

Mascot Change FAQ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. Why is the Crusader Mascot being retired?

As the Valley Christian Community seeks to be a more loving, compassionate, holy, and spirit-filled community, we must ensure our selected mascot is in alignment with our highest ideals.

We desire to ensure the story of God's faithfulness, as symbolized in a selected mascot, highlights and underscores our central mission and purpose, and demonstrates to all the breadth, depth, and beauty that is part of our Christian education heritage and hope for the future. While admittedly, in years past, the mascot "Crusader" illustrated that which was central to our mission and purpose, in today's context, the term "Crusader" no longer serves such a purpose.

Our world has changed since 1947 when the Crusader was chosen as the mascot for VCS. Today, access to information from around the world is instantly available to us. As a result, we have changed. We have a deeper understanding of our world, and our world is exposed to us. Prior to such accessible knowledge, most people were unaware of differences, hurts, and circumstances of others. We can no longer be unaware. This new environment forces us to know how other people think and often when we see through the eyes of others, our opinions and understandings change.

With this keener understanding of our larger world, one can learn that Valley Christian's traditional understanding of "crusader" does not accurately communicate the intended message. This is because the meaning of the word "crusader" has changed. Language is a dynamic code used to communicate and because it is fluid, over time the meaning of words in our language change. Awful used to mean "inspiring awe", fantastic meant "existing in one's imagination, and gay meant "happy or merry", and crusader meant "one who fought valiantly for a noble cause".

While it is not our intention for the Crusader mascot to represent Valley Christian Schools as violent, greedy warriors, this is the negative association made by many outside of the VCS circle. For those not familiar with the original intent of Valley Christian's Crusader, notions of the Crusades or Crusaders calls forth images of religious militarism and all that is wrong with religious conviction. In the new global environment, of which we are now active participants, the mascot of Crusaders no longer commonly represents the ideals intended by our founders and central to our school community.

The board understands that sincere Christians can debate the value of the historical Crusades and their place in history. Arguments supporting both sides of this issue could be well presented, and both could be true. However, because the "Crusader" image does not represent well who we are. It is for this reason that the Board of Directors has determined changing the mascot aligns more closely with our Strategic Plan to be a more "loving, compassionate, and Spirit-filled community."

2. Doesn't the word "crusader" mean, "one who fights vigorously for a cause"?

Yes. One definition given in most English dictionaries indicates that a crusader is one who fights for a worthy cause; typically, one who is zealous, idealistic, and unrelenting. A second definition dictionaries provide defines crusader as a soldier who fought in the medieval Crusades. While the Crusader mascot of Valley Christian Schools began as a positive way to communicate to the

world our worthy cause God's kingdom, today, a crusader is more often negatively associated with the medieval Christian aggression and modern Western imperialism and colonialism.

3. Why is this change happening now?

There are two significant reasons. First, effective 2016, Valley Christian Schools established its new strategic plan. The development of this strategic plan was born out of months of intentional prayer. Over approximately five months, which spanned from spring of 2015 to fall of 2015, constituents that included Valley Christian School board members, administrators, a select group of teachers, and parents actively engaged in this prayer effort. This collective body met twice, once in fall 2015; again in January 2016, to outline, discuss, and formulate what was collectively being heard about the future of Valley Christian Schools in and through such intentional prayer. What resulted from this collective and prayerful work is the present strategic plan. The change of the mascot comes directly from our desire to be a more loving, compassionate, holy, and spirit-filled community.

Second, Valley Christian Schools is about to enter into a major fundraising campaign for an Event Center and VCS cash needs. The school board determined the selection of a new mascot is to effectively coincide with the opening of the future Event Center. Wanting to enter into a fundraising campaign with integrity, the school board believed it had an ethical duty to let our donors know of its intention to retire the Crusader mascot as VCS entered into raising funds for this building in order to avoid any notions of "bait and switch" that could occur.

4. What about our heritage and our tradition?

The Valley Christian Schools Board of Directors recognizes that for many years the mascot of Crusaders has served Valley Christian Schools well. For much of VCS history a "Crusader" symbolized our highest ideals to others and a "Crusader" evoked images of self-sacrifice, honor, and devotion to God. As such, the "Crusader" mascot was congruent with Valley Christian Schools.

