



SEARCH

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DAILY

- Front Page
- Nation/Politics
- Election 2000
- World
- Commentary
- Opinion-Editorial
- Metropolitan
- Sports
- Business
- Technology
- Entertainment
- Culture
- Links
- Weather

WEEKLY

- Business Times
- Family Times
- Auto Weekend
- Home Guide
- Access Magazine
- Nat'l Weekly Edition

MARKETPLACE

- Classifieds
- Business Directory
- Int'l Special Reports
- Advertiser Index

## Tufts reinstates Christian group spurning gay as leader

By Andrea Billups  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A Christian student group at Massachusetts' Tufts University that was banned from meeting on campus and stripped of its funding by the student judiciary for refusing to select a lesbian member for a leadership position has been reinstated.

Members of the Tufts Committee on Student Life, a 12-member faculty/student panel voted unanimously to overturn a ruling by the Tufts Community Union Judiciary, which had revoked the status and funding of the 70-member Tufts Christian Fellowship as an officially recognized student group.

"We are delighted and relieved that the TCF does not have to seek shelter in catacombs beneath the Tufts campus," said Thor Halvorssen, executive director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a Philadelphia-based campus liberty organization that had organized a campaign to support the Christian students.

"This is a victory for everyone who values genuine pluralism," he said.

In announcing its decision yesterday, the student-life committee at the Medford, Mass., private school said the student judiciary "failed to follow proper procedure in considering the discrimination case against TCF."

Tufts administrators declined to comment on the ruling or the case, pending its outcome. The student-life committee's ruling did not address the issues of the case, which will be returned to the student judiciary for reconsideration in the fall semester under a newly elected student judiciary, administrators said in a prepared statement.

Leaders of the evangelical Christian group, who had appealed the decision and were considering legal action, lost their status as an officially recognized student organization

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last month after they refused to offer junior Julie Catalano, who is homosexual, a leadership role. While they welcome her as a member, they said her sexual status violated teachings of the Bible, making her unfit to lead the nondenominational group.

Miss Catalano, who could not be reached for comment yesterday, is openly lesbian and was a member of the Christian group for three years before leaving in March. She filed a complaint with the student judiciary, saying the actions violated the school's nondiscrimination code on sexual orientation.

Members of the Christian group and their supporters argued that several other religious groups on campus, including Muslim and Jewish organizations, also followed similar beliefs on homosexuality. To deny the Christian fellowship official recognition and revoke university funding would be singling them out inappropriately because their deeply held religious beliefs were not politically correct, they said.

Curtis Chang, 31, an affiliate minister at Tufts who works for the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a national campus ministry that sponsors the fellowship, was overjoyed yesterday at the outcome of the appeal.

"We feel like this is a decisive statement by Tufts that they will protect religious liberty on campus," Mr. Chang said. "I don't feel like this is just a victory for us, but a victory for Tufts itself. It has now declared that it will welcome Christians on this campus."

Mr. Chang and Mr. Halvorssen said they hope the committee's ruling will help student groups at four other schools who have been ousted over their beliefs about homosexuality. Those schools include Middlebury College in Vermont, Whitman College in Oregon, Grinnell College in Iowa, and Williams College in Massachusetts.

"Basically, we've identified what has been a movement that has sought to eradicate any opposition to the current political climate," Mr. Chang said.



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