

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY™

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TO: Mr. Anthony Romeo
Student Representative for Proposed Student Organization "TRUTH"

Dr. W. King Mott
Faculty Advisor

FROM: Dr. Laura A. Wankel
Vice President for Student Affairs

RE: Application for Provisional Recognition

Date: December 18, 2003

The Dean for Community Development shared the recommendations of the recent Student Organization Activities Committee (SOAC) meeting with me. I am grateful to them for their careful work and sincere effort to fairly review the applications for proposed new student groups.

Due to the complexities of issues surrounding your application for an organization called "TRUTH", it was my obligation to more fully explore its consistency with the University's Catholic mission. I appreciated SOAC's review of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the University's Catholicity Statement; however, the nature of your proposal required deeper examination of Catholic teachings and the mission of Seton Hall.

I consulted with the Vice President for Mission and Ministry and reviewed the pertinent Church teachings and documents addressing the pastoral care of homosexual persons. Further, I sensitively explored the issues with members of the University's Executive Cabinet and others.

The most compelling guidance from the Church directs us to care for the human person whose fundamental identity is as a "child of God" – not as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual". The Church teaches that an exclusive focus on a person's sexual orientation denies the fullness of human dignity and diminishes persons in a way that is both reductionist and marginalizing. As a result, although SOAC did recommend to me that "TRUTH" be approved, I am informing you that your application for provisional recognition has been denied. No organization based solely upon sexual orientation may receive formal University recognition.

Be assured, in our pastoral care for all our students, the University will continue to work through the initiatives outlined by the Executive Cabinet in response to the Task Team on Sexual Orientation report issued earlier this semester. The Executive Cabinet Initiatives ensure tangible and comprehensive institutional action.

Further, the Division of Student Affairs remains prepared to work with gay and lesbian students to meet their needs. I am committed to working collaboratively with you and other students in fostering a positive, safe and caring community. To that end, I am providing the following plan that outlines how we may move forward. I have forwarded a copy of this letter and the proposed plan to all students who expressed an interest in the application. It is my sincere hope that all interested students actively participate in creating this initiative.

Memorandum of Understanding

The University will permit the students to operate at the South Orange campus under the following guidelines and understandings:

Name and Relationship

- An identifying name will be mutually agreed upon between your representatives and the Vice President for Student Affairs.
- The group will stand in “special relationship” to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs through which all of its privileges, benefits and responsibilities will be coordinated.

Purpose. *The purpose of this group will be to:*

- provide education to the campus community, in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church, about the injustice of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
- oppose discrimination against students, faculty, and staff on the basis of sexual orientation;
- provide a forum for discourse, discussion and the exchange of views;
- support the lesbian and gay students of Seton Hall University through programs to educate the campus community about the injustice of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
- work with the University to foster a safe environment for all students;
- work with the University to promote support groups for parents and family members who ask for pastoral help or spiritual guidance.

Privileges. *The group will be permitted to:*

- sponsor educational events, meetings and programs;
- sponsor volunteer and community service initiatives;
- provide a forum for discourse, discussion and the exchange of views;
- support lesbian and gay students of Seton Hall University through programs that educate the campus community about the injustice of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
- elect officers and or create ad hoc committees;
- submit requests for funds for particular activities, and or other resources to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The group shall not be permitted to:

- sponsor activities that are contrary to, or involve advocacy contrary to, Church teachings on human sexuality;
- use the University’s name in a fashion that would imply that the University approves of homosexual behavior, or any lifestyle that is contrary to the Church’s teachings on human sexuality;
- sponsor religious services or activities;
- sponsor social activities.

Responsibilities:

- The Vice President for Student Affairs shall have the responsibility to serve as the direct liaison to the group and to approve the advisor(s) to the group.
- The group shall have the responsibility to furnish the Vice President for Student Affairs with a report of activities, programs and achievements at the end of each semester.
- The group shall have the responsibility to ensure that any outline of proposed activities will include clear communication of the Church’s teachings on human sexuality.

These guidelines are subject to change at the discretion of the University at any time. The group acknowledges that, in accepting these guidelines, it will neither seek nor expect formal recognition by the University or elsewhere. The University reserves the right to terminate this arrangement in the event of a violation of the guidelines.

I hope that this outline will provide us with an opportunity to move forward in a significant and meaningful way. The University is steadfast in its faith commitments and will do all that it can to preserve human dignity in an authentically human community. It is within this context that I look forward to our dialogue.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura A. Wankel".

Laura A. Wankel, Ed.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs

cc: Executive Cabinet
Dean for Community Development
SOAC members