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Posted on Tue, Dec. 20, 2005

SoCal university denies charter to Christian group

Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. - California State University, San Bernardino has refused to allow a Christian group to organize on campus, saying it would discriminate against non-Christians and homosexuals.

The Christian Student Association's proposed constitution included a statement on sexual morality and required members and officers to be Christian.

State law prevents student groups at public universities from excluding people based on religion or sexual orientation.

"We are not permitted to charter them under Title V," said Christine Hansen, director of student leadership and development in the office of Student Affairs. She was referring to a section of the state education code.

Ryan Sorba, who tried to form the association, accused the university of discriminating against Christians.

"This is about whether or not the First Amendment is allowed to exist at Cal State San Bernardino and whether or not Christians are allowed to exist," Sorba, 23, who also is president of the College Republicans, said Monday.

Similar controversies are playing out on other California campuses.

A group called the Alliance Defense Fund filed a lawsuit last month against the California State University campuses in Long Beach and San Diego, alleging that Cal State's systemwide policy forces students to abandon their Christian beliefs if they want benefits that other organizations receive.

Chartered student groups are eligible for money from student fees and can invite speakers to campus, post fliers and use university rooms for meetings.

Several Christian organizations began campaigning on Monday to force the university to approve Sorba's club.

"This is political correctness gone amok. There is no way we are going to let this thing pass," said the Rev. Louis Sheldon, chairman and founder of the Traditional Values Coalition in Washington, D.C.

Sorba has generated controversy in the past by using the College Republicans' name on anti-gay signs and coordinating an affirmative action bake sale at which minorities were offered snacks at reduced prices.

In a separate dispute, evangelical high schools are suing the University of California for refusing to recognize Christian themed courses.

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