

## **SUSC Motion Regarding University Decision on Planned Parenthood**

Members of the Seattle University Staff Council (SUSC) are concerned about issues that have been raised by the University's decision to remove a reference to Planned Parenthood from a University web page. Some staff, faculty, and students have felt alienated and excluded by this decision and by the process through which it was carried out. They raise concerns of "Do I belong here?" and "Do I have a voice here?"

These concerns take more specific form in the following issues that challenge our University community:

- Consultation & Shared Governance: The University needs to develop better processes by which shared governance groups can be consulted before decisions are made.
- Communication: There is need for greater clarity and communication throughout the process of University decisions.
- Academic Freedom: The University needs to clarify the expectations and freedoms of faculty and staff, especially regarding academic freedom and protection from retaliation.
- Jesuit Catholic Identity: The University needs to continue examining what it means to be a Jesuit Catholic University in current times, and how this identity can be implemented in positive and inclusive ways.

SUSC has met with President Sundborg and Provost Martin to discuss these concerns. A summary of that discussion is available at [this link](#) on the Staff Council web page.

Moving forward, SUSC makes the following requests and recommendations to the University President and Cabinet.

### **1. Consultation & Shared Governance**

University leaders have indicated that greater consultation should have occurred before a decision was made. SUSC requests that the University provide further clarification regarding consultation for future decisions:

- a. When would consultation occur? More specifically, what sorts of issues, actions or potential decisions would invoke consultation?
- b. How would consultation occur? More specifically, in what way would shared governance bodies such as SUSC be involved?

### **2. Academic Freedom & Staff Freedom**

University leaders have indicated that individual interactions by staff are not restricted, but have also indicated that academic freedom does not apply to staff in the same way that it applies to faculty. SUSC requests that the University provide more specific clarification of these questions:

- a. How does academic freedom apply to staff?
- b. What is understood by individual interactions?
- c. Are there any restrictions on what staff can state as their personal opinions?
- d. Are there any restrictions on what staff can say in their work roles, either in private conversations (e.g. staff counseling or advising students) or in public discussions (e.g. staff advocating in their role as representative of an office on sustainability, inclusion, etc.)
- e. What are the guidelines for what can be written in University documents or posted on University sites?

### 3. Working Group

Seattle University's Academic Assembly has recommended formation of a working group to look at some of these issues. S USC supports the goal of working collaboratively in this group. S USC recommends formulating the working group as follows:

- a. Purpose: Address the issues of consultation and speech listed above.
  - i. Where needed, specify any distinctions on how these issues apply to faculty, staff, or students.
- b. Composition: The working group will include members from faculty, staff, students, and University officials.
  - i. Faculty, staff, and student members will be chosen by the appropriate governance bodies for each group.
  - ii. These members will invite University officials to join the working group either as members or as consultants, depending on needs identified by the working group.
- c. Action:
  - i. The working group will gather information and draft recommendations which will be forwarded to AcA, S USC, and other governance bodies.
  - ii. These bodies may then decide to endorse the recommendations separately or jointly, and forward them to University leadership.