

After a Yearlong Battle, This Christian Group Gets Back on Campus

After over a year of being kept off campus for its Christian beliefs, the student group Chi Alpha has finally been reinstated at the California State University Stanislaus campus. Chi Alpha, a Christian organization for college students, was kicked off campus at Stanislaus and ordered to change its policies at three other California State campuses after the California State University system adopted a new policy banning students in religious clubs from requiring their leaders to share their faith. As of Thursday, all four Chi Alpha chapters are back on campus.

“For religious students, groups like Chi Alpha are a place of refuge. It’s just common sense—and basic liberty—for religious groups to be led by students who share their faith,” said Adèle Auxier Keim, legal counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

Chi Alpha was founded in 1953 as a place where college students could gather to worship God, study Scripture and pray together. Its members give back to the community through programs like feedONE, which provides food for over 140,000 hungry children worldwide.

Chi Alpha has been serving Cal State Stanislaus for almost 40 years. Chi Alpha’s students have always asked their leaders to believe and live what Chi Alpha teaches. But in August 2014, the Chancellor of the Cal State University system banned policies like Chi Alpha’s. Under California State’s new policy, fraternities and sororities can require their leaders to be men or women, the environmental club can require its leaders to believe in climate change, but religious groups

can't require their leaders to believe what they teach.

In September 2014, Cal State Stanislaus administrators derecognized the Chi Alpha chapter and locked Chi Alpha's students out of the meeting space they had reserved for their fall kickoff meeting.

In 2015, after months of negotiations, the Cal State Chancellor's Office agreed that while religious student groups couldn't require all leadership candidates to share their faith, students were free to select leaders whose lives and beliefs reflected their group's message. As of last Thursday all four Chi Alpha chapters—at Cal State Stanislaus, Cal State Sacramento, San Diego State and Cal State Fresno—are back on campus as recognized student groups.

Chi Alpha still has fewer rights than fraternities and faces an unfair burden on its ministry, but its students can once again take their place as a recognized part of campus.

"Cal State has adopted a halfway solution that still gives fraternities more rights than campus religious groups. But they've acknowledged that students can vote for a candidate who shares their beliefs, and that's a step in the right direction," said Keim.