



Knowledge and Faith for a Purposeful Life

February 17, 2015

Ms. Catherine E. Lhaman
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Re: Claim of Title IX Religious Tenet Exemption

Dear Ms. Lhaman:

I am President of Judson College. As such, I am the highest ranking official of this institution. I submit the following statement in order to claim on behalf of the College the religious tenet exemption from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 which is provided for in 20 U.S.C. 1681, and which is the subject of 34 C.F.R. 106.12.

Judson College is a Southern Baptist institution of higher education. It is an Alabama nonprofit corporation whose address is 302 Bibb Street, Marion, Alabama 36756. I enclose the Charter and Bylaws of the College.

Judson College is controlled by a religious organization. That organization is the Alabama Baptist State Convention. This convention is a Southern Baptist general body whose constituency is the cooperating Southern Baptist churches of Alabama. It is an "association of churches" in the terminology of the Internal Revenue Code. Pursuant to the College's Charter and Bylaws, the Alabama Baptist State Convention controls the College in part by exercising its right to select the entire membership of the board of directors of the College, the governing body of the College.

The Convention's authority over the College constitutes control by the Convention which is more than sufficient to cause the institution to be exempt from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964's general prohibition against religious discrimination in employment under 42 U.S.C. 2000e-2(e)(2), § 703(e)(2) an educational institution "which is in whole or in substantial part, owned, supported, controlled, or managed by a particular religion or by a particular religious corporation, association or society." (See, for example, the decision of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit, regarding our sister Alabama Southern Baptist university in *Killinger v. Samford University*, 113 F. 3d 196 (1997)).

Office of the President

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This request for exemption is from provisions of Title IX to the extent application of those provisions would not be consistent with the Convention's religious tenets regarding marriage, sex outside of marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, and abortion.

I identify those provisions to be:

Admissions:

34 C.F.R. § 106.21 including but not limited to (b)(iii) (governing differential treatment on the basis of sex in admissions); and (c) (governing admissions prohibition on the basis of marital or parental status).

Recruitment:

34 C.F.R. § 106.23 (governing nondiscriminatory recruitment).

Education Programs or Activities:

34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(4) (governing different rules of behavior or sanctions), and (b)(7) (otherwise limiting any person in the enjoyment of any right, etc.);

34 C.F.R. § 106.32 (governing housing);

34 C.F.R. § 106.33 (governing comparable facilities such as restrooms and locker rooms);

34 C.F.R. § 106.40 (governing different rules based on marital or parental status of students); and

34 C.F.R. § 106.41 (governing athletics);

Employment:

34 C.F.R. § 106.51 (governing employment);

34 C.F.R. § 106.52 (employment criteria);

34 C.F.R. § 106.53 (recruitment);

34 C.F.R. § 106.57 (governing the consideration of marital or parental status in employment decisions); and

34 C.F.R. § 106.60 (governing pre-employment inquiries).

Our College's Purpose begins: "Judson College is a distinctly Christian Liberal Arts College for Women. As an entity of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Judson affirms its denominational loyalty, and accepts its responsibility to its Baptist constituency and to the total community and state. Emphasis is placed on development of intellectual, spiritual, cultural, physical, and social maturity of young women."

Judson College's Vision includes this statement: "The institution will endeavor to become the finest Christian college of arts, sciences, and professional studies for women in America. Twenty-first century students must be academically prepared for life and learning, always ready to exemplify the light and teachings of Christ."

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The College's Core Values include these statements: "Judson College is a purposeful, caring community of students and employees who live, work, serve, and learn together, and who are united by faith in God and adherence to Christian traditions. Based upon the character and teaching of Christ, the Judson community commits itself to Principles of Light and Truth that frame our common concerns and core values. . . . As a Christian community, the College embraces: Faith in God, adherence to Christian traditions, commitment to the ministry and mission of the Christian church; . . . The making of ethical choices based on the life of Christ, the teachings of the Bible, the well-being of others, and an informed conscience; . . ."

Southern Baptist religious tenets have been described most extensively and most recently in the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. The messengers constituting the Alabama Baptist State Convention adopted the following resolution: "That the Alabama Baptist State Convention approve of the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* as an expression of our unity in doctrine and practice, and recommend the same to all of the trustees elected by the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* is attached.

In regard to marriage, sex outside of marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy and abortion, the following statements are illustrative:

"Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. . . . Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord." XVII, The Family, The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

"Man is the special creation of God, made in His image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation." III Man, The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

"Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. . . . We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death." XV, The Christian and the Social Order, The *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

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The College's policies are rooted in these religious tenets. Application of a regulation would not be consistent with these tenets if the regulation prohibited the institution from following its policies, that is, if the regulation prohibited the College:

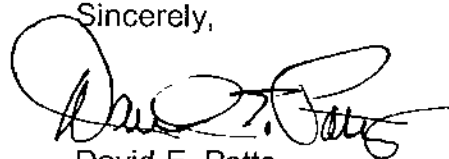
From engaging in recruiting and admissions under a policy which called for the consideration of an applicant for admission's sexual orientation, gender identity (including but not limited to transgendered status), marital status, past and present practices regarding marriage, sex outside marriage, pregnancy, and abortion (these considerations collectively referred to hereafter as "student and employee characteristics"), and prohibited the institution from treating that person differently as a result of that consideration;

From subjecting students to rules of behavior, sanctions, or other treatment because of these student characteristics. Examples would be the institution's rules regarding eligibility for employment of the student by the institution; the assignment of housing, restrooms and locker rooms; restrictions to athletic activities by birth sex; rules prohibiting homosexual conduct including but not limited to a prohibition of a student's engaging in sex with a person of his or her birth sex; prohibition of sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman; and sanctions as the result of pregnancy and abortion;

From making all employment decisions, including but not limited to selection criteria and pre-employment inquiries, recruitment, the decision to employ, retention decisions, and decisions regarding sanctions, in a manner which takes into consideration these employee characteristics.

