

Monday, 21 October 2019

To the President, Provost, Cabinet and Board of Trustees:

Members of Academic Assembly have followed with interest and concern recent actions by President Sundborg that have led Seattle University officials to remove references to Planned Parenthood from certain University web pages. These actions were taken in response to demands by Students for Life of America (SFLA), an outside organization.

While the members of Seattle University community acknowledge and respect the Jesuit ethos and the religious and cultural traditions on which the university was founded, and to which they contribute through their professional endeavors, we also wish to state that we are a diverse and inclusive community of many different faiths and belief systems, including Protestants, atheists, agnostics, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Catholics, and many others. Moreover, many committed Catholics respectfully disagree with the social policies of the Catholic Church around sexuality, contraception and other matters. SFLA mischaracterizes Planned Parenthood as simply a provider of abortion services when the organization offers a wide range of healthcare services and fulfills a vital social justice mission for women's health.

Removal of information and resources to our students does not recognize the autonomy and special character of academic institutions nor the role of faculty in shared governance.

Academic Assembly has discussed these issues at two weekly meetings and, with the assistance of the Provost, authorized a group of its members to meet with the President, Provost, and Dean of Students.

We now call on the Provost to:

1. Invite President Sundborg to participate in a series of fora with the Seattle University community of faculty, staff and students to discuss the issues raised by this matter.
2. Convene a working group of the Provost, AcA President and Vice Presidents, the President of the Staff Council, the Director of the Women and Gender Studies program, the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, and the Vice President for Student Development, an additional staff representative, two student representatives and other stakeholders to review the policies and consultative practices of decision making around these issues and to consult with relevant parties. The working group will be invited to draft a policy to protect the rights of employees in their personal lives and in their job responsibilities when those views may differ from that of the Catholic Church. The working group will bring recommendations for changes back to AcA for wider discussion and a vote.
3. Encourage President Sundborg and senior leadership, together with the Jesuit community, to participate in a series of workshops and/or reading groups on WGST and LGBTQ issues relating to gender, sexuality and identity.
4. Begin planning a series of faculty-led lectures and discussions for the wider SU community be planned from a variety of disciplinary perspectives around Catholic, Ignatian, Jesuit and mission related topics, as well as constitutional and legal issues relating to academic

freedom, censorship, and public v. private institutions, and that pertinent faculty with specific research expertise be invited to contribute to such a series.

5. Recommend deleted informational resources on the university website relating to Planned Parenthood be restored, while noting that the provision of such resources do not in any way suggest specific endorsement by the university or the Catholic Church.