

A Letter Reacting to the Non-Discrimination Clause

Redrafted on 01 March 1999

To the Board of Fellows of the University of Notre Dame du Lac:

In light of recent events, the Student Senate has found it necessary to question the decision of your body with regards to the addition of sexual orientation to the University's Non-Discrimination Clause. That a vote of twelve people could overrule the combined voices of the Academic Council, Faculty Senate, and the Student Senate is disturbing. Due to the lack of information disclosed to the Notre Dame community regarding the specifics of your consideration of this matter, we are left to wonder whether our opinion was given its due respect.

We acknowledge that the process your body followed is completely within the bounds of propriety -- well within the established rules of this University. This process, however, greatly limits communication between the bodies involved in decision making and the populace as a whole. The current system creates a situation that does not foster an atmosphere of open discussion and intellectual honesty. Perhaps the best step at this point would be to reform this process to allow for added communication between these groups. Evidence for this absence of communication is the assemblance of hundreds in the Week of Action preceding the Board of Trustees meeting; women and men fighting for a cause who had no way of knowing that their pleas were directed toward a body whose decision had already been influenced by the potent voice of the Fellows.

The people who sustain and perpetuate the traditions of this University are the students, faculty and staff. This myriad of voices has shown its support for the change in the Non-Discrimination Clause, but has once again been ignored. Those of us who study, teach and work here are the ones who can most rightly proclaim, "WE are ND!" For years, we have been fighting to protect all the members of our Notre Dame family from injustice. This issue is one that will not go away. If there is anything that history has taught us, it is that real social change is only accomplished through persistence. Only when justice is served will our voices truly be silenced.

The Student Senate of the University of Notre Dame du Lac

Submitted by the Student Senate Gender Relations Committee

