

November 9, 2012

Dr. Mary E. Lyons, President
The University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego CA 92110

Dear President Lyons:

I write on behalf of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, whose presence on the University of San Diego campus is embodied in our Chapter Phi of California, which I had the pleasure of helping to install a few years ago. It was a delight to be on your campus at that time, and to participate, however briefly, in the life of the University.

My letter is prompted by reports in the academic press of your withdrawal of an invitation to a British theologian named Tina Beattie, who was to have been in residence at USD and was to have spoken there. According to the published reports, complaints from off-campus groups played some role in your decision to withdraw the invitation. Also, according to the reports we have seen, the complaints pertained to the nature of her views on certain social issues.

One of Phi Beta Kappa's central values is academic freedom. Our concern is not only for faculty interactions with students in the classroom setting, but also for the maintenance of a broad campus climate open to a diversity of perspectives on important issues. While the Society does not insist on a policy of unregulated access to the campus as a forum for all comers, we do expect each institution to have, and to operate in accord with, regular policies concerning invitations to speak on campus, and regular policies concerning an appropriate process to develop the course of action to be followed when such invitations come under criticism. I attach a document that outlines the position of our Committee on Qualifications. That committee makes recommendations about the placement of chapters.

In light of Phi Beta Kappa's interest in the maintenance of communities of free and open discourse, I would be grateful for your statement

about the policies at USD pertinent to Professor Beattie's initial invitation, and to the withdrawal of that invitation. May I also ask, concerning the withdrawal, about the process actually followed in the run-up to your decision to disinvite her?

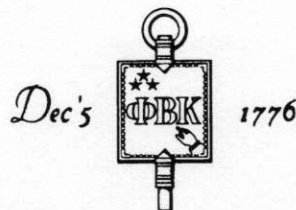
I look forward to the University and Phi Beta Kappa continuing to work together for the benefit of the students on your campus.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

John Churchill
Secretary

The Phi Beta Kappa Society



Freedom of Expression Guidelines of the Committee on Qualifications

Liberal learning, unlike technical training, neither begins nor ends at an appointed hour or a specified place. That is why Phi Beta Kappa affirms that free expression and inquiry, no matter whether occurring inside or outside a classroom, is central to its mission as an advocate of excellence in the liberal arts and sciences. The Society's doing so is not new. In 1837, when Ralph Waldo Emerson famously but simply defined a scholar as "Man Thinking," he did so in a Phi Beta Kappa address. "Life," he declared, "is our dictionary . . . Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of today."

Emerson's belief that everything an individual experiences can contribute to learning explains why his conception of a scholarly life included more than what occurs in lecture halls or libraries. Today, Phi Beta Kappa continues to promote a broad vision of education. An exposure to diverse ideas and views is an integral component of that vision. Liberal education aims for the realization of an individual's personal and intellectual potential through deliberation and discernment. Consequently, academic institutions seeking to shelter Phi Beta Kappa chapters should have policies and practices that ensure open expression and inquiry across their campuses. Cultivating a climate conducive to true learning requires as much.

Phi Beta Kappa's Committee on Qualifications recognizes that every college or university campus is unique. Each has its own culture. Issues regarding the sensitivity of particular intellectual or political positions vary from campus to

campus, and the Committee in no sense insists that every position need be put forth on every campus. Yet when ideas are expressed, or when the desire to have them expressed becomes known, colleges or universities committed to liberal learning must ensure that those ideas can be put forth freely and openly. Even when doing so may prove divisive, there can be no stronger evidence of an academic institution's commitment to liberal education. As Emerson also declared in *The American Scholar*, "Free should the scholar be—free and brave."

Phi Beta Kappa's document titled "The Founding of New Chapters" states: "The Committee on Qualifications will give close attention to the procedures by which an applicant institution . . . takes due precautions to prevent issues of governance, athletics, religion, or politics from subverting the integrity of the institution's dedication to liberal education." Because the phrase *due precautions* may seem ambiguous, the Committee on Qualifications adopted the following guidelines in April, 2010 to help its members better assess applicant institutions with regard to the sometimes thorny issue of freedom of expression. These guidelines may also prove helpful to faculty at applicant institutions when responding to inquiries from the Committee, or even to faculty at institutions debating whether to submit an application.

1. Academic freedom as defined in the 1940 AAUP "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" (subsequently endorsed by Phi Beta Kappa) refers primarily to speech by faculty in classrooms. The Committee's concerns definitely include this central issue. It is difficult to imagine how an applicant institution that limits what faculty members may say as they teach could truly be committed to the ideals of liberal education.

It is important to note, however, that Phi Beta Kappa's commitment to academic freedom applies also to students. Of course, college or university classrooms are not free-for-alls. Different rules of decorum apply on different campuses, and students sometimes do not wish for personal reasons to express particular views or opinions. Yet institutions must guard against students being intimidated or actually prevented from doing so—particularly on campuses or in individual classes where specific ideological, political, or religious positions are espoused.

2. Phi Beta Kappa's commitment to free inquiry and expression also extends beyond the classroom, to include areas such as:
 - Student admissions
 - Hiring, evaluation, promotion, tenuring, compensation, and retention of faculty and staff
 - Curriculum design and approval
 - Research and publication
 - Speech on campus by members of the community
 - Speech on campus by non-members of the community.

3. The Committee on Qualifications affirms that colleges or universities seeking to shelter Phi Beta Kappa chapters should have policies in place to ensure that all members of their communities are free to express and to receive ideas, even if other members of those communities may find those ideas disquieting. This does not mean that every institution need provide a forum for every idea. Yet when ideas are put forth, or when the desire to have them be put forth is made known, institutions need to have procedures in place that will permit free and open expression on their campuses.

Applicant institutions do well to have formal decision processes regarding speech and expression on campus. These processes may well be different for members and non-members of the college or university community, but their existence and use testify to the institution's commitment to free expression as an integral component of liberal learning.

4. Speech on campus by non-members of the college or university community sometimes can become a vexed issue. No institution is value-neutral, and the Committee on Qualifications does not contend that every ideological, political, or religious position need be presented on every campus. Yet when a speaker or group is invited or comes to campus in accord with the policies and practices of that campus, that speaker or group should not be intimidated or prevented from speaking freely. In this regard, the Committee repeatedly has looked askance at institutions at which speakers or groups with potentially controversial ideas have been first invited to campus and then disinvited. In these cases, the

Committee's concerns have had nothing to do with the ideas themselves. Instead, the concerns invariably have involved campus atmosphere and climate—specifically, whether the institution in question is one at which liberal learning is truly central.

In conclusion, the Committee on Qualifications remains committed to the principle of free expression and inquiry as central to Phi Beta Kappa's mission. Thus the Committee regards the institutional commitments required to uphold the ideals of liberal learning as being themselves expressions of those ideals. Seeing such commitments upheld can be especially important in situations in which ideological or political pressure, no matter from inside or outside the college or university community, promotes certain views or tries to prevent certain other views from being expressed. That such pressure in fact can be exerted is one reason why institutions seeking to shelter Phi Beta Kappa chapters need to have clear policies in place regarding freedom of expression, and why those policies need to be carried out in practice.

Adopted by the Committee on Qualifications

April 24, 2010