



For discussion with counsel on legal aspects
of issue

June 6, 2001

TO: President's Cabinet, Counsel Skip Li

CC:

FR: Kathleen Braden, Associate Provost and Dean of Student Life

RE: **Homosexuality and Community at SPU-meeting on topic with legal counsel**

With this memo, I am attaching some items that may be of assistance:

- Collection of community expectations statements expressed in various official SPU documents
- Statement on Human Sexuality at Seattle Pacific University (1993)
- Outline of our student judicial process

In terms of issues we face at SPU for students, staff, or faculty with homosexual orientation, I believe President's Cabinet needs to consider following:

1. we cannot expect that a "don't ask don't tell" approach will continue to help us avoid challenges on our stances regarding this issue. As I noted in my email of early May, we are seeing signs that we can expect some form of test case in near future and that this test case will inevitably be played out in public manner. This view is only an opinion on my part; I do not have any inside information about a particular case evolving, but I have formed this opinion based on:
 - increasing state and national issues around civil rights questions, discrimination, same sex marriages, same sex partners insurance cases, prospect of an "anti-bullying" law for schools
 - unofficial student group SPOUT at SPU
 - requests for posting materials from church that accepts homosexual lifestyle
2. our existing official expectations materials are inadequate because (1) they vary in language and requirements about what students are expected to agree to upon admission (2) the human sexuality statement in OSL was adopted in 1993 and has not been reviewed since that time and there is no public information about its availability
3. we need to ensure that counseling center staff and other staff and faculty at SPU who might be approached by students who wish to discuss homosexuality, receive counseling, support, etc. are all on the same page about our philosophy and standards; conflicting messages may not be supportive of students' needs and are certainly not a good display of integrity
4. the issue is especially apt for SPU engaging the culture at our doorstep because the city of Seattle does have a significant homosexual population; therefore, as President Eaton improves SPU's visibility and importance within the Seattle community, the issue of our views on homosexuality will inevitably be examined
5. Finally, as Dean of Students I believe that our first duty on this issue is to the well-being of our students and am concerned that our present statements and policy sends a contradictory message to students who are concerned about this topic: in not dealing with it in a meaningful and grace-filled way, we do not offer comfort or guidance to either students who may have homosexual orientation and are suffering OR students who are troubled about the issue, looking to us as an intellectual and believing community to offer guidance in their own education.