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Weird News

Sports

Entertainment

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Opinion

Projects

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Shopping

## Gonzaga won't recognize anti-abortion club

### The Associated Press

SPOKANE - Law student Ashley Horne never thought her club for abortion opponents would be rejected by Gonzaga University, a leading Northwest Catholic institution.

But the school's Student Bar Association this fall refused to recognize her Pro-Life Law Caucus as a university-sponsored group, ruling that a policy allowing only Christians to hold leadership positions was a form of discrimination.

"We live in a strange age, indeed, when a Catholic, Jesuit university would deny a Christian pro-life group recognition because its religious nature is considered discriminatory," said Greg Lukianoff, spokesman for the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education in Philadelphia, a conservative watchdog group for student rights.

The issue is not the group's stance on abortion, said SBA President Albert Guadagno. Leadership positions, he said, should be open to all students.

About 45 percent of Gonzaga's 5,800 students are not Catholic, and campus spokesman Peter Tormey said school administrators support the SBA ruling.

"Any club seeking funds must not discriminate. This club has that discriminatory clause," Tormey said.

Lukianoff wants Gonzaga's administration to intervene and grant Pro-Life official status.

Horne and fellow law student Katie Hauck formed the club this fall to promote opposition to abortion and assist a crisis-pregnancy center in Spokane. The club, now 20 members strong, requested affiliation with the association, which represents law school students and sponsors clubs and other activities for them.

Affiliation entitles groups to money from student fees, a mention on the university's Web page and in the student handbook, and use of Gonzaga as part of their name.

But while anyone can join Pro-Life, its rule barring non-Christians from club offices was viewed as discriminatory and affiliation was denied.

Lukianoff notes that Gonzaga's nondiscrimination policy enables the school "to take religious faith into consideration where it is deemed appropriate."

He contends this is such a case.

Similar debates have sprung up nationwide, most recently at Rutgers University in New Jersey and the University of North Carolina, both public institutions. In a case settled last spring, Rutgers allowed a Christian student group to continue operating and choosing leaders based on their religious beliefs.

Lukianoff said Gonzaga's case is unusual because such student-rights debates at private institutions are rare.

Horne said the club is still operating and recently held a baby-supply drive for the crisis-pregnancy center, which promotes alternatives to abortion such as adoption.

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