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## AP New Jersey

# Princeton recognizes Christian group initially denied sanction

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Associated Press Writer

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PRINCETON, N.J. -- After being initially rebuffed by a Princeton University official, a group of evangelical students who wanted access to facilities and the chance to apply for funds has won a victory.

After the university's dean of religious life refused recognition for Princeton Faith and Action, the group's campus rights group that successfully lobbied the university to change its procedures.



"We found Princeton's quick and fair response encouraging. We've found other colleges have been particularly fair to religious groups, so in an unconstitutional way," said Greg Lukianoff, the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

Princeton Faith and Action has now been recognized as a student group, religious groups are being treated the same as secular groups, and the university's review of procedures related to student organizations said Princeton Provost Christopher L. Eisgruber said.

"We need to be welcoming groups, even if they are unorthodox, and that is the goal of our office," Eisgruber said.

Princeton Faith and Action was formed by about 30 students associated with the off-campus Christian Union, which on its Web site describes its mission as "advancing the kingdom of Jesus Christ."

The group in March applied to a student government committee for recognition as an official campus group but instead referred to the dean of religious life, Thomas E. Breidenthal, who turned down their application.

According to PFA's leaders, Breidenthal turned down PFA because he did not want to recognize a group that was affiliated with the Christian Union. He declined to elaborate, PFA said.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education contacted Princeton President Shirley M. Tilghman, who

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acknowledged in an April 22 letter that Faith and Action should be given the same consideration as any

"We guarantee that university recognition will not be withheld from any group pursuing lawful objectives because its aims may seem unorthodox," Tilghman said in the letter.

The group was allowed to go back to the student government committee and was approved last Friday.

Contacted Wednesday by The Associated Press, Breidenthal referred questions to Eisgruber.

An officer from Princeton Faith and Action did not return calls seeking comment. But Matt Bennett, the Union's president, said he was encouraged by the university's decision.

"It shows how they're making whatever changes are necessary for religious freedom," Bennett said.

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