Thus, this claim for exemption includes exemption from these specified regulations to the extent the regulation would require the institution to treat marriage, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, gender identity, pregnancy and abortion in a manner that is inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Convention.

I trust this letter is sufficient, but if you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

David E. Potts

enclosures



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

April 29, 2015

David E. Potts
President
Judson College
302 Bibb Street
Marion, AL 36756

Dear President Potts:

I write to respond to your February 17, 2015, letter to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), in which you requested a religious exemption for Judson College (College) of Marion, Alabama, from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. § 1681. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity operated by a recipient of Federal financial assistance.

The implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. § 106.12 provides that Title IX does not apply to an educational institution controlled by a religious organization to the extent that application of Title IX would be inconsistent with the controlling organization's religious tenets. Therefore, such educational institutions are allowed to request an exemption from Title IX by identifying the provisions of Title IX that conflict with a specific tenet of the religious organization. The request must identify the religious organization that controls the educational institution and specify the tenets of that organization and the provisions of the law or regulation that conflict with those tenets.

Your request explained that the College, "a Southern Baptist institution of higher education," "is controlled by a religious organization. That organization is the Alabama Baptist State Convention." Your letter enclosed a copy of the College's charter, which states that the College is "a distinctly Christian Liberal Arts College for Women. As an entity of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Judson affirms its denominational loyalty, and accepts its responsibility to its Baptist constituency and to the total community and state." (Article III, Section 1(a)). The charter further explains that "[t]o be nominated for the office of trustee, a member must be in good standing of a cooperating Alabama Baptist church." (Article V, Section A). You also enclosed a copy of the College's bylaws, which state that the "management of the College shall be vested in a Board of Trustees consisting of not more than 32 rotating members plus such other honorary life members as shall be elected by the Alabama Baptist State Convention." (Article I, Section 1).

Your letter requests a religious exemption from the provisions of Title IX "to the extent application of those provisions would not be consistent with the Convention's religious tenets

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

regarding marriage, sex outside of marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, and abortion.” In support of this request, you cite to The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, the most recent statement of faith adopted by the Convention. According to your letter, that statement of faith explains that the tenets of the Convention are that marriage is between one man and one woman and serves as the means for procreation, that God made man in male and female form, and that the “gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God’s creation.” You further cite the Convention’s belief that one should “speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

You explain that it would not be consistent with the Convention’s religious tenets for the University to comply with Title IX to the extent that it prohibits the College from “engaging in recruiting and admissions under a policy which called for the consideration of an applicant for admission’s sexual orientation, gender identity (including but not limited to transgendered status), marital status, past and present practices regarding marriage, sex outside marriage, pregnancy, and abortion[; . . .] from subjecting students to rules of behavior, sanctions, or other treatment because of these student characteristics[; or from] making all employment decisions. . . in a manner which takes into consideration these employee characteristics.”

You state that, for these reasons, the College is requesting an exemption from the following regulatory provisions “to the extent the regulation would require the institution to treat marriage, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, gender identity, pregnancy, and abortion in a manner that is inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Convention:”

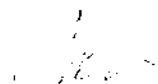
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.21 (governing admission);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.23 (governing recruitment of students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(4) (governing different rules of behavior or sanctions);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.31(b)(7) (governing the limitation of rights, privileges, advantages, or opportunities);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.32 (governing housing);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.33 (governing comparable facilities such as restrooms and locker rooms);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.40 (governing different rules based on marital or parental status of students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.41 (governing athletics);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.51 (governing employment);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.52 (governing employment criteria);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.53 (governing recruitment of employees);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.57 (governing the consideration of marital or parental status in employment decisions); and
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.60 (governing pre-employment inquiries).

The College is exempt from these provisions to the extent that they prohibit discrimination on the basis of marital status, sex outside of marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, or abortion and compliance would conflict with the controlling organization's religious tenets.

Please note that this letter should not be construed to grant exemption from the requirements of Title IX and the regulation other than as stated above. In the event that OCR receives a complaint against your institution, we are obligated to determine initially whether the allegations fall within the exemption here granted. Also, in the unlikely event that a complainant alleges that the practices followed by the institution are not based on the religious tenets of the controlling organization, OCR is obligated to contact the controlling organization to verify those tenets. If the organization provides an interpretation of tenets that has a different practical impact than that described by the institution, or if the organization denies that it controls the institution, this exemption will be rescinded.

I hope this letter responds fully to your request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Catherine E. Lhamon
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education