



## THE SOCIETY OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE CAMPANILE

Fellow Knights,

The Provost, speaking at the recent Knights' Dinner, spoke of our society's many contributions to College and student life. Such praise from the Provost is welcomed. And warranted as, over our long history, the Knights has provided much support and encouragement for College's numerous sports clubs and related societies. This includes many initiatives from the Knights in support of various women's sports clubs in College as well as our sister society the all-female Heraeans. The Provost is aware, through past communications from both myself and our President Ben Arrowsmith, of these initiatives and I have reiterated to the Provost that such support from the Knights will continue in future to College sports clubs and to the Heraeans.

Forcefully reiterated at the recent Knights AGM were two relevant points: 1) the criteria for election to the Knights remain high-level involvement in sport at College, active participation in College sports club administration and social skills to welcome sporting visitors to College; and 2) that 'hazing' (a term denoting bullying and/or humiliation at initiation ceremonies) has no place, has had no place and will have no place in the Knights.

In his recent article, prompted by the controversy created by the University Times, the Provost eloquently supported freedom of the press and fearless journalism. The benefits deriving, not only in College but in wider society, from such press freedom and fearlessness are manifold and so, of course, the Knights fully endorses the sentiments expressed by the Provost.

But with the privileges, protections and power of press freedom goes the duty to act responsibly. Unfortunately, the University Times and its Editor have not so acted and it is their irresponsible behaviour, rather than constraints upon them, that has created this regrettable controversy. So press freedom is not the issue, though some self-interested parties have sought to suggest otherwise, and I am not aware of even a single call to restrict the press freedom of any College newspaper.

This controversy is regrettable for all touched by it. It is regrettable for those student Knights about whom allegations were published that subsequent College investigations determined were without foundation. It is regrettable that the Knights society has to publicly rebut ludicrous allegations, lacking an iota of substance, of bullying and/or humiliation. It is certainly, I know, considered most regrettable by College. And it is regrettable for the University Times which – as a consequence of its improper and disturbing trespass, invasion of privacy, and bugging – finds itself subject to a student referendum. (A referendum which, contrary to what some have suggested, has nothing to do with



the Knights.) All of this might have been avoided if more attention had been given to the responsibilities attendant on the privileges of press freedom.

It is to be hoped that, even at this late stage, the University Times might seek to defuse this controversy by retracting its unfounded allegations and apologising for its improper behaviours. Just as the student Knights involved in an “unauthorised party” did so when they took responsibility for their actions and apologised to College.

Regards,

Peter Ledbetter

Master

10<sup>th</sup> April 2019