



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 13, 2011

Ga. Grad Student Fighting Expulsion Over Christian View of Homosexuality

Faculty and administrators at a Georgia university are attempting to derail the dream of one of its graduate students to become a school counselor. The reason: Her Christian beliefs on homosexuality don't square with the politically correct doctrines embraced by the school.

In 2010, reported the [Baptist Press News](#), Augusta State University placed counseling student Jennifer Keeton on probation after it was discovered that she disagreed with the view that homosexuality was an acceptable lifestyle. According to school administrators, related BP News, "Keeton said it would be hard for her to counsel gay clients, a stance they said violated ethical standards for licensed counselors, as put forth by the American Counseling Association."



In addition, school officials said they were concerned with Keeton's desire to use "conversion therapy" to help individuals leave the homosexual lifestyle, citing their fear that Keeton might harm students she would be working with during internships she would be required to serve as part of her degree plan.

After placing her on probation, the school required Keeton to enter a remediation program, during which she was supposed to go through sensitivity training, attend "gay pride" events, and demonstrate that her attitude toward homosexuality was changing and that she could be trusted to toe the proper line on the issue.

Keeton declined the school plan, and in July of 2010, with the help of the [Alliance Defense Fund](#), filed suit against the school to prevent it from expelling her from the graduate counseling program. Following a lower court ruling that sided with the university, the ADF appealed Keeton's case to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which is now considering the evidence.

In a brief filed before the court, ADF attorneys noted that Keeton had never had any problems with maintaining the ethical standards set for counselors, and that the motivation of the school in expelling her was her moral convictions. "[Augusta State University] faculty have promised to expel Miss Keeton from the graduate Counselor Education Program not because of poor academic showing or demonstrated deficiencies in clinical performance, but simply because she has communicated both inside and outside the classroom that she holds to Christian ethical convictions on matters of human sexuality and gender identity," the brief stated.

In a statement to [CNN](#) in July of 2010, the university insisted that it "does not discriminate against any individuals on the basis of their personal, social, political, or religious beliefs or views. No student is asked to change their religious beliefs or views in order to participate in any program."



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Nonetheless, ADF attorney Jeff Schafer pointed out to the court that it was “Miss Keeton’s communication of her religion-founded beliefs on sexual ethics which the faculty reported as the justification for their imposing remediation in the first place, and which they condemned as problematic and in need of alteration.”

Reported BP News: “Shafer claims Keeton’s First Amendment rights were violated because the school targeted her for her expressed viewpoints. He compared the school’s attempt to alter Keeton’s beliefs in order to remain in the counseling program to a business school that required students to affirm capitalism or disavow socialism in order to graduate.”

In reflecting on the case, [ADF Senior Counsel David French](#) said that a student at a publicly funded university “shouldn’t be threatened with expulsion for being a Christian and refusing to publicly renounce her faith, but that’s exactly what’s happening here. Simply put, the university is imposing thought reform.” He added “abandoning one’s own religious beliefs should not be a precondition at a public university for obtaining a degree. This type of leftist zero-tolerance policy is in place at far too many universities, and it must stop.”

Photo: Augusta State University building.



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