

May 9, 2008

Chancellor Mark Wrighton
1 Brookings Drive
Campus Box 1192
St. Louis, MO 63130

Dear Chancellor Wrighton:

As the undergraduate members of the Board of Trustees Honorary Degree Committee, we want to express our disappointment with the choice to award Phyllis Schlafly an honorary degree at the 2008 commencement ceremony. The selection process was ineffective in providing a complete picture of the nominees, and the environment was hostile to dissent. We recognize our role in representing our peers, and we accept partial responsibility for the insufficient scrutiny of all nominees. However, throughout the two meetings of the Honorary Degree Committee and discussion of Ms. Schlafly, her prejudice views were never brought to light.

The committee's recommendation of Ms. Schlafly was based on a complicated voting system. Voting occurred in two stages. In our first meeting, we ranked our preferences from approximately thirty names. The nominees were ranked based on the first balloting, and the top five were collected in a slate. We voted yes or no on the entire slate. An objection by one student was met with hostile opposition. The block of five names was then approved unanimously. We implore you to clarify the University's official statement on the nomination Ms. Schlafly. The explanation of the selection process suggests a unanimous vote on each nominee and disregards the balloting process. It endorses the widely held misconception that every member of the committee voted in favor of Ms. Schlafly.

Ms. Schlafly's views, specifically those opposing a woman's place in academia, are contradictory to the mission of Washington University and inappropriate for recognition at the commencement ceremony. We believe the selection of Phyllis Schlafly was a mistake. The undersigned students have reversed their decisions and urge you to do the same.

Sincerely,

The undergraduate members of the Board of Trustees Honorary Degree Committee

Hui Amy Chen
Amelia D. Keiser
Neil K. Patel
Aaron Robinson
Rachel L. Tucker