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The Duquesne University decision to cancel advertising by Planned Parenthood has engendered considerable confusion concerning the relationship between the University and its radio station, WDUQ.

As President of Duquesne University from 1988 through 2001, not only did I never interfere with the reporting of any news event by WDUQ; the thought of any kind of interference never crossed my mind. Any such interference would have constituted a misrepresentation to the public and a violation of the most basic journalistic standards. Recent action by my successor is totally consistent with these views.

Since 2001, public television and public radio have increased and enlarged their recognition of corporate supporters that are now commonly seen and heard through "commercials." While public radio "underwriter" commercials are limited in time and content, a commercial by any other name is still a commercial.

Like any other commercial, they are not "news." The advertisers pay a fee to have the public station remind the viewer or listener of the advertiser's products or services. Public or commercial stations may choose their advertisers.

Even newspapers and other media that claim value neutrality have been known to refuse to run certain kinds of advertisements. Duquesne University has never claimed value neutrality.

The Duquesne University Community is blessed to have the widest diversity of backgrounds, races, beliefs and points of view among its student body, faculty, alumni and supporters. We have complete respect for the dignity and beliefs of every person. We welcome all, exclude none and we do not proselytize; but there should never be any doubt about our identity. We are a Roman Catholic University that subscribes to the teaching of the Magisterium of our Church. The identity of the University is clearly set forth in its Mission Statement that expressly values diversity. Many students from various faiths and different value orientations come to Duquesne because we announce and live our identity.

We serve God by serving students in a University that pursues academic excellence with a profound concern for moral and spiritual values in the charism of the Roman Catholic Congregation of the Holy Spirit. The University was created by the priests and brothers of that Congregation who continue to serve and preserve the University in the Spirit that gives life.

While WDUQ operates its news department independently of the University, the University is identified on the air and otherwise with the station. The station provides a magnificent service to the region and the University is pleased to provide it. Announcing services provided by underwriting organizations facilitates and encourages the use of such services. To take payments from an organization for facilitating services diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Church would be a perversion of our identity. We respect the rights of others to support Planned Parenthood. We ask only that our right to respect life in the womb is also respected.

Could the University justify the actual Planned Parenthood commercial aired on WDUQ as not contrary to Church teaching because the commercial

avoided espousing abortion and focused on other services? Any attempt to justify the commercials on this basis would be double lie-- a perversion of both the University identity and the Planned Parenthood identity. As those ads were heard, news stories reported Planned Parenthood's opening still another of its hundreds of clinics providing abortions, this time one of the largest in the United States in Aurora, Illinois. A truthful WDUQ ad would require a disclaimer. For example, "Duquesne University supports education in abstinence but deems abortion to be the unjustified killing of a human being." Would Planned Parenthood continue its support of WDUQ if that statement had been included? The question scarcely survives its statement. No one would expect it to continue its support of a statement contradicting its own beliefs. Neither should the University be expected to support services that contradict its beliefs by implicitly endorsing the supplier of such services.

If there is a news story about Planned Parenthood reported on NPR, Duquesne University would never think of censoring such news. Duquesne does not and should not control NPR news or local news on WDUQ. With respect to any generally reported news including negative news about priests or others connected with the Catholic Church, Duquesne University would not think of censoring such news or any other news on its radio station. Again, however, there is a difference between news and commercials. The University cannot maintain its identity in accordance with the teachings of the Church while simultaneously accepting fees for facilitating services that violate those teachings. It was a mistake to accept those fees and President Dougherty's decision to return them was clearly correct. Extrapolating this correct and necessary action to a suggestion that the University might next decide to tamper with national or local news heard on WDUQ is both fallacious and unfair.

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