



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 15, 2016

Donald S. Fox  
Chief Executive Officer and President-Elect  
Clear Creek Baptist Bible College  
300 Clear Creek Road  
Pineville, KY 40977

Dear Dr. Fox:

I write to respond to your February 16, 2016, letter to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), in which you requested a religious exemption for Clear Creek Baptist Bible College (College) of Pineville, Kentucky, 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 Kentucky Baptist Convention... whose constituency is the cooperating Southern Baptist churches of Kentucky." Your letter states that "[p]ursuant to the College's Charter and Bylaws, the Convention controls the College in part by exercising its right to elect the entire elected membership of the board of directors of the College, the governing body of the College."

Your letter requests a religious exemption from the provisions of Title IX "to the extent those provisions conflict with the Convention's religious tenets 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

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means for procreation, that God made people in male and female form, that the “gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God’s creation,” and that Christians should oppose adultery and homosexuality.

You explain that it would not be consistent with the Convention’s religious tenets for the College to comply with Title IX to the extent that it prohibits the College from “(1) engaging in recruiting and admissions under a policy which called for the consideration of an applicant for admission’s sexual orientation, transgender status, marital status, past and present practices regarding marriage, and sex outside marriage, pregnancy and abortion...; (2) subjecting students to rules of behavior, sanctions, or other treatment because of these student characteristics...; and (3) 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 those regulation[s] require the College to treat marriage, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, gender identity, pregnancy and abortion in a manner that conflicts 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 (governing education programs or activities);
- 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. § 106.34 (governing access to classes and schools);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.36 (governing counseling and use of appraisal and counseling materials);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.37 (governing financial assistance);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.38 (governing employment assistance to students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.39 (governing health and insurance benefits and services);
- 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. § 106.56 (governing fringe benefits);
- 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 marriage, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, 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