

3715 Saint Germaine Court
Louisville, KY 40207
June 14, 2016

Dear

As a member of the Gay and Lesbian Alumni of Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College (GALA ND/SMC) organization I would like to ask that you please consider taking necessary action to have our organization officially recognized by the Notre Dame Alumni Association for which you are an Alumni Board member. It has been 2 years since GALA submitted its request for formal recognition, and even though conversations have been on-going we are still awaiting a formal response to this application for recognition.

I wanted to write to you personally today to introduce myself as a proud Notre Dame graduate (MA 1982) who also happens to have lived my last 35 years as an openly gay Catholic. You might also be interested to know that I was the named plaintiff in the Bourke vs. Beshear, Kentucky lawsuit ruled upon June 26, 2015 by the U.S. Supreme Court that helped establish nationwide Marriage Equality.

My husband, Michael DeLeon, and I met in March 1983 at the University of Kentucky and recently celebrated 34 years together. We were legally married in Canada in 2004, but it was not until June 2015 that our SCOTUS decision required our home state of Kentucky to recognize our marriage.

Michael and I have been openly gay and actively practicing our Catholic faith for all of our 34 years together. For the last 28 years we have been members of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Louisville Kentucky where we have served on Parish Council, Worship Committee, Coordinated the Communion Ministry, been Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders, soccer coach, and so much more.

We have two adopted children, Isaiah (age 18) and Isabella (age 17). Our children have attended Catholic schools for all of their lives. Our son just graduated from Trinity High School and our daughter is a rising Senior at Sacred Heart Academy. All that is just to provide some background about my family, so that hopefully you can appreciate that it is quite possible to be both openly gay, married and still an active and fully functioning member of the Catholic Church. In fact, much to our surprise, the National Catholic Reporter also named my husband and me Persons of the Year last year.

My family has been returning to campus for football games at Notre Dame for many years, but in June of 2015 I was asked to return to campus for Reunion Weekend so I could participate in a panel talking about my experience as a gay student at Notre Dame in the early 1980s. The Notre Dame experience was quite pleasant for me, both my time there as a student, and my opportunity to share these experiences with the audience who attended the Reunion session.

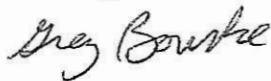
However, it was personally disturbing for me to hear many in the audience express so much frustration with the slow pace at which Notre Dame is moving toward welcoming, including and protecting LGBT people as students, faculty, staff, and especially as alumni. So much anger, angst and again frustration was expressed. In my world, and in our parish where my family is cherished and welcomed, this was so uncomfortable for me to listen to so many people who are upset by Notre Dame's unwillingness to keep pace with societal changes as they relate to LGBT equality and inclusion. I just got back from speaking on panel at Reunion again this (2016) year, and it was the same thing all over again.

I realize and do appreciate that the ND administration has made recent efforts to address these changes, by finally allowing the PRISM ND organization the opportunity to lay a foundation for serving the LGBTQ community on campus.

However, you should be aware that in a survey of the top 20 colleges (as defined by US News and World Report) ND was one of only 2 schools that did not have a formal relationship with a LGBT alumni affinity group. As a graduate of ND, and also the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville, I can tell you that Notre Dame greatly trails even these conservative southern institutions both in terms of providing LGBT student services and accommodating LGBT Alumni. I am Treasurer and a very active member of the UofL LGBT Alumni Council, which has received incredible support from the University and especially President James Ramsay who has hosted formal gatherings for us at his home the last two years. My husband and I also recently became founding board members of the University of Kentucky LGBT Alumni Network which has already been recognized by the UK Alumni Association.

The University of Notre Dame holds a very special place in my heart, and I hope you can tell from this letter that I am a proud and lifelong Catholic who cherishes my faith and faith tradition. Once again, I would like to call upon you in your role with NDAA to do whatever you can to have our GALA ND/SMC group officially recognized and included as part of the already broad and diverse collection alumni groups. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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