

Harding College
Searcy, Arkansas

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

72143

July 21, 1976

Dr. David Matthews, Secretary
Department of Health, Education and Welfare
Washington, D. C. 20201

Dear Dr. Matthews:

I am writing to inform you that Harding College, the Harding Graduate School of Religion, and Harding Academy of Searcy (kindergarten through twelfth grade) all operated directly by the administration of the College, will comply with the regulations of Title IX insofar as they do not violate our religious principles upon which this institution was founded and has been operating during its 52 years as a senior institution. We have conducted our self-study, appointed our compliance officers, and established a grievance procedure. Now we are seeking exemption in those areas which we feel are incompatible with Biblical principles by which we are guided.

Harding College is a Christian institution, supported and operated by members of the church of Christ, who believe that one of its most important Biblical principles has been the proper role and function of men and women in society, the home, and the church. To abandon the roles delineated and defined by God is to reject His plan for mankind.

Harding College has been established upon the teachings of the Word of God. Thus our basic thrust, rules and regulations on campus and programs recognize that men and women are of equal personal worth in the sight of God but that the role and the function of men and women are quite different. Women must not usurp the place of man in society, in the church, and in the home and men must not abandon their position as head of the home and spiritual leader, which are responsibilities assigned by the Word of God.

In the sacred Scriptures women are not permitted to serve as preachers, deacons, or elders. Neither should they serve as a teacher of Bible in a classroom occupied by adult males.

The Scriptures also exhort and admonish Christian women toward the observance of modesty in apparel and activity. This would preclude their appearance in indecent or immodest attire, as well as participating with young men in activities which may lead to thoughts or practices contrary to Christian character and morality.

Although Harding College is controlled by the church of Christ, occasional differences of interpretation and belief may arise and the position of Harding may not be agreed upon by all members. These differences occur because the churches of Christ have no written creed other than the Bible, no earthly headquarters, and accept only Christ as the head of the church and recognize the sincerity of divergent views.

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The revealed Will of God indicates only two sexes--male and female. Furthermore, the only sexual relationship approved by the Scriptures is that found to be between a male and female in wedlock. Therefore, all sexual relationships other than that one cannot be condoned. In substance, Harding College must always reserve the right to take action against persons involved in heterosexual relationships outside the holy union of wedlock and in homosexual relationships.

Exemptions sought:

1. Section 86.34 of Title IX provides that there shall be no discrimination in course offerings based upon sex. Ninety-nine percent of our courses are open to both sexes, but there are some exceptions.
 - a. Because of our religious beliefs and the fact that women are not permitted to preach, there are three courses in the preaching division of the Bible Department labeled Bible 425x, 420Gx, and 421Gx which are open to men only.
 - b. Because our religious conviction opposes mixed swimming, our swimming classes and programs are separated by sex.
 - c. Because our religious convictions are opposed to compromising positions and situations that are immodest, our gymnastics and weight-lifting classes have separate sections for men and women.
2. Housing regulations. Section 86.32 of Title IX regulations reads, "A recipient shall not on the basis of sex apply different rules or regulations, etc." We believe that the Biblical teaching on the roles of men and women necessitates our being more protective of our women students. For this reason we have always required them to be in earlier in the evening and have always been more security conscious for their safety. Since it is so late in the year and our next semester is upon us, we are not planning to change the program drastically since it would not be fair to incoming students. However, we are in the process of modifying our regulations to avoid any unnecessary discrimination.
3. Intramural and intercollegiate athletics. Section 86.41 provides for equal opportunity for participation in athletics. Harding has long maintained an excellent intramural program for young men and young women. About seventy-five percent of our young men participate and about sixty-five percent of our young ladies are engaged in numerous sports activities. The program is about as equal as it can be insofar as the sexes are concerned.

In intramural athletics we can control the dress of those who participate. We cannot control the dress of those who participate in intercollegiate athletics from other campuses. For this reason, we seek exemption on religious grounds from all women's sports which we deem to bring to our campus improper and suggestive attire. For many years we have forbidden bands, athletes and other groups from other institutions to come to the campus if they are accompanied by young ladies who are dressed in indecent uniforms, such as twirlers, majorettes, etc.

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4. Rules and regulations. Section 86.31 of Title IX regulations relate to educational programs and activities. Harding's dress code pertaining to modest and decent attire is based upon religious tenet. We seek to continue our standards in this area. There are also separate clubs, social clubs and religious clubs, such as the Timothy Club for young preaching students open to men only and JOY, a Christian service organization for young ladies. Such organizations remain separate due to the Biblical delineation of Christian service of men and women.

Young men have been permitted to smoke only in their rooms, but the young ladies have not been permitted to smoke at all. This year will be a transition in which we will phase out men's smoking so that no one will be permitted to smoke on the campus after this year.

Harding College also operates a Christian Communication Program which is a preacher training program. In view of the fact that Biblical injunctions forbid women serving as ministers, men only are permitted to enter the program. The wives also are offered free classes designed specifically for the wives of ministers and they are permitted to audit courses and sit in on classes without charge. Funds are also raised from churches to support the men while they are studying to be ministers. Because of our religious tenet in this matter, we must still allow men only in the program.

5. Financial assistance. Section 86.37 pertains to nondiscrimination in financial assistance. At Harding we have several scholarship funds which have been provided by others. Two of them are for women only but the bulk of our funds have been given for ministerial students and for those who are majoring in Bible. In view of our religious tenet concerning the necessity of ministers being men, it is essential that the scholarships and loan funds continue to be provided for men only. Therefore, we seek an exemption in this area because of our religious tenet.
6. Parental status. Section 86.40 reads, "A recipient shall not apply any rule concerning a student's actual or potential parental, family or marital status which treats students differently on the basis of sex." Because our religious tenets strongly oppose extra-marital sexual and homosexual relationships, Harding must reserve the right to exclude students, faculty members, or staff members, male or female, who violate the Scriptures concerning such relationship. We, therefore, seek exemption from this section of Title IX.

Harding College is not seeking to discriminate against women, but being controlled by the church of Christ and its interpretation of the sacred Scriptures and being established upon Christian principles, it is imperative that we seek exemption in these areas which we feel would violate our conscience. We appreciate the recognition by our government of the conscience of religious people and the diversity of their religious tenets. We are grateful for the opportunity to secure exemption in these areas in which we feel the Scriptures would forbid us to participate.

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Having exemption in these areas would permit us to develop a program of academic, social, athletic, and religious efforts which would be consistent with our understanding of the Word of God. If you have any questions or desire more information on our religious tenets, we will be happy to provide it for you.

Thanking you for your understanding and consideration in this matter, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Clifton L. Ganus, Jr.
President

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