



April 16, 2019

Office of the President
Board of Trustees
The University of Tulsa
800 S. Tucker Drive
Tulsa, OK 74104

Dear Drs. Clancy and Levit, and the University of Tulsa Board of Trustees,

I write to you to convey my shock and disappointment at the University of Tulsa leadership's recently announced intent to terminate and/or substantially compromise a host of programs and degrees that for years have been standard-bearers of the university's scholarly and creative integrity.

The announced changes are predicated on numbers assembled in a short span of time, and without consideration of the experiences, desires, and wisdom of individuals who comprise the institution—in particular, the ones who will be most affected by the changes. There is a troubling lack of transparency in the processes preceding this announcement.

It strikes me as unlikely that these changes square with the administration's declared support of equity, diversity and inclusion. What percentage of TU's enrolled women, ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBTQ+ students will be affected by these program cuts, in comparison to its mainstream white male population? How can this school even pretend to support diversity as it nixes its Native American Law program?

I attended TU as a Presidential Merit Scholar and member of the Honors Program, 1999-2003, and graduated as a member of both the Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi honors societies. TU, as I knew it, was a place where students learned to live an examined life. It was a place where the humanities (art, theatre, music, literature, history, philosophy, religion, to name a few) were cherished, and where discourse between these and other programs (including STEM programs so beloved by current university administrations) flourished to everyone's collective benefit—particularly in TU's Honors program. My direct access to a rich diversity of serious scholarship was absolutely formative, and essential in my achieving a successful career in academia.

The changes to be enacted will lay this special dynamic to waste: overloaded faculty will teach overloaded classes. Faculty research will atrophy, and why not? There will be few if any majors needing to imprint on good research methods, anyway. The faculty who can leave will leave. Those who stay will be demoralized. The decline in quality of experience for minors and Gen Ed box-checkers will justify still more cuts.

TU was and still is a private school. In my experience, it was a place where students could learn how to live responsibly, ethically, and thoughtfully with their privilege, be it a circumstance of their birth or acquired through endeavor. It saddens me to think that someone would pay \$40,000+/year for an education at an institution that has dismantled its engines for cultural literacy, intellectual rigor, and deep inquiry into the human condition.

I am truly disappointed for my mentors who still call TU their academic home, and for the students who will be deprived of the rare and valuable experience of working with them. As an alumnus who has never been anything but deeply grateful for his education at the University of Tulsa, I implore you to reconsider this plan. Bring the affected parties into the review, the strategizing, and the implementation. As stewards of this university, you are in a position to sustain a rich legacy. I hope that you see fit to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S King', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam King

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MFA, 2005, Indiana University

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