Attention: Assignment Editors

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ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS

An unusual and poignant graduation story has unfolded at the University of San Diego.

The diploma awarded to 22-year-old business major Mark Klingler of Pacific Beach had special significance for him and his family. Two years ago, Mark was diagnosed with lymphoma and began undergoing treatment. In April of this year, just two months short of graduation, Mark's condition worsened to the point where he was forced to leave school.

After consultation with Mark's professors at the School of Business Administration, Dean James M. Burns decided to award Mark his bachelor's degree as scheduled this year. Last Friday, just two days before USD's May 26 Undergraduate Commencement, a group of 15 of Mark's classmates and Sigma Chi fraternity brothers surprised him in his room in Mercy Hospital -- and handed him his diploma.

The impromptu commencement was held in the presence of Mark's mother, Madeline Klingler, his grandmother, Catherine Klingler, and his two brothers, Tod and Guy Klingler. "Mark was heavily sedated to help ease his pain," Tod recalls, "but you could tell he was pretty happy."

Mark Klingler passed away at Mercy Hospital during the evening of Tuesday, May 28. His funeral will take place in Immaculata Church on the USD campus Friday, May 31, at 11 a.m., followed by burial at Holy Cross Cemetery. His family has asked that contributions in his memory be made to the University.

The Klingler family and USD faculty members who knew Mark have agreed to be available for interviews. For further information, please contact Kate Callen, 260-4682.