

PROJECT SYCAMORE

ALUMNI PRESERVING NOTRE DAME'S CATHOLIC IDENTITY

William H. Dempsey
President
Joseph A. Reich, Jr.
Vice President
George L. Heidkamp
Secretary/Treasurer

Directors
Richard V. Allen
Dr. Daniel M. Boland
Timothy M. Dempsey
Dr. John A. Gueguen, Jr.
Dr. Susan Biddle Shearer

September 28, 2007

Rev. John I. Jenkins, CSC
President
University of Notre Dame
Main Building
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

Dear Father Jenkins:

I write on behalf of the Officers and Directors of Project Sycamore because of our concern over this statement by Father Robert Sullivan in *The Irish Rover*: “[T]he goal of the University is to annually exceed 50 per cent in the hiring of instructional faculty.”

This goal seems to us inadequate to insure fulfillment of the Mission Statement requirement that there be the “continuing presence” of a “predominant number of Catholic intellectuals” on the faculty. Because of the heavy concentration of Catholics retiring, it seems self-evident that hiring at a rate just exceeding 50 per cent would continue to drive Catholic representation down. Last year’s slim arithmetical majority of 53 per cent, which included dissident and heterodox Catholics, would soon be lost. Accordingly, so, too, would be the University’s claim to Catholic identity that, the Mission Statement declares, “depends upon” this Catholic presence.

Nor would the decline be shallow and short. Rather, it would be steep and sustained, so much so that the ultimate recapture of a majority would be unachievable. We base this conclusion on an analysis of the historical information provided to us by the University. Our projections show that, even assuming the goals were always met, hiring Catholics at a rate of just over 50 per cent would steadily erode Catholic representation to near 40 per cent in ten years and to still lower levels thereafter. To expect an upturn after so much ground has been lost would, we believe, be simply unrealistic.

While assumptions must necessarily be made, the experience of the College of Arts and Letters over a recent seven-year period in which Catholics were hired at a 50-55 per cent rate provides a solid basis for testing our assumptions. Our conclusions are supported also by the fact that the University did not respond to our previous invitation to correct, if necessary, our estimate that a hiring rate of more than 60 per cent would be required to maintain a slender Catholic majority on the faculty.

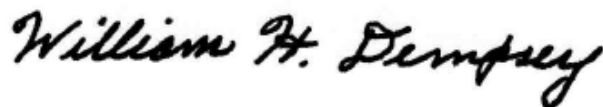
As we have stated in previous correspondence with you and in accordance with your initial request to us, we wish to be as sure as possible about the facts we adduce, and accordingly we would welcome the opportunity to explain in detail to you representatives the basis for our conclusions and to examine with them all data relating to a majority hiring policy.

Our hope, however, is that this in fact is not to be the policy, but that instead one insuring compliance with the Mission Statement will be adopted. That hope is supported by your endorsement of the Mission Statement requirement during your recent address to the faculty.

There is yet another unsettling aspect of Father Sullivan's interview, namely, his declining to disclose the results of last year's hiring except in general terms. In particular, he did not say whether the slim Catholic majority has become smaller or larger or has remained the same. We hope these data, together with other information pertinent to the Mission Statement, will be revealed, as they have been in the past, inasmuch as the University declares to alumni, parents, students, and donors that its Catholic identity "depends upon" the Catholic composition of its faculty. With respect, we respectfully suggest that transparency is essential when such important representations are made and when a Catholic majority is so close to being lost.

We applaud your continued emphasis upon mission-centered hiring and upon arresting the precipitous decline in Catholic representation on the faculty, and we do not underestimate the problems you face. They are the result of hiring practices that have too often and for too long emphasized secular reputation over Catholic identity. The challenge is now much greater than it would have been years ago. If decisive action is not taken now, it will surely be too late.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William H. Dempsey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

William H. Dempsey
President