The "Crusader" has been part of a strong, historical tradition of Valley Christian and it is difficult to part with tradition. It is not the intention of the Board of Directors to erase, shame, or somehow diminish the value of the years of Valley Christian Crusaders. We intend to honor the VC Crusader history while at the same time making a change to a new mascot in order to demonstrate our commitment to being Christ-like in a changing world while leaving the mission of the school unchanged. The true tradition of VCS is the tradition of being Christian.

It is not the intention of the BOD to throw out trophies, pictures, or plaques that bear the name "Crusader". The league championship banners and CIF Championship boards in the gym will continue to have the "Crusader" name on them. We intend to showcase the old Crusader and the new mascot together at our school.

5. What about the capital campaign?

As noted, the BOD desires first and foremost to enter into this upcoming capital campaign with integrity. Therefore, the BOD felt strongly that it had an ethical duty to let our donors know of its intention to retire the Crusader mascot as VCS entered into a phase of raising funds for the Event Center.

The BOD is unsure of how this decision about the mascot will affect the capital campaign.

However, the BOD feels it would be dishonest to accept donations and then change the mascot. Wanting to avoid any appearance of “bait and switch,” to our donors, the BOD believed it best to simply communicate its decision about retiring the Crusader mascot at this point.

6. Is changing the mascot an attempt to appease complaints of a small group of people?

No. The BODs is not being pressured to make this change by any particular group or person. Within our constituency, there have been those over the years who wished for a name change, and many others who were aware of the negative views of the crusades and crusaders that many hold. This is the case today, but no pressure or set of complaints were the impetus for this change or is forcing this change upon the VCS School Board.

7. Is changing the mascot an attempt at political correctness?

Changing the mascot is not about presenting Valley Christian Schools as a “politically correct” school. We are not seeking for such approval. Our mission and vision calls us to be countercultural, and we remain steadfastly committed to equipping and inspiring students to seek justice, bring mercy, and walk humbly with God wherever called. VCS board of directors has determined that selecting a different mascot for its future is needed in order to effectively convey who we are as a Christian school to a wide variety of audiences.

8. Is changing the mascot a first step down the path of becoming a non-Christian school?

No. Member’s of the Valley Christian Community can be certain that the vision of the school will remain unchanged; this decision was made in light of that vision as a way to better fulfill that vision in a changing world.

The Valley Christian School Board remains committed to our mission: equipping and inspiring students to make a difference for Jesus Christ in the world. We are also committed to the Christian faith (with a Reformed Accent) of our founders (please see Strategic Plan). The board has also recently made a strong statement regarding our position on human sexuality (please see VC Doctrinal Statement). Lastly, Valley Christian continues to enroll only students from Christian families or staying with Christian families (International Students).

Our mission is clear and remains strong. The changing of the mascot is designed to better highlight and under score our Christian mission and heritage to those interested in Christian education in our present and extended Christian community. It is precisely because of our commitment to our Christian mission that the BODs believed changing the mascot is critical. The genuine desire of the BODs is to illuminate our Christian principles, eliminating hindrances that might obscure our common Christian focus. It is for this reason, and this spirit, the Crusader mascot is being retired.

9. Why was the community not involved?

This question is understandable. There is no Board Policy regarding “Changing a Mascot”. We wish there was. It would have made our job a lot easier. That being said, the board felt it had enough information regarding the changing narrative of the term “Crusader” to make the decision that it no longer supports our mission and vision.

There were numerous highly debated board discussions regarding obtaining VC Community input first. Some of the board discussions centered around - what if we got community input first

and we decided something different? (This was the method used 12 years ago when school uniforms were decided on. The board received community input against uniforms, and still made the decision to require them. This made people very upset. Probably worse than if the board just did it on their own) In this situation, we would be introducing anxiety in the community twice, rather than once.

At the end of the day, the board chose to follow the processes used by many of the schools (Wheaton, Point Loma, Denver Christian) whose boards made the decision without community input.

