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Time: 10:21 AM, Tuesday, December 20, 2005

The Nation

California State University 2, Christianity 0

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December 20, 2005

(CNSNews.com) - For the second time in two weeks, Christianity is on the losing end of a decision made by officials from the California State University system. Some students from Cal State at San Bernardino have been told that forming a Christian group is "not permissible" at the university because it restricts membership based on religious beliefs and sexual orientation.

Last week, an administrator from Cal State at Sacramento banned decorations pertaining to Christmas and the 4th of July, among other holidays, from her office because, she said, they represented "religious discrimination" and "ethnic insensitivity."

In the San Bernardino case, the Christian Student Association (CSA) proposed a constitution in order to be recognized by Cal State officials. In it, the CSA agreed to accept the school's demands about not discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender and physical disability, but rejected non-discrimination requirements regarding religious beliefs and sexual orientation.

The student group insisted that members "must be Christians who have professed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." It added that membership could be revoked "for misconduct or violation of the statement of faith," including "historical Christian heresy [and] engaging in sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage."

All students were invited to attend group meetings and events without being members, according to the constitution, but only members could vote on group policy.

But in an Oct. 3 memo to the CSA's Ryan Sorba, Cal State San Bernadino student affairs director Christine Hansen wrote that the student group "could not discriminate against potential members because of their status as a non-Christian or as a homosexual."

Hansen told **Cybercast News Service** that the university does recognize several religious clubs, including the Jewish group Hillel and "a couple other sort of non-denominational Christian groups besides the one that Mr. Sorba is trying to start." But she said Sorba's

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proposal violated university and state policies.

Hansen's memo to Sorba on Nov. 2 explained the violation of those policies and how her enforcement of the rules were "not a matter of my opinion ...

"[I]t's a matter of my responsibilities as the director to uphold Title V," Hansen wrote to Sorba, referring to the California law that requires the non-discrimination clause in student group constitutions.

Greg Lukianoff, the director of legal and public advocacy for the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), said the CSA had "the right to ensure that their members share their central beliefs." FIRE, a legal group that defends free speech on college campuses, is urging Cal State to recognize the group.

"The [United States] Constitution ensures that Muslim groups are free to be Muslim, Buddhist groups are free to be Buddhist, and Christian groups are free to be Christian," Lukianoff said, "even if the principles they express run counter to the official viewpoints of unconstitutional policies of state universities."

Last week, Patricia Sonntag, director of the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities for Cal State at Sacramento, sent an email to members of her staff pertaining to Christian-dominated holiday decorations from the office.

The memo named Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Valentine's Day, the 4th of July, St. Patrick's Day and Easter as the most offensive holidays, but Sonntag said those celebrations are "off the top of the list," implying that there would be others.

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