

# Christian High School Bows to PC Spirit, Welcomes Gay Faculty

A Catholic high school in Portland, Oregon, has reversed its policy on gay employees after receiving a public backlash for refusing to hire a woman because she is a lesbian, school officials said on Thursday.

The school board of the all-girls St. Mary's Academy voted unanimously late Wednesday to add sexual orientation to its equal employment opportunity policy.

The school had come under fire after it last month withdrew plans to give Lauren Brown a job as a counselor because of her sexual orientation.

Brown had accepted the job in the spring but was told by the school in July that she would not get it because of her "impending marriage to a same-sex partner," according to Brown's attorney, Gloria Trainor.

Brown is not engaged and has no plans to marry anytime soon, Trainor said.

Some students at the school launched an online protest in support of Brown after the details of the withdrawal emerged this week.

A major donor to the school, Tim Boyle, chief executive officer of Columbia Sportswear Co, had also condemned the decision and told a local newspaper there was no place in the workplace for discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"The news this week is an example of how to not prepare students," Boyle told the Oregonian in an interview published before the school updated its employment policy.

School officials said they are talking to parents, students and staff about the situation so that “healing within our community can begin.”

St. Mary’s Academy President Christina Friedhoff said in a statement the school welcomes and includes gay and lesbian students, faculty, alumnae, parents and friends, “including those that are married.”

“We are proud of our work preparing the next generation of women leaders for service and leadership. We are still deeply committed to our Catholic identity,” she said.

The school has already offered another candidate the position, Friedhoff added, but she said they would reach out to Brown and that the school is “open to further discussions with her about reconciliation.”

Trainor said Brown turned down the school’s initial offer of one year’s salary to settle the matter. She would not comment on what future steps her client might take.

The attorney said Brown has a “guarded optimism” about broad change, and that she hopes the school and the Catholic Church will one day support “full and equal rights” for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

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