



Notre Dame punts on gay protections

By Jay Shaff

May 2, 2012

<http://chicago.gopride.com/news/article.cfm/articleid/28959129>

SOUTH BEND, IN -- University of Notre Dame officials have once again declined to consider implementation of substantive LGBT protections for students, faculty and employees by refusing to add sexual orientation to the university's non-discrimination clause. The University will also delay until fall a decision to recognize a gay-straight alliance group.

Both the Student Senate and the Faculty Senate passed resolutions this year backing the addition of sexual orientation to the non-discrimination clause and recognition of an alliance group. However, the proposals will not go before Notre Dame's board of trustees scheduled to meet later this week in South Bend.

Notre Dame, renowned for its Roman Catholic hierarchy, athletics and powerful alumni, is one of the few major universities in the U.S. that has not adopted meaningful and enforceable policies to relieve bias toward the same-sex community. There are approximately 8,000 undergraduate students on campus and 120,000 alumni worldwide.

LGBT community members, supporters and friends have been seeking protections for same-sex individuals at Notre Dame for years. The University, a private institution, is under no legal obligation to extend such protections and it is argued that students are aware of the philosophy promulgated and make an informed decision to attend.

Avoiding the issue of exclusion of the LGBT society, Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., Notre Dame's president said: "In all of our efforts, we seek within the context of Church teaching to better realize the ideals expressed in the University's 'Spirit of Inclusion' statement – to create an environment of mutual respect, hospitality and warmth in which none are strangers and all may flourish."

The University's "Spirit of Inclusion" statement dates back to 1997, and is without enforcement substance. <http://dulac.nd.edu/spirit-of-inclusion/>

Rev. Thomas P. Doyle, C.S.C., vice president for student affairs said: "The University has made significant progress over the past 15 years in its support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning students, but we've always emphasized the desire to continuously improve and to be responsive to student concerns. The conversations between students and the administration both recently and over the past several years have been very important."

The rift between the gay community and the Vatican is not new. Most recently, the Catholic Church has made unsuccessful attempts to undermine the Illinois Civil Union bill by refusing to cooperate with same-sex couples and the State on adoption and foster care, ordered U.S. nuns to condemn gays and lesbians, and attempted to thwart New York's gay marriage legalization.