



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

SEP 23 1985

Dr. Jack T. Dean  
President  
Grace Bible College  
1011 Aldon, S.W.  
Post Office Box 910  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49509

Dear President Dean:

The Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Education (OCR/ED) has reviewed your response to OCR's letter requesting clarification of Grace Bible College's request for religious exemption from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. In your letter you describe certain policies practiced at Grace Bible College as consistent with the tenets of the religious organization that controls the institution. These policies would violate certain sections of the regulation implementing Title IX (copy enclosed) absent a religious exemption. You have supplied information in your request letter that establishes that Grace Bible College is controlled by a religious organization and that tenets followed by this organization conflict with specific sections of the Title IX regulation. Therefore, I am granting Grace Bible College an exemption to those sections of the Title IX regulation appropriate to your request letter. The exemption is limited to the extent that compliance with the Title IX regulation conflicts with the religious tenets followed by the College. Grace Bible College is hereby exempted from the requirements of the following sections of the Title IX regulation: 34 C.F.R. § 106.21(c)(2) and (4), § 106.40, § 106.51, § 106.53 and § 106.60. The basis for our decision to grant this exemption is discussed in further detail below.

Your letter indicates that "Grace Bible College is controlled by an independent board which is affiliated with the Grace Gospel Fellowship Denomination." The College follows the doctrinal statement of the Grace Gospel Fellowship that states that the Bible, "in its original writings is inerrant, being verbally inspired of God[.]" This relationship between Grace Bible College and the Grace Gospel Fellowship Denomination adequately establishes that Grace Bible College is controlled by a religious organization as is required for consideration for exemption under § 106.12 of the Title IX regulation.

In your letter you indicate that, based on tenets regarding the "biblical standard of Christian living and morality[.]" the College would not permit a student to enroll who is pregnant or recently pregnant and not married. Based on this principle, Grace Bible College has requested and is granted by this letter exemption to § 106.21(c)(2) and (4) (marital or parental status of applicants for admission) and § 106.40 (marital or parental status of students).

In your letter you also indicate that Grace Bible College and the Grace Gospel Fellowship Denomination believe "that men, not women, are called by God as ministers of the Gospel." Thus, Grace Bible College follows employment practices that exclude women from teaching such courses as Homiletics and Pastoral Counseling and from positions reserved for men based on religious tenets. Based on this principle, Grace Bible College is granted by this letter exemption to § 106.51 (employment, general), § 106.53 (recruitment of employees) and § 106.60 (pre-employment inquiries). This exemption is limited to those employment positions reserved for men based on religious tenets.

Your original letter also suggested that Grace Bible College maintained standards regarding appearance. The provision concerning rules of appearance at § 106.31(b)(5) was formally revoked and deleted from the Title IX regulation. Thus, an exemption for appearance codes is not necessary.

This letter should not be construed to grant exemption from any section of the Title IX regulation not specifically mentioned. In the event that OCR receives a complaint against your institution, we are obligated to determine initially whether the allegations fall within the exemption herein 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. I regret the inordinate delay in responding to your original request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Chicago Regional Office for Civil Rights. The address is:

Linda A. McGovern  
Acting Regional Civil Rights Director  
Office for Civil Rights, Region V  
Department of Education  
300 South Wacker Drive, 8th Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Sincerely,



Harry M. Singleton  
Assistant Secretary  
for Civil Rights

Enclosure

cc: Linda A. McGovern, Acting Regional Civil Rights Director, Region V