



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 5, 2013

## Christian Group Booted From Michigan University

[InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#), one of the nation's oldest and most respected campus-based Christian ministries, said in early February that the University of Michigan has booted its [Asian InterVarsity](#) chapter off campus after the student outreach refused to drop its biblically based requirements for leadership.

As is happening at an increasing number of universities across America, the University of Michigan has instituted a non-discrimination policy that often requires Christian groups to compromise on such issues as the sinfulness of homosexuality, same-sex relationships, and even the fundamentals of Christian faith.

According to [Fox News](#), last December leaders of the Asian group, one of 10 InterVarsity groups on the Michigan campus, "were summoned before university officials who told them there was an issue with the section of the club constitution related to leadership. In order for students to be InterVarsity leaders they must sign a statement of faith. But the university said that requirement violated their non-discrimination policy."

[Sara Chang](#), one of the group's leaders, said that instead of revising the group's constitution to fall in line with the university's non-discrimination requirements, the club decided to stand firm in their Christian convictions. "For us, there's no other option than to hold to the tenets of our faith," Chang told Fox News. "We want to model a lifestyle of integrity. Holding the Bible as the inspired, divine word of God and seeing the commands for us to choose leaders who have a vibrant faith in Jesus — is obviously something very important that we want to continue to uphold."

The decision by the Christian leaders to stand by their faith prompted university officials to take away the Christian group's official recognition, forcing the group to relocate off campus.

A University of Michigan spokesman released a statement explaining that all registered student groups must "sign the university's standard non-discrimination agreement [and] submit their constitution for review." The spokesman said that as of yet "Asian InterVarsity Christian Fellowship has not completed this process" — a default which caused the group to forfeit its recognition by the school.

According to Greg Jao, InterVarsity's national field director, while the university laid the blame on the Christian group for not submitting the constitution for official approval, the truth is that university officials refused to accept the group's unrevised constitution. "It's the same as approved in prior years," Jao explained, adding that it's "not an administrative failure on our end, but [the university] won't accept it."

The university's relevant rule states that the school is "committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of ... religion." The move by university officials to unrecognize the InterVarsity group prompted the [Michigan Daily](#), the school's student newspaper, to exult that "removing the group's campus affiliation reaffirms the university's commitment to nondiscrimination."





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The paper's editors also pointed out that there are other "InterVarsity groups currently recognized by the University whose constitutions include a statement of faith requirement for student leaders, similar to [the Asian InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's] constitution. This indicates that the Center for Campus Involvement, the arm of the University that deals with student organization applications, needs to ensure that it consistently applies its policies across all student organizations."

Jao told Fox News that the university "is sending the message that religious voices are suspect and should be marginalized. I think it sends the message that the university does not understand the nature of religious beliefs and the convictions of religious students."

He added that he expects the university's other InterVarsity groups to be similarly targeted in the near future. "The sad place that we've arrived at is that certain campuses in pursuit of tolerance and diversity are now saying they will use those standards to discriminate and marginalize viewpoints they disagree with," he told Fox. "I think the university's decision will impact any religious group that is being honest about their leadership criteria."

Kevin Theriot of Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative legal advocacy group, said it appears that InterVarsity has a strong reason to file a suit against the University of Michigan for religious discrimination.

Such religious discrimination, particularly against Christian groups, has increased in the wake of a 2010 Supreme Court decision, [Christian Legal Society vs. Martinez](#), in which the High Court ruled that a public university may implement a policy effectively requiring religious groups to receive "all comers" as long as it applies the same rule to all campus groups.

"It's really amazing that we have come to this place in our society where a Christian group can't require Christian leaders," Theriot told Focus on the Family's CitizenLink. "It's really kind of silly, but we are seeing more and more universities do this."

In 2012 over a dozen Christian groups were forced off the campus of Vanderbilt University in Nashville after they refused to knuckle under to that college's non-discrimination policy. One of the groups to lose its recognition was InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Jao said that Vanderbilt officials went as far as prohibiting other registered student organizations from co-sponsoring events with banned Christian groups such as InterVarsity, causing Christian students at the school to "feel disenfranchised, distinctly unwelcome."



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