



## Planned Pence Commencement Address Provokes Opposition at Christian College

“Inviting Vice President Pence to Taylor University and giving him a coveted platform for his political views makes our alumni, faculty, staff and current students complicit in the Trump-Pence Administration’s policies, which we believe are not consistent with the Christian ethic of love we hold dear,” reads a petition circulated by Alex Hoekstra, a 2007 graduate of the small evangelical Christian college in Indiana, demanding that the invitation to speak at commencement be revoked.



Hoekstra’s complaint about Vice-President Pence appears centered upon the fact Hoekstra is a homosexual, and evidently believes the Trump administration in general, and Pence in particular, somehow are targeting men and women in homosexual community. “As an alumni [sic] of Taylor and as a gay man I’m pretty personally injured by the policies of the Trump/Pence administration and I know that a lot of alumni who identify as other minority groups are personally affected by the Trump/Pence administration,” Hoekstra told *Newsweek* magazine on Thursday of last week.

While it is unknown what the 2,000 students at Taylor think about the Pence invitation, the faculty appear rather divided over the issue. When the Taylor administration announced that Pence — a former governor of Indiana — would speak at the 2019 commencement, a professor in the Christian ministries and philosophy department called for a vote against the invitation. Some in the faculty disagreed with the effort to disinvite the vice president, even comparing him to the biblical figure of Daniel. In the end, a vote was taken, with 61 voting to oppose Pence speaking to the graduating seniors, and 49 voting in favor.

Despite the petition and the faculty vote, the administration at Taylor is standing firm on the invitation. James Garringer, speaking for the university, said Monday, “Since making the announcement of Vice President Mike Pence’s upcoming commencement speech, we have received feedback from people on either side of the issue. Taylor University is an intentional Christian community that strives to encourage positive, respectful and meaningful dialogue. We look forward to hosting the vice president next month.”

Other than Hoekstra’s remarks, which centered on the issue of homosexuality, it is unclear what the complaint is by those at Taylor who are opposed to Pence speaking at graduation. One would think that it would be a high honor for a small college such as Taylor to have the vice president of the United States speak at the commencement ceremony. The college certainly does not condone homosexuality. On its webpage, it has a list of “Prohibited Behaviors.” The site states that “Certain behaviors are expressly prohibited in Scripture and therefore are to be avoided by all members of the community. They include theft, lying, dishonesty, gossip, slander, backbiting, profanity, vulgarity, crude language, sexual immorality (including adultery, homosexual behavior, premarital sex, and involvement with



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pornography in any form), drunkenness, immodesty of dress, and occult practice.”

One would think that such a listing would be rather non-controversial at a *Christian* university. After all, if a person disagreed with that list, then there are multitudes of other colleges across America, and in Indiana, where such behavior is not only widespread, but in some places, *celebrated*. A place where both students and faculty have non-Christian moral views would seem to be a better fit for these folks.

The opposition of 61 members of the faculty is particularly puzzling. These men and women are supposedly hired to promote Christian principles, not oppose them. If they are not going to do that, it would seem that Secular State Tech would be a better place to teach.

Sadly, this is a phenomenon not restricted to Taylor University, but one that is common among historically “Christian” colleges. They are launched with the intention of promoting evangelical Christianity, but after a time they begin to compromise their beliefs with the world, and eventually degenerate into being just another place where secular values predominate.

The Ivy League colleges were formed to prepare young men to be ministers of the gospel. The statue of John Harvard, at the Massachusetts college that bears his name, has him holding an open Bible across his lap. Today, the Bible is referred to as a “book,” and no one thinks of Harvard as a “Christian” college. This tendency is not found only among “evangelical” schools, but also Roman Catholic ones. Several examples could be cited, but at Notre Dame 100 students walked out during Pence’s 2017 commencement speech.

In stark contrast, these same students at the historically Roman Catholic university supported the address by then-President Barack Obama, a pro-abortion politician.

It is not uncommon for Christian colleges — Protestant or Catholic — to hire faculty who support same-sex marriage, abortion, evolution, and disbelieve in many historic beliefs of the Christian faith, including belief in the Bible. Exactly why a Christian college would even consider hiring a professor who is not a solid believer in the Christian faith is perplexing.

If a “Christian” college is going to be no different from a state-supported college or university, one is hard-pressed to explain why it should even exist.



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