

Letter of complaint about *Darwin or Design*.

Dear Dr. Genshaft:

My spouse, a professor in the College [REDACTED], recently received a memorandum via USF mail regarding the upcoming "Darwin or Design" presentation. The memorandum was signed by USF's [REDACTED].

I am not formally a member of the USF community. Nevertheless, I have an important stake in that community, and I strongly support the University's efforts in recent years to build its research programs and advance USF's standing in academia.

Here are the serious concerns I have with the "Darwin or Design" memo:

1. The memo creates the impression that this event is underwritten by USF or is supported by a significant number of its faculty.
2. The memo's authors do not clearly state their positions or their biases with respect to the topic of the memo.
3. The memo suggests that its authors--all affiliated with USF and in possession of advanced degrees--either do not understand the difference between science and philosophy, or feel that advancing the "Intelligent Design" agenda is more important than maintaining USF's scientific integrity.

I won't attempt to rehash the entire history of the ID movement here, but I will point out that the memorandum gets it dead wrong from its very first sentence:

"One of the most controversial movements to arise on university campuses recently, led by scientists in a variety of disciplines, is Intelligent Design (ID)."

In fact, as Republican judicial appointee John Jones pointed out in his landmark *Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District* decision, the ID movement is neither a recent phenomenon nor one that has ever been "led" by scientists (1). The "intelligent designer" posited by ID adherents is indistinguishable from God in any practical sense, and while this does not necessarily mean that ID is wrong, it does mean that ID is not science.

It is unfortunate for the USF community that the "Darwin or Design" event this Friday will feature no eminent scientists that support Darwin's side of the argument. Such scientists would not be difficult to find. Thus, my suggestion to USF is twofold: first, remind the authors of this memorandum that transparent communication and accurate, referenced writing are fundamental to the advance of real science. Second, make plans for an event at the Sun Dome to educate the public about our present understanding of the scientific theory of Evolution. The USF community deserves better than the one-sided pseudoscience that will likely be on display this Friday evening.

(1) Ruling, *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, Case No. 04cv2688. December 20, 2005, p. 18:

"ID [and related teachings] are Creationist, Religious Strategies that Evolved from Earlier Forms of Creationism."