

Online petitioners square off on Baylor LGBT policy

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WACO—More than 2,700 members of the “Baylor Family”—including students, alumni, major donors and former regents—have signed an open letter asking Baylor University to recognize LGBTQ student organizations.

Outcry over a speech sponsored by the Baylor chapter of Young Americans for Freedom sparked the online [letter](#) to President Linda Livingstone and Vice President for Student Life Kevin Jackson.

“We ask that the university reconsider its exclusion of student organizations that are designed to provide a community for individuals in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) and allied community,” the letter states.

In turn, that appeal prompted an opposing [online petition](#) titled “Save Baylor Traditions,” which urges the university to “stand strong and refuse to abdicate the traditional Christian values for which it has historically stood.”

“The purpose of this petition is to keep Baylor from changing a policy which would in all likelihood result in it losing its status as a traditional Christian institution, thereby stripping it of that which sets it apart,” the petition states.

Baylor policy

Baylor’s [statement on human sexuality](#) says: “Baylor University welcomes all students into a safe and supportive environment in which to discuss and

learn about a variety of issues, including those of human sexuality. 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 acts 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.”

The university’s [student conduct policy](#) also states that Baylor “expects that each Baylor student will conduct himself or herself in accordance with Christian principles as commonly perceived by Texas Baptists.”

Controversy began to swirl when the Baylor Young Americans for Freedom invited Matt Walsh, a writer for *Daily Wire*, to speak April 9 on “The War on Reality: Why the Left Has Set Out to Redefine Life, Gender and Marriage.” His scheduled appearance prompted an earlier [online petition](#) urging that “harmful hate speech” be kept off the Baylor campus.

Call for change

The subsequent open letter calling for a change in policy regarding student organizations included the preface: “We are not protesting Matt Walsh coming to Baylor University. We are using his invitation to speak as an opportunity to achieve long overdue change to the university’s exclusion of LGBTQ student groups.”

The letter asserts Baylor “continues to deny applications for student organizations that would serve as a community for LGBTQ students, such as the Baylor Sexual Identity Forum, to be official campus groups.”

The letter acknowledges “that allowing our LGBTQ students and their allies to organize official student organizations would represent significant

change for Baylor University's current practices."

However, petitioners insist policies allowing dancing on campus and permitting African-American students to enroll also represented major changes.

"As members of the Baylor family who love Baylor and believe in its future, our request is simple: let us not have that unfortunate chapter in Baylor's history repeat itself, requiring us to look back in a few years and realize that we were on the wrong side of an issue of basic compassion and human dignity," the online letter states.

When asked to comment, a Baylor spokesperson simply responded that "the university is aware of the letter."

Call to maintain traditional position

The competing "Save Baylor Traditions" online petition asserts if the university chartered an LGBTQ organization, it would "be going against the official position of the Baptist General Convention of Texas."

On several occasions, the BGCT has gone on record affirming a traditional view on marriage and biblical sexual ethics. Messengers to the 2016 BGCT annual meeting approved [a motion](#) declaring "any church which affirms any sexual relationship outside the bonds of marriage between one man and one woman be considered outside of harmonious cooperation" with the convention.

"It is certainly within the best interest of the university to abide by traditional Christian principles and remain in good standing with the BGCT," the online petition states. "If this is unacceptable to some, they are free to associate themselves with a school which more closely aligns with their position."