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The campus crusade against Christ (revisited)

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I would urge everyone reading this column, whether they are a Christian, a conservative, or simply a firm believer in our constitutional democracy to do two things without delay. First, read every word of this editorial carefully. Second, take the time to e-mail Chancellor James Moeser (james_moeser@unc.edu) demanding appropriate personnel changes necessary to end the unconstitutional assault on religious organizations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

I first wrote about the issue of anti-Christian bigotry on college campuses last July in an editorial entitled "The Campus Crusade Against Christ." The editorial attempted to draw attention to the hypocrisy of campus liberals who combat bigotry against certain groups while actually promoting bigotry against Christians. Despite using a somewhat humorous approach, my commentary was poorly received by many of my "open-minded" colleagues.

Early in January, I learned about an administrative threat to de-recognize InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at UNC-Chapel Hill. This threat, which would have effectively banned the student group from campus, was the result of their requirement that group officers subscribe to orthodox Christian principles. In other words, they would be allowed to remain on campus if they would only abandon their core beliefs and accept the official religion of UNC-Chapel Hill which is, of course, any religion which approves of homosexual conduct.

As a result of negative publicity generated by the indispensable Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (<http://www.thefire.org/>), the threat against IVCF was rescinded in a letter written by Chancellor Moeser. In the letter, Moeser said that the conflict between the school's diversity policies and the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of religion was "not a simple matter."

Actually, it is a very simple matter. The First Amendment (found in the United States Constitution) trumps the "diversity policies" found in the handbooks of state-funded institutions of higher learning. Most of us learned this simple principle in our high school civics classes. Of course, university administrators often pretend that they don't

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understand basic principles that interfere with their efforts to promote "diversity" and "multi-culturalism."

After the threat against IVCF was rescinded, Wilmington attorney Charlton Allen informed me that the Daily Tar Heel reported over a dozen other threats of de-recognition had been issued to various student groups at UNC-CH. After filing a public records request, we obtained copies of the letters from Interim University Counsel Glenn George. Predictably, the threatening letters were overwhelmingly directed to Christian groups engaging in such transgressions as asking members to "model an appropriate Christian character" and hailing the importance of "discovering . . . what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ . . ." Allen and I summarized those letters in an [editorial](#) written in mid-January for Breakpoint Online.

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Shortly thereafter, I made a public records request to UNC-CH asking for any similar letters which may have been written over the last ten years. As a result of substantial (and, in my view, unnecessary) delays in processing my request, I was forced seek help from Allen in getting the university to turn over the information. After a delay of over two months, we were successful.

Upon receipt of the requested documents it became apparent that most of them were letters written after we made our request. Specifically, they were mostly requests for non-Christian student groups to amend their constitutions in order to comply with diversity requirements. For example, one group was asked to change its constitution to read "he/she" in places where it previously read "he" or "she." This may seem trivial to some. However, I interpreted it as effort to mask a pattern of anti-Christian bias by creating hundreds of documents unrelated to interference with the expression of Christian values.

After sifting through 1167 documents (mostly e-mails), we made a number of disturbing discoveries. They are summarized below:

- In the Fall of 1995, The Muslim Student Association (MSA) was denied official recognition by the UNC Office of Student Activities for refusing to allow non-Muslims to hold office in the group. The university later reversed its decision in a letter to MSA which cautioned that "assuming there will be no problems with your organization . . . recognition will extend until September 30, 1996." The letter further cautioned the MSA that "it is critical that you inform the Office of Student Activities about changes within your organization" and that "failure to do so will result in loss of recognition."
- On November 14, 1995, Jonathan Curtis, Assistant Director of Student Activities, wrote the University Counsel asking whether an implied requirement that IVCF members must be Christians conflicts with university diversity requirements.
- On November 29, 2002, a member of the national Board of Directors of the Alpha Iota Omega Christian Fraternity complained to the university about its request that the fraternity amend its constitution to allow non-Christians to join. Internal memoranda indicate that the organization later capitulated.
- On the same day, Alpha Epsilon Omega Sorority notified the university that they were not willing to amend their constitution to permit homosexuals and members of different religions to join their Christian sorority. Three days later, Jonathan Curtis responded saying, "I will send a letter to the chapter by United States Postal Service informing you of the termination of (your) official recognition . . ."
- On December 7, 2002, the university announced that UNC law professor Glenn George

would take over as Interim University Counsel in January of 2003.

- On December 10, 2002, Jonathan Curtis wrote 17 letters threatening UNC student groups with de-recognition. Thirteen letters were to religious groups. Twelve were Christian organizations.
- On January 6, 2003, Dean Bresciani, Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, wrote an e-mail to Jonathan Curtis asking for a copy of "the funding history for the 17 'bad boys'." In a "high importance" e-mail, Curtis wrote to SGA officers to formally advise them "regarding the possibility of freezing the funds of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship based on the recent issues raised about their governance." The issue was their insistence that IVCF officers subscribe to orthodox Christian principles.
- On January 28, 2003, Young Life was told to change their constitution to refer to its membership as a "community supporting Christianity" instead of "a community of adult Christians."
- On the same day, Jonathan Curtis wrote the Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity to thank them for amending their constitution so that they no longer described themselves as an organization which "believes in God."
- On January 29, 2003, the Lutheran Campus Ministry was told to change their constitution so that it no longer referred to its membership as a "Christian Community" but, instead, as a "Christ-centered community." Phi Beta Chi, a Lutheran sorority, was also given a similar mandate.

Sadly, the above list of unconstitutional demands is not exhaustive. Sadder still, the documents indicate that these demands were issued with both the knowledge and approval of the university's top administrators. It is hard to believe that UNC administrators are so profoundly ignorant of the Constitution that they do not recognize the illegality of their actions. It is more likely that they are simply political activists feigning ignorance of the Constitution in the name of "diversity."

Either way, the solution is clear. The nation's oldest public institution of higher learning needs new leadership.

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