

UNC Concedes Christian Club Can be Christian

In a victory in the **culture wars** front, the University of North Carolina-Greensboro has agreed to officially recognize a Christian student group and make clear that its policies permit religious student groups to select members and leaders who share their religious beliefs.

In other words, the university is going to let the Christian club remain all Christian.

The university originally required the group to allow students of other religions and belief systems to become leaders and members in order to get official recognition on campus. University officials had claimed the Christian group was not “religious” and therefore did not qualify for an exemption that had been extended to other **religious student groups**.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) filed a suit against the university. The suit has now been dismissed.

“Saying that a Christian club isn’t religious is not only absurd, it also means the government is playing theologian, which it is not constitutionally permitted to do,” says ADF Legal Counsel Jeremy Tedesco.

“The university has done the right thing in recognizing this club and clarifying that the university’s policies permit religious and other belief-based student groups to be led by those who agree with their beliefs,” he continues. “The Constitution protects the right of all student groups to employ belief-based criteria in selecting their members and leaders, and this settlement has ensured that this right will be respected at UNC-Greensboro moving forward.”

Here’s the backstory: UNC-Greensboro’s nondiscrimination

policy contains an exemption for student groups that select their members based on a shared set of beliefs. The “Make Up Your Own Mind” club at UNC-Greensboro applied for recognition under the exemption, but university officials denied the request.

University officials had stated that the club is not religious even though the club has a clear religious mission and purpose and requires its members and leaders to agree with its **statement of faith** and beliefs. The university recognized many other belief-based student organizations, including many religious ones, but would not recognize Make Up Your Own Mind.

After ADF attorneys filed suit in February on behalf of the club in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina, the university agreed to recognize the group, clarify its policy and settle the lawsuit.

The settlement agreement affirms that the university’s policies allow students to form “groups that select their members on the basis of commitment to a set of beliefs.” This includes, but is not limited to, groups that select their members on the basis of their religious or political beliefs.

“The nature, depth or type of the group’s beliefs (whether they are religious, political or other) will not be a factor in determining whether a group receives recognition,” the settlement agreement states.