

---

### *Summary*

---

Religious liberty is the first freedom guaranteed to Americans by the Bill of Rights. Yet on many college campuses, the right to associate on the basis of religious belief—and even the right to express those beliefs—is under attack.

### *The Problem*

---

Students and faculty who are openly or devoutly religious are increasingly marginalized at America's colleges and universities. The mere expression of religious beliefs in public is often condemned or even punished as “harassment” or “discrimination.” At dozens of universities across the country, religious groups have been denied official university recognition merely because they wished to form groups devoted to their faith and to exclude those who do not share their faith. The right to form groups according to a set of beliefs is a basic human and constitutional right, but too many colleges that recognize the rights of dozens—even hundreds—of student groups ignore this principle when the groups are based upon an evangelical Christian or traditional Muslim faith. FIRE has fought to educate universities about granting religious expression the same protections that non-religious expression enjoys. More about FIRE's efforts to preserve freedom of religion on campuses and about the cases listed below is available at [www.thefire.org/religiousliberty](http://www.thefire.org/religiousliberty).

### *Examples*

---

- ❖ The [University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire](#) banned all voluntary studies of the Bible, Koran, and Torah led by resident assistants (RAs) in their own dormitories in July 2005, claiming that those RAs might not seem “approachable” to other students. After months of public pressure from FIRE, the UW System's Board of Regents approved a policy granting RAs the right to participate in or lead religious activities “to the same extent as other students.”
- ❖ At [William Paterson University](#) in New Jersey, 63-year-old Muslim student Jihad Daniel was accused of harassment in June 2005, when he replied to a professor's e-mail advertisement of film about lesbians by stating his belief that homosexuality was a “perversion.” By December 2005, FIRE successfully convinced WPU to drop the charges against Daniel and to remove a letter of reprimand from his file.
- ❖ At [Lakeland Community College](#) in Ohio, Professor James Tuttle was stripped of his classes in 2003 for making statements on his syllabi and in class lectures that referenced his Catholic faith and how it shaped his personal philosophy.
- ❖ The [Ohio State University](#) investigated librarian Scott Savage for “sexual harassment” when he recommended four conservative books that accorded with his Christian faith for

use in a first-year reading program. The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) came to Savage's aid, and he was cleared of all charges.

- ❖ In November 2004, [Louisiana State University](#)'s Muslim Student Association, which had been on campus for 30 years, was denied recognition after refusing to comply with a new policy that forced the group to revise its constitution to explicitly state that it would not deny membership on the basis of "religion" or "sexual orientation." FIRE's involvement restored the group to its rights by March 2005.
- ❖ In 2000, [Pennsylvania State University](#) said that the Young Americans for Freedom student group's constitution and mission statement, which identified rights as "God-given," constituted religious "discrimination" because the words reflected a "devotion to God." FIRE's intervention resulted in a resounding victory for the group.
- ❖ At [Harvard University](#), the Harvard-Radcliffe Christian Fellowship was denied funding in 2002 because its constitution required members to "subscribe without reserve" to the articles of the Christian faith. Harvard's Undergraduate Council decided that this requirement constituted "discriminatory activity." The Undergraduate Council voted to deny funding to the HRCF again in May 2006. The group remains unfunded today.
- ❖ Religious student groups whose constitutions restrict membership and leadership to students who subscribe to the tenets of the group's stated faith are often denied funding for not subscribing to the university's "nondiscrimination" policies. Such cases have arisen at:
  - [Milwaukee School of Engineering](#)
  - [Princeton University](#)
  - [Purdue University](#)
  - [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)
  - [Rutgers University](#)
  - [California State University at San Bernardino](#)
  - [Gonzaga University](#)
  - [Tufts University](#)

## *Conclusion*

---

FIRE's efforts to fight for religious liberty and freedom of association on college campuses have been very successful. For every case that FIRE accepts and wins, however, there are countless cases of infringements upon students' and professors' religious rights that never get reported. These infringements will continue until colleges learn that it is intolerance—not tolerance—to deny students their basic rights of religious association or expression. For institutions that so often claim to value "diversity," America's colleges and universities must recognize that respect for students of faith contributes to, not detracts from, that diversity.