

NSYSU to hold referendum on statue removal

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Statues of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek are pictured at National Sun Yat-sen University in Kaohsiung's Gushan District on Friday.

Photo: Huang Hsu-lei, Taipei Times

Kaohsiung's National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU) is to host a school-wide referendum tomorrow to decide whether to move the statues of Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) and Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) on its campus.

The referendum reflects Taiwan's democratic education and is the first of its kind among the nation's colleges and universities, NSYSU's administration said in the announcement.

Under an atmosphere of rationality and mutual respect, the school can hopefully resolve an issue that has concerned its students and faculty for a long time, it added.

Student representatives on Oct. 21, 2016, at a university affairs meeting proposed removing the statues that stand outside the university's Info-Library Building.

The administration at the end of that year formed an ad hoc committee and on Nov. 3 last year decided to host a school-wide referendum on the issue.

Online voting is to open at 9am tomorrow and close at 4pm on Thursday, the Office of Student Affairs said on Friday.

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Students and faculty who were enrolled or employed as of Tuesday are eligible to vote in the referendum, as well as Chinese and other foreign students, the office added.

Participants may select one of three options: keep the statues where they are, move them to a different location on campus or move them off-campus, the office said.

A total of 10,862 people are eligible to vote and there is no minimum voter turnout requirement for the referendum to pass, it added.

The bronze statues are landmarks, an unnamed NSYSU professor said, asking if the university could retain its name if the statue of Sun is removed.

Others have proposed removing Chiang's statue, but keeping the one of Sun, saying that the former is often vandalized while the latter is relatively uncontroversial.

A referendum is the best way to decide how campus space is used and how history should be perceived, NSYSU student association president Yuan Ho-ching (袁浩清) said, adding that no matter the result, it would be the collective decision of the entire school community.

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