

Professor Mary E. Lyons, PhD
President
University of San Diego
Hughes Administration Center, 222
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110-2492

**Vice-Chancellor
Professor Paul O'Prey**
Personal Assistant, Karen MacNaughton
University of Roehampton
Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5PJ
T. +44 (0)20 8392 3000
T. +44 (0)20 8392 3101
F. +44 (0)20 8392 3029
E. paul.oprey@roehampton.ac.uk
www.roehampton.ac.uk

30 October, 2012

Dear Dr Lyons

Professor Tina Beattie has shared with me your letter to her of 27 October, cancelling her Visiting Fellowship at the Frances G. Harpst Center for Catholic Thought and Culture, which was due to start next week.

I appreciate that you will have only arrived at such a decision after very serious consideration. As Vice-Chancellor (President) of a University with faith foundations, I understand the complexity of such issues, and it is in that spirit of a shared understanding that I would like to make a few points in relation to Tina's position.

Tina holds a Chair in Catholic Studies here at Roehampton and is also Director of our Digby Stuart Research Centre for Religion, Society and Human Flourishing (DSRC), which has a strong Roman Catholic focus. She has an excellent record of research and publication, and is an exceptional teacher, at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level. She is also a respected public intellectual in the UK, often called upon to discuss some of the most complex moral issues, which she does with sensitivity and respect for differing points of view. One example of her good standing is that, for one week every year, the BBC invites her to lead the daily prayers that signal the beginning of the day's national broadcasting.

Tina is a serious intellectual who is also dedicated to the service of her Church and who holds to an orthodox theology. That said, she is also someone who questions particular aspects of the Church's current moral and social teaching, from a carefully reasoned point of view, which I am sure you would agree is her right.

I have seen some of the rather malicious distortions of Tina's views that are circulating on the internet. I do not know who is behind these comments or what their motives are. Unfortunately, the nature of the internet is that postings get picked up and passed on rather unquestioningly by others, and at an alarming rate, so that what starts as a misrepresentation gets further distorted, taking on a life of its own and gaining undue credibility. I had to deal with such a case here last Spring Term, when I was asked to ban a speaker based on what was being said about their 'extremist views' on the internet. After doing some further investigation, and reading that person's texts for myself, I concluded that the claims made against them were deliberate exaggerations.

/cont

It is always a matter for regret if academic freedom is seen to be restricted in a university, which by its nature is a place where debate is encouraged and dissent permitted and safeguarded. In this case Tina was not intending, so far as I am aware, to take part in any events related to controversial issues of Church teaching. Rather, she was due to deliver the Emilia Switgall lecture, on the representation of women in Christian art, a subject on which she is a leading authority. She was also due to share a platform with Professor Ursula King, one of the leading Catholic theologians of our day (and a regular visitor to Roehampton), to discuss the education of Catholic women since Vatican II. It is a great shame that she will now no longer be able to take part in these events.

I have a great regard for USD, which has rightly achieved an outstanding international reputation, and recognise that we have much in common in terms of a shared heritage and foundation. I also appreciate the complexities of balancing Church teaching and academic freedom. That said, I am concerned that there may have been some misunderstanding of Tina's position and hope that you might consider a review of the decision to cancel her Visiting Fellowship.

I would be very happy to discuss this further by telephone, if that would help.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul O'Prey', written in a cursive style.

Professor Paul O'Prey
Vice Chancellor