



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 21, 2014

Notre Dame Denies Pro-Marriage Club Official Status

The University of Notre Dame has denied  official recognition to a student club that supports traditional marriage. On April 30, the university's Club Coordination Council (CCC) voted not to approve the application of Students for Child-Oriented Policy (SCOP) for official club status.

SCOP's Facebook page identifies it as "a group of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Notre Dame who are focused on the debate about marriage taking place in Indiana."

The *Indianapolis Star* reported on the ongoing marriage debate in a May 21 article, "State GOP platform reopens gay marriage debate," noting:

Indiana Republicans will vote in June on a proposed platform that reasserts the party's support of traditional marriage, a move that likely will lead to another GOP showdown over gay rights.

This renewed debate comes after the state legislature — with Republicans having large majorities in the House and Senate — effectively delayed until 2016 a public referendum on a constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage. The legislature also removed a clause that would have banned civil unions.

Margaret Hnatusko, director of Notre Dame's student activities office, gave the following reasons for turning down SCOP's application in her April 30 letter:

We consider the general purpose of a club, uniqueness to campus, proposed activities, a clear constitution, a strong understanding of budget planning, projected membership, opportunity for membership among other things.

The ... mission of your club closely mirrored that of other undergraduate-student clubs on campus which served the intended interests of this club. As such, the Club Coordination Council felt there was not a need for another similar type club.

When we visited Notre Dame's [Student Activities webpage](#) and searched under the listing of student groups, we found no other student group whose mission even remotely resembled SCOP's — not to mention any that "closely mirrored" the proposed student club. (Though, curiously, for a university described in a Fox News article about this event as "the iconic Catholic institution," Notre Dame does have an officially sanctioned Muslim Student Association.)

Notre Dame spokesman Dennis Brown also repeated Hnatusko's assertion of redundancy in a statement to FoxNews.com on May 20:

SCOP is one of six proposed clubs whose applications were denied this spring, and 31 percent of club applications have been denied over the past five years, most for the same reason — *duplication of purpose*. [Emphasis added.]

As noted, a review of Notre Dame's online list of student groups does not reveal another organization whose mission even remotely resembles SCOP's, rendering both Hnatusko's and Brown's explanations specious.



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The CCC's decision brought a response from Notre Dame student Tiernan Kane, the prospective president of SCOP:

If [Student Affairs Office] officials and voting members of the CCC read our application documents, as I assume they did, how they could have identified our distinct and timely mission with that of any active university club is beyond me.

The student newspaper from Loyola University in Chicago, *The College Fix*, reported on May 20 that SCOP launched a petition in March that called on administrators to "make a clear stand in support of the true definition of marriage and to take serious and sustained action to improve the public understanding of this natural institution."

The SCOP petition cited the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Notre Dame's mission statement, and a university document called "A Pastoral Plan for the Support and Holistic Development of GLBTQ and Heterosexual Students at the University of Notre Dame" to bolster its case. It read, in part: "We understand marriage to be that natural institution that unites one man and one woman in a comprehensive sharing of life 'ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.'"

The Fix also reported in an April 11 article that another group of Notre Dame students countered the SCOP petition with one of their own that said that SCOP's motives "can only be interpreted as discrimination against individuals based on sexual orientation." The opposing petition went on to assert that "clearly, [SCOP] is not actually in the pursuit of knowledge and truth, nor do they want what is 'best' for children."

Notre Dame senior Tim Kirchoff, a member of SCOP, told *The Fix* at the time:

The [counter] petition sought to deny us official recognition as a student club and so the ability to organize events through which to explore and explain our club's perspective. It accused us of not entering into responsible discourse about social science before we had a meaningful opportunity to do so in the context of a wider conversation. There's something just a little silly about that.

The *National Catholic Register* (owned by the EWTN television network) quoted Notre Dame law professor Gerard Bradley, who was prepared to serve as SCOP's faculty adviser. Bradley said "utter ignorance" of SCOP's stated mission — to advocate for child-friendly policies from a basis of reason — could explain the CCC decision.

Another possible motive, Bradley said, could be "sheer hostility against what SCOP stands for," an explanation he called "more disturbing." Bradley continued,

SCOP is trying to do in public policy about the family exactly what the Church has asked all Catholics to do: namely, to do what it can to make sure that children are raised by their mother and their father and to make this case in the public square on reasonable grounds accessible to anyone who cares to think about the issues.

The Register also quoted Patrick Reilly, president of the Cardinal Newman Society, whose stated mission is to promote and defend faithful Catholic education.

"It's the new political correctness. In certain Catholic circles, anti-Catholicism is the new cool," Reilly said. "Very often, the same students who scream censorship in nearly every other instance are the ones who would silence those who promote Catholic teachings. Those who advocate difficult teachings are shunned or ridiculed."



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Each year, the Cardinal Newman Society publishes *The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College*, wherein institutions are recommended for their “fidelity and excellence.” In 2014, only 28 of the nation’s 244 colleges identifying themselves as Catholic made Newman’s list. Notre Dame was not one of the 28.

The university that Fox News described as an “iconic Catholic institution” — whose unique fame may have been derived more from the history of its “Fighting Irish” football team coached by the beloved Knute Rockne (“win just one for the Gipper”) than for other reasons — has seen more than its share of controversy in recent years.

The New American touched on these controversies in a May 26, 2009 article: “Notre Dame: Tragedy and Hope,” noting the granting of an honorary Doctor of Laws degree to President Obama, who was honored by being Notre Dame’s commencement speaker that year. The bestowal of that honor was fraught with irony, given Obama’s role as the nation’s most prominent proponent of abortion “rights” and embryonic stem-cell research.

In response to that betrayal of the school’s commitment to Catholic (and human) values, Mary Daly, a junior at the university that year and president of the 1,000-member Notre Dame Right to Life group, noted: “My father said he felt like a member of the family had died.” Daly’s brother and parents were both Notre Dame alumni. “I never wanted to go anywhere else but Notre Dame,” she said. “Before I even knew or understood the concept of college, I wanted to go to Notre Dame.”

In an interview with the *National Catholic Register*, Archbishop Raymond Burke, Prefect of the Vatican’s highest court, the Apostolic Signatura, said that Notre Dame should “come clean. Is it Catholic or isn’t it? A Catholic institution, a Catholic university, cannot give honors to someone who is a promoter of things that are opposed to the most fundamental beliefs of Catholics.”

Conservative Catholic columnist Pat Buchanan responded to the Obama event by publishing a column whose title asked rhetorically, “Is Notre Dame Still Catholic?”

A good question. Perhaps the answer can be found by applying the test found in Matthew 7:20: “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

Photo of Washington Hall at the University of Notre Dame

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