

November 8, 2011

Mark F. Dalton Chairman Vanderbilt University Board of Trust 305 Kirkland Hall
Nashville, TN 37240

Chairman Dalton and Members of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust:

We, as directors of parachurch ministries at Vanderbilt, are writing today to invite your active participation in the ongoing dialogue about the future of religious groups on campus. We love the Vanderbilt campus community and value its rich diversity. In order to preserve a campus dialogue that welcomes diverse ideologies and perspectives, student groups (including religious groups) need to be allowed to maintain their unique identities. The distinct messages of religious groups must be preserved. If the nondiscrimination clause is applied to prohibit religious groups from ensuring that their student leaders share the religious viewpoint of their group, unpopular or minority religious viewpoints could be diminished or suppressed. We are concerned that this application of the non-discrimination policy would therefore stifle religious diversity.

We are committed to all student organizations at Vanderbilt being open to any student who desires membership. However, most student groups on campus are allowed to have basic requirements of their student leadership teams, such as a commitment to and belief in the purpose and mission of the group. Yet, due to the enforcement of the current non-discrimination policy, religious groups would not be able to have such common sense requirements for their leaders since the purpose and mission of most religious groups are rooted in our doctrinal beliefs and thus, by definition, religiously distinctive. **Out of a desire for fairness and preservation of diverse viewpoints**, we ask that Vanderbilt allow our organizations to ensure that student leaders uphold our mission and purpose.

Despite the University's assessment that few religious groups are out of compliance with the nondiscrimination policy, **all of our groups do not comply with this policy in practice**. We believe doctrinal requirements for our leaders protect and preserve authentic religious identity and community coherence and are a necessary component of a vibrant and dynamic religious community. (See enclosures for alternative solutions reached by other universities.)

A student leadership team can determine whether a group thrives or withers. We would like to be able to ensure that our leaders are committed to our purpose and mission so that we can continue to effectively contribute to the rich religious diversity that currently exists on this campus. We respectfully call upon the Board of Trust to consider a policy that would allow religious groups to protect their identity by having leadership who express a commitment to the religious beliefs of their respective groups.

Sincerely

SB
Beth Randolph Fabelle
Campus Crusade for Christ

DB
The Navigators

[Signature]
Fellowship of Christian Athletes

[Signature]
Graduate Christian Fellowship

[Signature]
Bridges International

[Signature]
Medical Christian Fellowship
(formerly Medical Campus Outreach)

David C. Henderson
Beth Randolph Fabelle (VU '93)

David Bachman (VU '05)

Lance Brown

Tish Harrison Warren

DAVID MENKEN

Brian Pugh

Enclosures: 2

A Policy Alternative

The Ohio State University developed a policy that recognizes the importance of allowing religious groups the same privilege given to other student groups of selecting leaders that agree with their mission and purpose. For religious groups, those beliefs are grounded in religion, thereby relating to the nondiscrimination categories. Other groups also have beliefs that are also strongly held, but they are not categorized as religious.

The following paragraphs are included in The Ohio State University's "Constitution and By-Laws Guidelines for Student Organizations", found at http://ohiounion.osu.edu/posts/documents/doc_522011_104241354.pdf. Under this policy The Ohio State University has recognized a wide array of student groups and there have been no problems on campus.

“[Article I] Section 3 - Non-Discrimination Policy: All student organizations desiring to benefit from registered student organization status with The Ohio State University must include in their constitution a non-discrimination policy statement that accords with the Student Organization Registration Guidelines. Such statement will generally be at least as broad as the University's Non-Discrimination policy statement. Where applicable, a student organization may adopt a statement that reflects its eligibility criteria for Student Officers.

An example of an acceptable non-discrimination policy statement is as follows:

This organization and its members shall not discriminate against any individual (s) for reasons of age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.”

“Article VI – Method of Selecting and/or Removing Officers and Members.

The constitution should describe the process by which officers and members are selected. A student organization formed to foster or affirm the sincerely held religious beliefs of its members may adopt eligibility criteria for its officers that are consistent with those beliefs. General members and elected or appointed leaders should be expected to meet certain standards and conduct themselves in a way that reflects well on the organization. In the event that a member or leader does not meet those expectations, the organization should have procedures in place for objectively considering the member's or leader's probationary membership status or removal from the organization. The process described in the constitution should specify which body conducts this review and ultimately makes the decision. It should be noted that the organization's non-discrimination policy should protect members from removal based on those listed statuses.”

University of Florida's Policy (<https://www.union.ufl.edu/involvement/index.asp>)

Student Organization Registration Policy Update

The University of Florida has modified its policies relating to the registration of religious student groups as Registered Student Organizations (RSOs). The modification was made to accommodate any student group whose religious mission requires its membership to share the organization's religious beliefs, while at the same time continuing to protect the University's nondiscriminatory educational program.

More than 760 student organizations covering a wide variety of interests are registered at the University. UF has always welcomed registration of religious organizations. More than 60 religious student organizations, of which about 48 are Christian, are registered as RSOs at UF.

The University considers participation in registered student organizations to be an important educational opportunity for all of our students. The University applies its nondiscrimination in membership policy to registered student organizations to ensure that these important learning opportunities are not denied to any student due to discrimination based on race, sex, religion or certain other prohibited bases.

A small number of religious student groups have expressed a religious need to ensure that all of their members share the religious beliefs of the organization.

To the greatest extent possible-while fulfilling our nondiscriminatory educational mission and complying with the law-the University wants to be sure that a full range of religious student organizations feel just as free to register as any other type of student organization. This ensures that all of our students will find meaningful educational opportunities to participate in registered student organizations.

As we are committed to serving all of our students well, the University has carefully considered how to address the concerns expressed by some religious student groups and individuals without compromising our educational program. After doing so, the University has made the decision to modify its nondiscrimination policy as follows: "Student organizations that wish to register with the Center for Student Activities and Involvement (CSAI) must agree that they will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, or veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act.

A student organization whose primary purpose is religious will not be denied registration as a Registered Student Organization on the ground that it limits membership or leadership positions to students who share the religious beliefs of the organization. The University has determined that this accommodation of religious belief does not violate its nondiscrimination policy."This modification of the University's registration policy recognizes a meaningful distinction between sincerely held current religious beliefs (which may be considered in selecting members or leaders of religious RSOs)-and religious or other status (e.g., religion of birth or historical affiliation). The modification takes effect immediately and is now reflected in the CSAI's Handbook of Student Activities as well as its registration and constitution guidelines and Web site. A letter has

been sent to each religious student group that has recently sought and not received registration to ensure that it is aware of the modification and to invite its registration.