

Valpo drops 'Crusaders' team name

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The Valparaiso University Victory Bell as seen in 2012. (Photo used via Creative Commons License)

Valparaiso University announced on August 10 that it has adopted the Beacons as its new team name, replacing the Crusaders, a term school officials dropped this year after saying it had been embraced by hate groups.

University president José D. Padilla said the private Lutheran school's new nickname "directly connects to the University's motto, 'In Thy Light We See Light,' and represents the Valparaiso University community in many ways."

"We are beacons of knowledge for our students' academic, social and spiritual growth. Above all, we are beacons of God's light around the world. We light the way for our students, so that once they graduate, they shine their light for others," Padilla said in a news release.

School officials announced in February that they had retired the Crusaders name following input from students, faculty, and alumni.

That decision came after a decades-long debate that has recently intensified because groups such as the Ku Klux Klan began using the words and symbols of the Crusades, a series of bloody religious wars Christians waged beginning in the 11th century.

For years, Valpo's sports mascot was a helmeted figure in faux armor. But the school's faculty and student senates each passed resolutions calling for a change, and the university's alumni board of directors supported reassessing the team name's appropriateness.

Beacons was chosen after a months-long process that included nearly 1,000 suggestions and input from student athletes, other students, faculty, staff, and alumni of the 3,100-student university, located in Valparaiso, Indiana.

The new nickname, new mascot, and related imagery will be phased in during the 2021-2022 academic year, and Valparaiso's intercollegiate athletic teams will immediately be known as the Beacons, the school said.

Many of the university's marks and logos, including its colors and the "shield of character," will remain part of the university's brand, school officials said. —Associated Press