

Calvin College agrees to study faculty limits on gay-rights advocacy: A matter of academic freedom

News in the [December 1, 2009](#) issue

A controversial memo at Calvin College, which was adopted in May and publicly surfaced in August, said it is unacceptable for Calvin faculty and staff to teach, write or advocate counter to Christian Reformed Church policies on homosexuality.

The board of trustees had affirmed a 2008 statement backing the college's commitment to the denomination's tenets on homosexuality: the practice is sinful, but the orientation is not.

However, in light of continued questions on faculty restrictions at the Grand Rapids, Michigan, campus, the board now has said the college will take more time to study how CRC teachings relate to academic freedom.

Board chair Bastian Knoppers, in a letter issued to the college's faculty on October 26, said the policy of banning the advocacy of homosexual practices and same-sex marriage has not changed. But trustees said they deeply regret the "confusion and distress that has resulted."

Earlier in October, the college's Faculty Senate voted to ask the board to withdraw the memo, saying it stifles academic freedoms that encourage open discussion of social issues between students and professors.

Knoppers said discussions over the issue have been "intense, at times uncomfortably so," but also "grounded in good thinking, frank speaking and spirited meetings" and perhaps were "overdue." He added: "While awkwardly begun, the discussions, debates, panels, meetings and writings will, we believe, make the college a better place."

Professors still digesting Knoppers's letter said they were pleased that the issue will continue to be discussed, according to Faculty Senate vice chair Karin Maag.

“When they came to a lightning-quick conclusion in May, it wasn’t good,” she said.
“So coming to a lightning-quick decision now wouldn’t be good, either.” -*Religion
News Service*