

The Nation's Largest Christian University Cries Foul Over Federal Agency Scrutiny

Grand Canyon University, the nation's largest Christian university, has recently found itself at the center of investigations by the Department of Education and other federal agencies. GCU President Brian Mueller believes these investigations are unwarranted, raising concerns that they might be related to the university's Christian beliefs.

While no direct evidence suggests religious motivations, the fact that two of the largest Christian universities, GCU and Liberty University, are under scrutiny prompts questions about the intentions behind these investigations.

Compound these investigations with the Biden administration's Department of Justice actively prosecuting pro-life groups and political rivals, and it does not take a stretch of the imagination to see how these allegations could be true.

GCU's troubles began when the Department of Education denied its request to transition to nonprofit status in 2018. This denial affects the university's ability to access grant-writing opportunities, federal research funding and financial aid programs.

GCU, originally a nonprofit institution until 2004, reestablished its nonprofit status in 2018 with approvals from various institutions, including the IRS, the Higher Learning Commission and the State of Arizona. The Department of Education, however, contested this change, leading to a lawsuit by GCU, arguing the decision was "arbitrary and capricious." The department emerged victorious, reinforcing

its stance under the Higher Education Act.

GCU's continued appeal is set for Dec. 5, further highlighting the university's determination to attain nonprofit status. In the meantime, the university has accused the Department of Education, the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Veterans Affairs of unfairly targeting them in response to their lawsuit.

One investigation scrutinizes GCU's advertising practices, specifically whether its claims about the demand for cybersecurity experts are deceptive. GCU maintains its assertions are factual.

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The Arizona State Approving Agency, which reviews GCU, has been accused of being influenced by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA, however, cites a change in law signed by former President Trump, requiring cooperation between VA and state agencies for annual risk-based surveys on educational institutions receiving GI Bill benefits. This accounts for the unique review GCU is undergoing.

The Federal Trade Commission is investigating Grand Canyon Education, the entity providing marketing and recruiting support to GCU. GCU disputes allegations of making unsolicited calls to potential students, asserting that they only contact those who express interest.

The Biden administration's pledge to curb for-profit colleges misusing Title IV funds has also led to closer scrutiny of GCU. Despite its nonprofit status, GCU's default rates on student loans remain low, contradicting the administration's rationale for investigations.

A 2021 press release by GCU indicates a default rate of 5.6%,

nearly half the national average at the time. However, the FTC has offered no comment on these figures.

In addition to other reviews, the Department of Education is examining GCU's doctoral program for misrepresenting the program's costs. The department has informed the university of a potential significant fine due to "substantial misrepresentations and other compliance issues."

The department insists that these actions are aimed at holding schools accountable for student welfare and the proper use of federal funds, maintaining that these actions are not influenced by the university's Christian identity or its history of litigation against the department.

Grand Canyon University's ongoing legal battles with federal agencies raise questions about whether its Christian identity plays a role in these investigations. While GCU seeks nonprofit status and argues for fair treatment, the federal government maintains that its actions are solely in the interest of protecting students and taxpayers. {eo}

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James Lasher is staff writer for Charisma Media.