To summarize, this decision was made for the following reasons:

- In BOD policies and procedures, there are not outlined procedures for making a mascot change. Therefore, the BOD are in uncharted territory, responsible for making this decision in the best manner possible.*
- The BOD, then, spent a great deal of time reviewing best practices of schools and universities previously in this similar position. Based upon this review of best practices, the BOD determined it most effective for the VCS community to simply institute and announce the retiring of Crusader mascot.*
- The above decision was made largely because the BOD knew various opinions on either side of this issue were held by those valued in the VCS community. The BOD took the leadership role to retire the mascot instead of opening a discussion on its value and importance to VCS, anticipating that such discussions could be divisive to and among those in our community. Not wanting to place members of our community possibly against one another; the BOD, based upon its extensive review of other schools in a similar position, choose to make this a BOD decision.*
- The BOD wanting to ensure this decision did not fall upon the Superintendent*

10. Can agendas, meeting notes, voting records, and meeting documents used by the board be distributed to the public?

Consistent with effective governance practices, agendas, meeting notes, voting records, and meeting documents for information discussed, determined, and voted on in Executive Session are not distributed to the public. There are many purposes for such confidentiality: (1) The BOD must have a confidential space to discuss sensitive items related to the school. In these meetings, far more than a possible mascot change is discussed. Key personnel concerns are addressed in this setting, financial strategies and options best for VCS are discussed and often decided upon, and various long-term strategic options best for VCS are debated. (2) While notes and minutes of these discussions and decisions are kept, they are not shared with the public as part of effective governance practices. (3) The BOD must have a space where forthright discussions about critical issues and decisions for the VCS and its future can confidentially occur. Executive sessions are set aside for these purposes.

11. Can the BOD's voting count to adopt the retirement of the Crusader mascot be obtained?

No. While voting on various resolutions frequently occur at the BOD level, our common practice has been and remains to present voting results only in the affirmative or negative. Why is this the case? Individual BOD members can/do vote individually on issues, but once the vote is cast as affirmative or negative, each individual speaks with one common voice and as a BOD member. This is important to effective and productive governing practices. Therefore, our BOD does not publicize vote counts to the public on any resolution.

12. Can the voting tally of each individual on the BOD be distributed to the public?

No. The rationale for this was briefly discussed in the response to the previous question. The BOD invites

and desires cognitive dissonance from its members. For the health and future of the VCS, each BOD member must advocate for and effectively articulate their individual position relative to any resolution that requires a vote. Such individuality of conscience makes a BOD strong and healthy. When a vote on a particular resolution is passed or rejected; then each BOD member speaks collectively, without individuality, as a BOD member. We work with extreme care on this. Our BOD members speak individually on issues for robust debate, but they speak collectively for the BOD once a vote has been cast. Therefore, consistent with this belief and objective, we do not publicize individual voting of our BOD to the public.

13. Is there an appeal process?

Because this issue rests outside of and beyond written BOD policies, there is no appeal process available. In light of this, the BOD diligently researched other institutions (colleges and K-12 institutions) to determine best practice in these situations. While this was difficult for the BOD, the BOD determined it best to simply make the decision to change the mascot rather than open the discussion to the general VCS public.

Additionally, the BOD is empowered to make decisions for VCS related to the hire, evaluation, and removal of Superintendent, the finances of VCS to sustain and grow its future, and to oversee and determine policies and procedures that are consistent with and in the best interest of VCS. The BOD worked diligently to make the mascot change within its policies and procedures, and consistent with what is best for VCS and its future.

14. How will the next mascot be chosen?

A new mascot will be chosen by a committee constructed of a BOD appointed chairperson, two faculty members, two students, two alumni, and two current parents, and one BOD member. This committee will be charged with presenting options for a new mascot to the BOD. These mascot options will be accompanied by explanation of why they would fit well into the vision of Valley Christian, how the mascot would be depicted, and how this mascot would represent excellence in academics, arts, and athletics.

From the list presented by the Mascot Committee, the BOD will choose at least three possible choices to present to the Valley Christian community. The Valley Christian community will vote to choose the new mascot.

The time line on this process is still being determined. Ideally, there are two objectives in the development of this timeline. First, the BOD wants to allow sufficient time for the committee to receive input from anyone wanting to participate and the committee will require time to make wise decisions regarding which mascots to put forward to the BOD. Second, the BOD feels that it is important to move forward in a timely manner. The selection of a new mascot will mark the beginning of forward movement and the community can begin to celebrate our united mission of inspiring and equipping students to make a difference in the world for Christ.