

# The Real Reason Driving InterVarsity's Gay Marriage Policy

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA, one of the largest evangelical college campus ministries in the country, is defending a new policy that asks staff to leave if they disagree with the ministry's position on sexuality.

According to the campus ministry, the new policy does not elevate the issue to a core doctrine but rather relates to the authority of Scripture and the need for staff to agree in an area that directly affects college students.

Greg Jao, InterVarsity vice president and director of campus engagement, told CBN News the ministry is asking staff to "self-disclose" if they disagree with the organization's theology on sexuality.

"We want to make sure that, at least from InterVarsity's perspective, we're providing a clear, consistent message and pointing people to Scripture in a clear, consistent way," Jao said.

Jao emphasized that InterVarsity's position has not changed in its 75-year history. Rather, it is completing an 18-month staff study on its hermeneutic approach to Scripture and how it has reached its beliefs on sexuality.

In a July letter, InterVarsity encouraged staff who disagree with InterVarsity's position to let the organization know by Nov. 11 in order to begin plans for leaving.

The letter explains "staff are people of integrity. If they disagree, we trust that they will alert their supervisors and conclude their work in ways which reflect their love for

students, faculty, the mission and their colleagues who remain.”

Jao told CBN News that he doesn’t know how many staff might disagree with InterVarsity’s position.

He also challenged the criticism of some in the Christian community who have argued that InterVarsity should allow its staff to disagree internally on beliefs about sexuality.

“I don’t think we’ve chosen a side issue,” he said. He added that InterVarsity wants to have coherent teaching on sexuality among its staff, especially since so many college students are grappling with issues around sexual identity and behavior.

Jao told CBN News that he expects some universities will struggle with the controversy over InterVarsity’s reiteration of its historic beliefs. He denied that concern about litigation had prompted the organization to restate its position on sexuality.

“Because of the confusion in the church and our culture and because students asked us for clarity, we’ve re-iterated what we believe. Worrying about lawsuits is far from the primary thing in our thinking at this point,” he said.

A *Time Magazine* piece about the change, published late Thursday, set off an avalanche of social media criticism among those in the Christian community who oppose InterVarsity’s position.

Dr. Christena Cleveland, associate professor at Duke University’s Divinity School, tweeted, “I’m so tired of evangelical orgs further marginalizing ppl who are already marginalized by society. It’s the opposite of the Jesus way.”

Julie Rodgers, an advocate for sexual minorities and formerly on staff at Wheaton College, lamented, “LGBT students will be the ones who pay the price for InterVarsity’s decision. Let’s

help them find places to belong.”

But Dr. Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, went on Facebook to defend InterVarsity, noting that its policy is consistent with Christian doctrine over the ages.

“They’re not adopting a new policy,” he said. “What they’re doing is clarifying something that didn’t need to be clarified before.”

Dr. Ed Stetzer, Billy Graham chair of Church, Mission and Evangelism at Wheaton College, marveled at the internet outrage and buzz over InterVarsity.

“Why is it news that evangelicals think their ministry staff should hold mainstream evangelical beliefs?” he asked on his blog.

“Ultimately, every organization with the beliefs of old orthodoxy will face a moment like this,” he warned.

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