



**Southeastern**  
Baptist Theological Seminary

December 18, 2015

Ms. Catherine F. Lhaman  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave. S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Re: Claim of Title IX Religious Tenet Exemption

Dear Ms. Lhaman:

I am President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. As such, I am the highest ranking official of this institution. I submit the following statement in order to claim on behalf of the Seminary the religious tenet exemption from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 which is provided for in 20 U.S.C. 1681, and which is the subject of 34 C.F.R. 106.12.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary is a Southern Baptist institution of higher education. It is a North Carolina nonprofit corporation whose principal office address is 120 South Wingate Street, Wake Forest, North Carolina, 27587. I attach the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Seminary.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary is controlled by a religious organization. That organization is the Southern Baptist Convention. This Convention is a Southern Baptist general body whose constituency is the cooperating Southern Baptist churches of North America. It is an "association of churches" in the terminology of the Internal Revenue Code. Pursuant to the Seminary's Charter and Bylaws, the Southern Baptist Convention controls the Seminary in part by exercising its right to select the entire membership of the board of directors of the Seminary, the governing body of the Seminary.

The Convention's authority over the Seminary constitutes control by the Convention which is more than sufficient to cause the institution to be exempt from the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964's general prohibition against religious discrimination in employment under 42 U.S.C. 2000e-2, §703(e)(2), as an educational institution "which is in whole or in substantial part, owned, supported, controlled, or managed by a particular religion or by a particular religious corporation, association, or society." (See, for example, the decision of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit, regarding our sister Southern Baptist university in *Killinger v. Sanford University*, 113 F. 3d 196 (1997)).

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This request for exemption is from provisions of Title IX to the extent application of those provisions would not be consistent with the Convention's religious tenets regarding marriage, sex outside of marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, and abortion.

I identify those provisions to be:

Admissions:

34 C.F.R. § 106.21 including but not limited to (b)(iii) (governing differential treatment on the basis of sex in admissions); and (c) (governing admissions prohibition on the basis of marital or parental status).

Recruitment:

34 C.F.R. § 106.23 (governing nondiscriminatory recruitment).

Education Programs or Activities:

34 C.F.R. § 106.31 (b)(4) (governing different rules of behavior or sanctions), and (b)(7) (otherwise limiting any person in the enjoyment of any right, etc.);

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. § 106.40 (governing different rules based on marital or parental status of students);  
and

34 C.F.R. § 106.41 (governing athletics);

Employment:

34 C.F.R. § 106.51 (governing employment);

34 C.F.R. § 106.52 (employment criteria);

34 C.F.R. § 106.53 (recruitment);

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 Seminary's Mission Statement reads as follows, "Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by equipping students to serve the Church and fulfill the Great Commission." In fulfilling the Seminary's mission, the Faculty teach our students in accordance with and not contrary to the Southern Baptist Convention's Statement of Faith, *The Baptist Faith & Message 2000*.

Southern Baptist religious tenets have been described most extensively and most recently in *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, a statement of faith adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention. That statement is attached.

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In regard to marriage, sex outside of marriage, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy and abortion, the following statements are illustrative:

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means of procreation of the human race... Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. XVIII The Family, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

Man is the special creation of God, made in His image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. III Man, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. (The Southern Baptist Convention elaborated on this tenet most recently in 2014 by the adoption of a resolution "On Transgender Identity." It is attached.)

Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography... We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death." XV The Christian and the Social Order, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

The Seminary's policies are rooted in these religious tenets. Application of a regulation would not be consistent with these tenets if the regulation prohibited the institution from following its policies, that is, if the regulation prohibited the Seminary:

From engaging in recruiting and admissions under a policy which called for the consideration of an applicant for admission's sexual orientation, transgendered status, marital status, past and present practices regarding marriage, sex outside of marriage, pregnancy, and abortion (these considerations collectively referred to hereafter as "student and employee characteristics"), and prohibited the institution from treating that person differently as a result of that consideration;

From subjecting students to rules of behavior, sanctions, or other treatment because of the students characteristics. Examples would be the institution's rules regarding eligibility for employment of the student by the institution; the assignment of housing, restrooms and locker rooms, and restrictions to athletic activities by birth sex; prohibition of sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman; sanctions as the result of pregnancy and abortion; and

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From making all employment decisions, including but not limited to selection criteria and pre-employment inquiries, recruitment, the decision to employ, retention decisions, and decisions regarding sanctions, in a manner which takes into consideration these employee characteristics.

Thus, this claim for exemption includes exemption from those specified regulations to the extent the regulation would require the institution to treat marriage, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, gender identity, pregnancy and abortion in a manner that is inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Convention.

I trust this letter is sufficient, but if you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you kindly for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel L. Akin', written over a horizontal line.

Daniel L. Akin  
*President*

NOTE: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 120 South Wingate Street, Wake Forest, North Carolina **is not** affiliated with any other institution of higher education by the same name.

Enclosures: Articles of Incorporation for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Bylaws of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary  
The Baptist Faith and Message 2000  
2014 Resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention "On Transgender Identity"