



April 22, 2013

Dear President Mary Lyons,

We come to you with a concern that not only affects us as a community, but as a nation. We believe that all of us who reside in the United States are dreamers; we dream of access to an education, a successful career, and a desire for safety in our homes. Unfortunately, there are many who are not guaranteed these privileges because they lack documentation. Every year there are 65,000 undocumented students who graduate from high school and of those only 5-10% go on to college. This is not because of academic ineligibility, but because their political status makes it difficult for them to reach higher education, even after having been accepted to a university. They face many roadblocks in financing their education, finding support on campus from faculty and peers, and overcoming their own undeserved guilt of being undocumented, because of the stigma that is attached to this status.

Recently at our university, we welcomed a panel of DREAMers, students who are undocumented and are fighting for their right to be accepted into U.S. society as college students and professionals. We will soon welcome Jose Antonio Vargas, an undocumented immigrant that has challenged the definition of what it means to be an American.

Vargas, a Filipino American, founder of the non-profit organization *Define American*, writer for the New York Times, and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting, is a clear example of the immense amount of potential that can be lost when youth, students, and communities do not receive the support they need to pursue their dreams. Struggles that undocumented youth face, include, but are not limited to: lack of funding for their education, fear of being separated from their families, feeling rejected and unsafe in their communities, and having uncertainties about their futures. We as students and compassionate leaders stand in solidarity with undocumented youth and their families. We hope that this sentiment holds true for our institution as well.

We ask that you, President Mary Lyons, unite with us in this effort and follow the example of our greater San Diego community, and the Catholic Colleges and Universities in ACCU. Through their outspoken initiatives, institutions of higher education such as Santa Clara University, Dominican University, DePaul University, and Loyola Marymount University are true examples of faith and compassion. We believe that a public statement from our university is necessary now, one that supports:

- Fair and humane immigration reform that protects all students and their families
- The DREAM Act

- A personal commitment, by the University of San Diego, to provide educational and financial opportunities to current undocumented students

We cannot be bystanders in this movement when members of our own community are affected by our silence. We need to be active and at the forefront on this human rights issue. We need to put our values into practice. We need to be the Changemakers that we claim to be. During this time of Life Week, a public remark in support of this issue would demonstrate what it means to be an ethical leader for everybody on this campus. Since the university is already involved in collectives that fully support the Immigration Reform, it would only make sense to publicly advocate for this community that we personally, as students, have familial ties to. Such a statement would make us proud to be students here at the University of San Diego, an institution that is mindful and rises for a greater cause that in the end affects us all.

As a university that is “committed to the creation of a diverse and inclusive community” that seeks to educate future “ethical and compassionate leaders,” and that values the human dignity of all, this is without a doubt the right time to take action.

We look forward to working together with you, administrators, faculty, and students.

Respectfully Submitted,

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