



# THE PENDULUM **ONLINE**

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[Browse Past Issues](#)

[<< Back](#)

## InterVarsity decision causes controversy

**Jessica Patchett - Assistant News Editor**

The latest debate raised against InterVarsity Christian Fellowship chapters nationwide has been closed at the University of Chapel Hill following Chancellor James Moeser's retraction of a December letter to InterVarsity from the student union administration demanding elimination of a clause from the InterVarsity charter requiring fellowship leaders to sign a declaration of faith in Christian doctrine.

Upholding the organization's right to freedom of expression, Moeser overruled the student union administration's threat to terminate official recognition of and university funding to the InterVarsity chapter if the clause was not struck by the end of January.

Questions and conflicts have been raised on public university campuses concerning InterVarsity's inclusion of the reservation of leadership positions for Christians in its national charter.

At Rutgers University, InterVarsity has filed a lawsuit against the administration who recently suspended university to the group on the grounds of illegal discrimination against non-Christian students wishing to apply for InterVarsity officer positions.

Staff members and the InterVarsity chapter at Rutgers faced social and legal challenges this winter from students and outside organizations, said Carolyn Burke, InterVarsity intern at Elon.

Keeping in touch with a fellow staff member at Rutgers, Burke gained insight into the complexity of the issues surrounding the leadership clause and the dilemmas students are still confronting.

"Rutgers particularly regrets that its students have been caught in the middle of a theoretical dispute not of their making," according to a Jan 13 press release by Emmet Dennis, vice president for student affairs at Rutgers.

In December, UNC-CH brought Tarheel students to the center of this dispute when the university, concerned with the events at Rutgers, asked its student administration to examine organizations' charters, verifying that students' rights to participate in organizations on campus were not being violated.

UNC-CH was not the only body creating controversy in the lives of InterVarsity member students.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, among others, refused to compromise InterVarsity's freedom to uphold its national charter and the mandatory commitment of leaders to Christian doctrine, according to the Durham Herald-Sun.

For now, Elon students are sheltered from this controversy. The requirement for leaders to sign a statement of belief is included in the InterVarsity chapter at Elon but has not been challenged by the university, outside groups or individuals.

The statement of belief is a basic summary of the Christian Gospel, stating that Jesus died and was resurrected.

"We don't go into anything that is considered disputed," InterVarsity Campus Minister Ray Crompton said.

"As a private university, [Elon] is not governed by the same issues that public universities have to deal with," said Shana Plasters, Director for Leadership and Organizational Development. "The institution has not said that officer positions have to be open for everyone... we certainly could if we wanted to.

"It doesn't make sense why anyone would challenge that," Crompton said, referring to the requirement holding leaders to a signed declaration of belief.

"If you don't believe in helping a certain Greek group's philanthropy you wouldn't join it."

At Elon, "there's never once been a problem," Crompton said, but at many universities across the nation, many legal and social activists nationwide continue to push for InterVarsity leadership positions to be open for all students, regardless of their religious affiliation.