

Baylor Student Senate calls for LGBTQ policy changes

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WACO—Baylor University’s Student Senate passed a resolution calling on the school to reinterpret its statement on human sexuality and add a nondiscrimination clause to its policies for student organizations.

“Student Government recommends that Baylor University formally and publicly announce the ability for LGBTQ+ groups to be recognized as fully chartered student organizations,” the “No Crying on Sundays” [resolution](#) stated.

The resolution passed 30-15 with one abstention. Decision-making authority with respect to the issue rests with the university administration and its board of regents.

Student Senate debates resolution

Two sophomores on the Student Senate—Addison Knight from Boerne and Veronica Penales from Shreveport, La.—were co-authors of the resolution.

“Senator Knight and I wrote this bill, not with the intent to change the identity of Baylor as a Baptist university, but rather with the desire to have Baylor leadership realize the need for Baylor to reinterpret its human sexuality statement so that it is no longer antithetical to Baylor’s overall mission statement and commitment to diversity and inclusivity, but we cannot achieve our goal of ending the discrimination of these individuals on this campus without the help of Student Senate,” Penales told the *Baylor Lariat* student newspaper.

Other student senators registered their dissent, saying the resolution could strain relations between the Student Senate and Baylor's board of regents. They also said it could be an affront to the Baptist General Convention of Texas, which elects 25 percent of the board and provides financial support for the university.

"Baylor has been and will continue to be a place where people of all different races, religions, sexualities and creeds can come together under the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Baylor's Baptist commitment holds dearly to the university's mission. Let's not abandon that by sending a dead-on-arrival bill up to administration without engaging with them first," said Tate Korpi, a junior from New Braunfels. "Let's work together and foster civil discourse with decision-makers to move forward on this issue. This is a problem. This just wasn't the answer."

The [Waco Tribune-Herald reported](#) Oct. 24 that Gamma Alpha Upsilon, Baylor's unofficial LGBTQ student group, reapplied for official status as a recognized student organization. The group—previously known as the Sexuality Identity Forum—has applied for a charter multiple times in the past decade, and the university has declined its request.

Knight and Penales, along with several other students, launched a [petition](#) that asks Baylor to recognize Gamma Alpha Upsilon, reinterpret its statement on human sexuality, amend its policy on student organizations and "apologize to the current students and alumni who have been excluded from the full rights and benefits of Baylor life as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Reconsideration of policy 'not on the

table'

Baylor University's [statement on human sexuality](#), last revised in 2009, reads in part: "The university affirms the biblical understanding of sexuality as a gift from God. Christian churches across the ages and around the world have affirmed purity in singleness and fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman as the biblical norm. Temptations to deviate from this norm include both heterosexual sex outside of marriage and homosexual behavior. It is thus expected that Baylor students will not participate in advocacy groups which promote understandings of sexuality that are contrary to biblical teaching."

Baylor's [policy on sexual conduct](#), as updated in May 2015, states: "Baylor will be guided by the biblical understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God and that physical sexual intimacy is to be expressed in the context of marital fidelity. Thus, it is expected that Baylor students, faculty and staff will engage in behaviors consistent with this understanding of human sexuality."

In a recent phone [interview with the Baptist Standard](#), Baylor President Linda Livingstone underscored both the university's commitment to being a caring community for all its students, as well as its steadfast commitment to its Christian mission.

Baylor University has no plans to revise its policies on human sexuality or student groups, she said, adding that the matter is "not on the table."

She emphasized Baylor's desire to create a climate where all its students can thrive, including those who identify as LGBTQ.

"It's a challenging space to navigate as a Christian institution," she said.