



Azusa Pacific University Reverses LGBT Policy

Azusa Pacific University (APU), a Christian university in southern California, reversed — or at least made a strategic retreat from — its recent [decision](#) to allow same-sex romantic relationships on campus.

“Last week, reports circulated about a change to the undergraduate student standards of conduct,” APU’S board of trustees wrote in a [statement](#) issued Friday. “That action concerning romanticized relationships was never approved by the board and the original wording has been reinstated.”



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At the beginning of the semester, administrators removed from the school’s code of conduct language that prohibited students from engaging in same-sex relationships while retaining the code’s insistence on sexual abstinence outside of biblical marriage. They also officially recognized Haven, a formerly underground support group for LGBT students, and created a pilot “safe space” program for LGBT students.

At the time, Associate Dean of Students Bill Fiala argued, “The language changed, but the spirit didn’t. Our spirit is still a conservative, evangelical perspective on human sexuality.”

However, the Bible is unequivocal in its denunciation of homosexual behavior. As APU associate professor Barbara Harrington pointed out in a [letter](#) to the board of trustees, “Encourag[ing] students to engage in romantic homosexual relationships, but hope that they will stop short of having sex outside of marriage connotes that homosexual relationships are as healthy and normal as heterosexual ones.”

After the policy change became national news and generated [negative responses](#) from conservative Christians, the trustees rescinded it. “We affirm God’s perfect will and design for humankind with the biblical understanding of the marriage covenant as between one man and one woman. Outside of marriage, He calls His people to abstinence,” they said in their statement.

Although the trustees’ statement suggests a firm resolve to resist the cultural tide of acceptance of LGBT lifestyles, trustee Albert Tate, in an interview with the [San Gabriel Valley Tribune](#), appeared somewhat less resolute, telling the newspaper that “the university’s intention is to find better language for the current policy.”

“When we took out the language, everyone else filled that gap with their own language and interpretations, and it was hurtful to LGBTQ students, our faculty, our constituencies outside,” Tate said. “We reinstated that language with the intention to strategically partner with our LGBTQ students to find the best language possible to capture our heart and intent.”

The trustees’ statement did not address the recognition of Haven or the “safe space” program. According to the *Tribune*:

Tate said he couldn’t specifically speak to Haven’s future, but he said LGBTQ students will not be



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 2, 2018

forced back underground and that they will be able to continue having conversations with one another on campus....

Tate said that staff and student workers from the university's Student Life office, which had been set to develop a specific LGBTQ support office, will continue to work with and facilitate discussions with LGBTQ students.

LGBT students and pressure groups were angered by the trustees' actions.

Erin Green, co-executive director of Brave Commons, a group that aims to normalize LGBT lifestyles in Christian institutions, told the *Tribune* the reversal felt like a "betrayal."

Sophomore Hannah McElfresh, who describes herself as "[pansexual](#)," told the paper, "It feels as if people who had hope had the rug ripped out from under their feet." McElfresh also said "she still believes living a Christian life still comes down to loving one another" and that she's "100 percent OK with being Christian and part of LGBTQ community."

This is the enemy against which Christian institutions today must constantly battle: not outsiders trying to force them to abandon their beliefs (though there are [plenty](#) of [examples](#) of this) but people who believe they are Christians and that the [sum total of Christianity is loving other people](#), which to them means accepting and affirming lifestyles that the Bible clearly depicts as sinful. Combine that with a popular culture and public-education system that put LGBT lifestyles on a pedestal, and it's easy to see why so many Americans, especially younger ones, see no conflict between claiming to be a Christian and engaging in same-sex relationships.

APU made the right decision to reinstate its ban on same-sex relationships, but it had better be wary of where its "conversations" with pro-LGBT forces lead. Unless the university stands its ground — and other concerns raised by Harrington suggest it has already ceded considerable territory to the Left — its strategic retreat may soon turn into a rout.



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