



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 16, 2014

Remaining Biblical May Cost Christian College Its Accreditation

A small Christian college in Massachusetts is having its long-time accreditation reviewed after its president joined over a dozen religious leaders in penning a letter to President Obama requesting a religious exemption to a planned executive order banning organizations that do business or receive funding from the federal government from discriminating against homosexuals in hiring or services.



Gordon College president D. Michael Lindsay was one of 14 religious leaders who signed the letter to Obama appealing for an exemption for religious institutions from the president's expected executive order banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. "Without a robust religious exemption ... this expansion of hiring rights will come at an unreasonable cost to the common good, national unity, and religious freedom," reads the letter, which was sent to the White House the day after the U.S. Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision exempting closely held companies from the ObamaCare mandate requiring employees to provide workers with free contraception, including contraceptives that can cause abortion.

The letter's signers — which included the head of Catholic Charities USA, the executive editor of the magazine *Christianity Today*, and leading evangelical pastor Rick Warren — insisted that they do not approve of discrimination, writing that they believe "all persons are created in the divine image of the creator, and are worthy of respect and love, without exception. Even so, it still may not be possible for all sides to reach a consensus on every issue. That is why we are asking that an extension of protection for one group not come at the expense of faith communities whose religious identity and beliefs motivate them to serve those in need."

The [Boston Globe](#) reported that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' (NEASC) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the region's higher education accrediting agency, "will review whether its standards are being violated by Gordon College after the Christian school's public opposition to hiring protections for gays and lesbians shed light on its longstanding policies prohibiting gay activities among students, faculty, and staff."

The commission's director, Barbara E. Brittingham, said that pulling a school's accreditation is a rare and "very drastic" step, and she declined to predict the fate that the commission, composed of officials from the highest levels of liberal academia throughout New England, may decide for the 125-year-old college, considered one of evangelical Christianity's most prestigious institutions. The jury is slated for next September, and should the commission decide to pull Gordon's accreditation, the school would face losing its federal funding.

"There's considerable publicity about the whole issue, and it's been getting a lot of attention," Brittingham told the *Boston Globe*. "It's a matter of looking at the information we have and deciding if the institution is meeting our standards."



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Observers of the conflict said it is unclear how the accreditation committee will rule regarding Gordon. The college's website is clear that students, faculty, and staff are prohibited from engaging in "homosexual practice" on or off campus, as well as such biblically proscribed behaviors as sex outside marriage, drunkenness, blasphemy, profanity, theft, and dishonesty.

Meanwhile, reported the *Globe*, "NEASC's accreditation standards specify that each 'institution adheres to nondiscriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement' and that each school 'fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds.'"

Lindsay's signature on the letter to President Obama sent a backlash throughout the college community, and prompted over 100 faculty, staff, and students to sign their own letter to the White House expressing their support for rules banning discrimination against homosexuals, along with an online petition signed by over 3,300 individuals demanding that Lindsay reverse Gordon's longtime biblical stance against homosexuality on campus.

Among those targeting the school was Gordon alumnus Paul Miller, co-founder of the homosexual organization OneGordon, who complained that Lindsay "has made Gordon a fortress of faith rather than a place where the doors are open to people who want to be part of a conversation about what it means to be a Christian. He thinks it's important that it's encoded into law that institutions be able to discriminate."

In a statement posted on [Gordon College's website](#), Lindsay explained that his "sole intention" in signing on to the letter to Obama was to affirm Gordon's commitment to religious liberty. "Signing the letter was in keeping with our decades-old conviction that, as an explicitly Christian institution, Gordon should set the conduct expectations for members of our community," wrote Lindsay.

The negative impact of Lindsay's signature on the letter resounded past the Gordon College community. After the story became public, the city of Salem, Massachusetts, announced that it would terminate its contract with Gordon that allows the college to use the city's historic Old Town Hall, citing the city's own "non-discrimination" ordinance. In a letter to the college, Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll scolded Lindsay, writing, "while I respect your right to embed religious values on a private college campus, religious freedom does not afford you the right to impose those beliefs upon others and cannot be extended into a publicly owned facility or any management contract for a public owned facility, like Old Town Hall."

While the city has contracted with Gordon for the past eight years, Driscoll indicated that she had suddenly become "truly disappointed" in the college's biblical stance on homosexuality. "I hope you realize how hurtful and offensive these 'behavioral standards' are to members of the greater Salem LGBT community, some of whom are Gordon alumni, staff and/or students," she wrote.

In an apparent effort to score points with the local LGBT community, Michael Alexander, president of nearby Lasell College, offered his own [statement](#) intended to shame Lindsay and Gordon, writing that the "clear message" from Gordon's biblical proscription of homosexual behavior "is that homosexuals are not worthy of employment, or even recognition of their existence, in the Gordon community. It is a slap in the face of every gay and lesbian person, particularly every gay and lesbian Christian, that says you are somehow less of a human being, you do not belong in the embrace of God's merciful arms."

Focus on the Family education expert Candi Cushman reflected that the entire episode illustrates a "larger, disturbing trend" that is beginning to spread across the nation. "If you dare to openly



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acknowledge a biblical viewpoint on sexuality and relationships you are likely to become a candidate for censorship, ridicule, or even punishment,” she said. “All that the college president did was sign on to a very graciously written letter — also signed by several, well-respected religious leaders across the nation, mind you — asking for protections for religious freedoms, especially when it comes to a Christian college trying to do what it’s always done — and that is uphold a biblical standard of conduct for relationships and sexuality.”

Cushman wondered if embracing the LGBT agenda is becoming “the new litmus test we will be applying as a nation to Christian schools? It’s a frightening trend.”

Photo of A.J. Gordon Memorial Chapel at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass.



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