

BRIAN ALEXANDER

Mary Lyons
President
University of San Diego
5998 Alcala Park
San Diego, CA 92110

Cc: Chris Henneke *The Vista*
Prof. Gerard Mannion
Ron L. Fowler, Chair USD Board of Trustees

Dr. Lyons:

I write to you as an alumni (1981), and after several days thought and consideration, to demand your resignation as president of USD. I make this demand in light of the Beattie Affair. Your actions amply demonstrate a lack of fitness to lead USD, or any other university.

Your action undermines the value of a USD degree. I have been fortunate to have met with some success in my career as a writer and journalist. (I write this letter on behalf of myself only.) But over the years I've had to fight the perception that I graduated from a small, backwater, Catholic institution, that the school's association with the Catholic church had limited the scope of my intellectual growth. Colleagues and bosses who had attended Yale, or Brown, or Northwestern would greet my protestations that USD permitted and encouraged free inquiry with some skepticism. In recent years I have actively encouraged friends to explore USD as an option for their own children, using the same arguments I presented to employers and colleagues. You've made me a liar with one stroke. Not only do I find this personally embarrassing, I feel for recent graduates, and current students, who will now be forced to overcome the justified caution of employers and colleagues. Needless to say, I will now actively discourage prospective students from considering USD.

Your action undermines your own faculty. Professor Mannion arranged the visit of a respected scholar, no doubt using his own influence and reputation. Not only is your action rude in the extreme, it damages the credibility of all USD faculty members and the strength of their associations with colleagues at other institutions. You have succeeded in embarrassing USD, and its faculty, on an international scale.

Your action shows an astonishing lack of faith in the rigor of a USD education and in USD students. Any university must instill the ability to think critically. If it fails in that prime duty, it has no right to call itself a university. Fear of an idea, fear of contradiction, shows a lack of confidence in USD's students and the school's success in opening their minds. Any university president that admits such a failure has no business running that university.

Your action displays an alarming lack of faith in the strength of the church's own stance on same-sex marriage. If the church, or a university affiliated with the church, has so little confidence that its teaching on any matter is so threatened by a competing idea that it must ban that idea, or even, as in this case, a person who has advocated the idea, perhaps the teaching itself should be re-examined for weakness.

Your action betrays the role of a university in a free society. USD, or any Catholic academic institution, does not exist in a vacuum. Competing ideas define what it means to live in a free society. You've betrayed this highest of all values.

Your action is a shameful display of cowardice. A university president must be brave. For centuries, universities have been attacked by ideologues, bigots, zealots of many stripes and convictions. It is the first duty of any university president to support the freedom of faculty, students, alumni in the face of such attacks. It is the duty of any university president to defend the very concept of a university. You've failed miserably. By doing so, you have abdicated.

You must resign.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Alexander". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Brian Alexander