



American Indian Student Organization (AISO) Response to Junipero Serra Statue Removal

On July 11th of 2020, the American Indian Student Organization was informally made aware that the Junipero Serra statue in front of Saints Tekakwitha and Serra Hall was removed about a week prior. This was done through an informal source not affiliated with administration at the University of San Diego. Although we are in full support of this action, the rumored pretenses of it being removed without an official statement from administration is concerning to say the least.

As a student organization, we are concerned that this action is temporary and that there will be no further action regarding changing the building name to remove the namesake and imagery of Junipero Serra. The administration's failure to make an acknowledgement or official statement prior to and preceding the action of removing the statue, has left us Native students in a state of confusion and frustration. We have gathered to discuss this action and the quantifiable harm done on Native students, and we have compiled a list of questions for senior members of administration. Here are these questions:

1. Why was AISO excluded from the decision making process?
2. Given the current climate surrounding race in America, why was there no public statement done by the administration?
3. Why was the statue not removed when the building's name was changed a year ago? Why were Native students' voices sidelined?
4. Rumors surrounding the removal of the statue have stated that it is removed for "safekeeping," or temporarily.
 - a. Could you please explain why the statue was removed?
 - b. Was the decision to remove the statue in solidarity with Native and Indigenous students, or was this moved by self-interest from outside pressure?
 - c. Will this be a permanent removal?

5. Will there be further action to remove the namesake and imagery of Junipero Serra off the building entirely?

Further, Native American and Indigenous students at the University of San Diego have also come together to encourage that administration take immediate action to acknowledge the removal of the Serra statue, but to also implement lasting changes for Native students. The following listed are our recommended changes:

1. The removal of the name “Serra Hall” on the academic building located on the University of San Diego’s campus with a recommended replacement acknowledging Saint Kateri Tekakwitha.
2. Raise a statue honoring Saint Kateri, the first Native American canonized by the Catholic Church.
3. The acquisition of a space that caters to the needs of American Indian students.
4. The establishment and implementation of an American Indian student supervisor.
 - a. There is a need for someone to solely outreach American Indian students to support them academically, professionally, and their transition into college.
5. The hiring of additional tenure-track Native American faculty.
 - a. Currently, there is only one tenure-track Native American teaching undergraduate courses.
6. Require the implementation of a land acknowledgement in all university business, including but not limited to:
 - a. Syllabi
 - b. Campus events
 - c. Olé weekend, RA meetings, and campus welcome events
7. Acknowledging and changing the mosaic in the Hahn School of Nursing that seeks to erase the violence of the Mission system.
8. A public statement that addresses the aforementioned concerns, questions, and demands.

Given that the USD community benefits from the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism, we hope that this will garner support and solidarity for our Native students from other communities on campus. We hope to hear a public announcement about the university's intentions and further actions that will be taken to address these concerns. Other campuses, such as Yale University, have been able to accommodate the demands and needs of all students of color. We believe that the University has the ability to address the issues of our Queer, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color students.

Sincerely,

The American Indian Student Organization

