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UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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April 4, 1990

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Faculty

FROM: Steven Altman

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Steve Altman', written over the printed name.

SUBJ: University Club

Today I have asked the Faculty Senate to re-consider Resolutions 13 & 14. As written, both are difficult or impractical to implement, yet the principle of nondiscrimination is important to affirm. I intend to meet with the Steering Committee to develop new language.

While the Resolutions were general, clearly their purpose was specifically directed to the prospect of the University receiving funds from the University Club of Orlando for student scholarships. The funds, if accepted, would amount to approximately \$150,000 over five years (including the State match), and are unrestricted in their use at the University. But, well beyond the issue of money is the broader policy question of the University's posture toward donors, and more specifically toward the University Club.

Because of the policy question, and the interest the issue has stirred, I have engaged in broad consultation, on campus and off, to solicit input and to assess the impact of an action either way. I have been impressed with the depth and quality of the discussion this matter has sparked in the community, and by the thoughtful debate which has occurred on campus. John Milton said, "Where there is desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinions in good men is but knowledge in the making."

His words ring true. Knowledge is in the making, and the Faculty Senate's action has shown leadership in bringing an important issue to the public's attention. But, now it is time to decide -- based on what is in the best interests of the University.

My decision is to accept the gift for unrestricted scholarship use. The funds will be used consistent with University priorities to recruit and provide assistance to high ability students, minority students and other special talent students. A talented and diverse student body is fundamental to our development as a leading urban university. As graduates, they will provide future leadership to the Central Florida community.

The reasons for my decision are many, but before detailing several of them I must say that this has been a very difficult decision. Discriminatory practices are abhorrent, and this University must be committed in its education and research programs to actions which promote equal opportunity. As we assemble the tools to be able to do so more fully, I am confident that even more progress soon will be evident. My decision now is rooted in my commitment to build the very best university we can. It did not result from votes, loud voices or pressure.

The decision is also difficult because of my belief in the development of a strong Faculty Senate at the University. My preference is to support its work on behalf of the entire faculty, and to affirm the principle of responsible faculty governance. At the same time, we can all recognize the tensions which arise between the expression of transcendent values and life in a vastly imperfect world. Both positions require respect.

It is my judgment that the message conveyed by the Senate's action has been heard clearly throughout the community and in the University Club. I have reason to believe that progress is underway to open up current membership practices, and the Club should be encouraged to move forward with the change process for the good of the community. My hope is that in so doing, its leadership may set an example for all organizations with restrictive practices. This is important to the future of the region. Yet, I also have reason to believe that continued contentiousness from the University at this point will actually impede the progress we all hope will occur.

There may always be differences among reasonable people about the best means to create change, but in this case I believe it will now have to come from within the organization. In the meantime, no moral cause will be

advanced by discouraging people with whom we may disagree from doing a good thing.

By accepting funds from the University Club, the University is not lending its support to them. The funds are absolutely unrestricted for scholarship use, and are totally subject to the University's control. The very nature of the gift means that the University is not obligated to do anything except use the funds responsibly. If this were not the case, my decision would be different.

There are other examples in academe where universities separate their actions from those of their donors. They, and we, accept funds from the Ford Foundation even though Henry Ford expressed anti-Semitic views. They, and we, encourage our students to pursue Rhodes Scholarships without fear that we endorse the racial and colonial views of Cecil Rhodes. Members of our faculties do not condone the earlier votes of J. William Fulbright in support of racial segregation by accepting Fulbright Scholarships. While these are not current practices of these organizations, the point is that people and institutions do change over time. The University should be able to exert leadership to help bring it about, but the means to do so will differ in each situation.

The bigger question is the University's relationship to donors generally. The institution is placed in an untenable position if it must begin probing the intentions and character of each donor to assure itself that certain standards or conduct are observed. We do not have standing, nor the authority to make such judgments, and in fact, we expose ourselves to legal liability if we do so in a manner that would be construed to be defamatory. If this practice were to start, its logical and simple extensions would confound our better judgment about where to draw the line before we accept a gift.

The above does not suggest, however, that no standard at all should be applied. The University will not accept funds acquired through illegal activity, nor from organizations or individuals whose purposes undermine social order or human dignity. The University will not accept funds from benefactors who seek to endanger our most basic academic values. In Justice Frankfurter's words, these include "determining" for ourselves "on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who

may be admitted to study." It is not difficult to draw these distinctions and to apply them rigorously.

Orlando is on its way to becoming a major U. S. city, and its aspirations for further development are high. A great future is possible here, and part of that depends on the ability of business people to show the leadership necessary to avail themselves of all the talent that is available. Our setting is so competitive that any exclusionary practices undermine the unity that makes good things possible. The University's increasing stature aids this process; our efforts to advance cultural diversity in the faculty, staff and student body will lead by example. Our own diversity agenda is one of our biggest challenges now, and many people rightfully are monitoring our progress closely. We need to get on with that task as we work with the business community to build a better Central Florida.

Despite the many other issues involved, and the negative financial impact this situation has already had, we have to finally remember why we are here. Simply put, we are here to educate students. They are the ones who are either helped or hurt by whatever decision we make. My commitment is to aggressively seek support for them, just as it is to bolster support for the faculty. These funds will help a significant number of students get an education who otherwise would not be likely to do so, or at least not here. We owe them that opportunity, secure in the knowledge that education is the best weapon against racism, sexism and other social ills.

I ask for your support as we move forward. The debate is healthy, and reflective of a university that is maturing rapidly. The mere fact that we can deal openly with it affirms the values for which the institution stands. The subject will stay with us as we get on with our other work.