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November 17, 2006

President Ruth J. Simmons
Office of the President
Brown University
One Prospect Street
Campus Box 1860
Providence, Rhode Island 02912

Sent via U.S. Mail and Facsimile (401-863-7737)

Dear President Simmons:

Christian Union is a ministry comprised of Ivy League Christian alumni dedicated to the spiritual well-being of the Ivy League Universities. We conduct a variety of ministry programs in the Ivy League including the maintenance of the Judson House, a Christian Ministry Center at Brown located on Lloyd Avenue. For more information, please visit www.Christian-Union.org. Given our Ivy League focus, we are deeply concerned about potential religious discrimination at Brown University.

Through conversations with the Brown leadership of Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), we have become aware of the suspension of the RUF student organization on campus. The suspension of any legitimate student religious organization would constitute a potential threat to religious tolerance and free speech, but this situation seems particularly egregious. OCRL Director Reverend Janet Cooper Nelson's statement based the suspension on "non-compliance with University policy and procedure as outlined in The Standards and Conditions Governing the Appointment of Religious Life Affiliates and their Sponsoring Religious Agencies at Brown University." However, the statement did not specify the violation that merited the suspension.

The reason for the suspension appears to originate from interactions that prompted Chaplain Reverend Allen Callahan's to write "RUF has (*sic*) become possessed of a leadership culture of contempt and dishonesty that has rendered all collegial relations with my office impossible." While it is indeed regrettable that the relationship between RUF leadership and Callahan has been strained, it is not clear if the suspension is merited. Without substantiation, it appears that there may have been an abuse of power, denying the right of free association to Brown students. The

students believed in good faith when they matriculated that Brown would keep its promise to allow them “the rights of peaceful assembly, free exchange of ideas and orderly protests, and the right to attend, make use of or enjoy the facilities and functions of the University subject to prescribed rules.”

Brown’s decision stands to have a negative impact on the access and availability of religious programming for its students. As a Christian ministry actively engaging Ivy League students with our own ministry programs, and as an organization in conversation with other Ivy League Christian student groups, it is paramount that this matter be seriously and straightforwardly addressed.

We respectfully request that you inform us of the following:

1. What specific prescribed rules has RUF violated to merit suspension? (For the sake of clarity, please quote from The Standards and Conditions Governing the Appointment of Religious Life Affiliates and their Sponsoring Religious Agencies at Brown University.)
2. What actions did RUF take or not take that constituted a breach of these rules?
3. If the rules governing religious agencies are different from those governing other advocacy student groups, what justification is there for this alternate system of governance and how would that be consonant with Brown’s commitment to the “free exchange ideas”?

Given the seriousness of this situation and the continuing inability of Presbyterian students to hold meetings on the Brown campus, we would appreciate a response to this letter by November 28, 2006.

Sincerely,

cc:

Rev. Janet Cooper Nelson, University Chaplain and Director of the Office of the Chaplains and Religious Life, Brown University

Rev. Allen Callahan, Interim Associate Protestant University Chaplain, Brown University

Russell Carey, Interim Vice President for Campus Life and Student Services, Brown University

Margaret Klawunn, Associate Vice President for Campus Life and Dean for Student Life, Brown University

Marylou McMillan, Executive Officer for Campus Life and Student Services, Brown University