

UC-Davis Students Object to Religious Discrimination Policy

Twenty-five students at the University of California at Davis (UC-Davis) are objecting to a policy that defines religious discrimination as Christians oppressing non-Christians.

The UC-Davis policy defines “Religious/Spiritual Discrimination” as “the loss of power and privilege to those who do not practice the dominant culture’s religion. In the United States, this is institutionalized oppressions toward those who are not Christian.”

“Christians deserve the same protections against religious discrimination as any other students on a public university campus,” says Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) Senior Counsel David French. “It’s ridiculously absurd to single out Christians as oppressors and non-Christians as the only oppressed people on campus when the facts show that public universities are more hostile to Christians than anyone else.”

A from ADF-allied attorney Tim Swickard to UC-Davis explains, “It is patently clear that UC Davis’s definition of religious discrimination is blatantly unconstitutional under both the Federal and California State Constitutions. The policy singles out some faiths for official school protection while denying the same protection to others solely on the basis of their particular religious views. Moreover, the UC-Davis policy is simply nonsensical given the environment on most University campuses where Christian students, if anything, are among the most likely to be subjected to discrimination because of their faith.”

The letter cites a recent study of more than 1,200 faculty at public universities that showed that professors admitted to

having a significant bias against Christian students, particularly evangelicals. Fifty-three percent admitted to having negative feelings about evangelical students solely because of their religious beliefs.

Mormon and Catholic students did not fare much better in the study. A 2004 Harvard Institute of Politics poll indicated that only 35 percent of college students call themselves “born again,” and only 22 percent identify as evangelical Christians. A 2000 study of teens by the Barna Research Group found that only 26 percent claim to be “committed to the Christian faith.”

“It is in contradiction to established fact to suggest, as this definition does, that Christianity is ‘the dominant culture’s religion’ at any public university or here at UC Davis,” the letter continues. “These are not statistics of dominance.”

On behalf of the students objecting to the policy, the letter asks UC-Davis officials to revise the “Religious/Spiritual Discrimination” definition and “examine other appropriate means to increase the inclusion of the Christian community to help ensure that other UC Davis policies and practices now and in the future are sensitive to the concerns of its Christian community as well.”