

Faith-based universities are under attack

Biden administration is devaluing religion's role in society

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We've all heard the expression "What starts with the Jews doesn't end with the Jews." Displays of rampant antisemitism across America's elite institutions have come under greater scrutiny since this month's testimony by three university presidents before Congress. That a climate of Jew-hatred permeates across establishments regarded for their liberal instructional agenda may help explain why, up until December's congressional hearing, many lawmakers resisted commenting on the antisemitism erupting on our campuses.

With that said, years of progressive politicians ignoring the rise of such animus at prominent places of learning are rendered more troubling when placed alongside recent efforts by the Biden administration to negatively expose and investigate Christian universities, including Michigan-based Hillsdale College and Grand Canyon University in Phoenix.

Christian schools are committed to spiritually and academically enriching students. Increasingly, however, their platforms detail objectives dissimilar to the toxic diversity, equity and inclusion doctrine preferred by Democrats and prioritized by Ivy League universities.

Public consideration given to a lawsuit filed earlier this year involving Hillsdale College feels more suspicious than sincere for a school that receives no federal funding.

The legal action was entered by Grace Chen and Danielle Villarreal, two students who allege that they were sexually assaulted in 2021 and that administrators at Hillsdale refused to take their claims seriously.

Apart from accusations charging the private Christian school with failing to conduct a meaningful look into the allegations, the lawsuit asserts that Hillsdale violated its responsibilities under Title IX, a federal law enacted in 1972 that outlines several provisions protecting victims of sexual assault.

Yet as a private institution, Hillsdale is relieved of obligations delineated in Title IX and is therefore free from government constraints.

More importantly, Robert Norton, the college's general counsel, is referenced in The Wall Street Journal denoting that Hillsdale's process for resolving sexual abuse cases is "stronger, quicker, and more confidential" than the bureaucratic maze afforded under the federal civil rights law.

Unveiling Hillsdale to the legalities concerning Title IX may result in risk to reputation and a mischaracterization of the college's role in responding to student complaints.

While resistant to blaming university leaders for failing to condemn genocidal chants leveled against Jewish students, President Biden's Department of Education also remains relatively quiet on sexual violence unfolding at secular colleges, choosing instead to reorient interest toward events at Christian schools such as Hillsdale and Liberty University.

The latest data on the most dangerous campuses confirm that Christian schools are among the safest in the nation when compared with academies like Harvard University.

The high degree of scrutiny circling a place like Hillsdale reflects attempts to rebrand conservative institutions in academia's progressive image, under which reverence for religion and morality is undermined in favor of "woke" pedagogical instruction.

The media noise regarding the Hillsdale lawsuit

comes within days of the Biden administration targeting Grand Canyon University with a \$37.7 million fine, the largest penalty in history to be imposed against a Christian college. The unprecedented toll stems from the government's assertion that the university was dishonest in disclosing tuition costs.

The school is appealing the egregious Department of Education decision, with university President Brian Mueller declaring at a news conference that "this is the weaponization of a department that has an opinion that isn't shared by anybody else."

In fairness, a school like Grand Canyon cannot afford a cost of this magnitude and, despite its expansion, does not have the economic cushion present at other universities.

An internal examination of 100 other universities found that only "two percent of universities show total program costs for doctoral programs," with a separate report by the Government Accountability Office showing that "91 percent of the colleges reviewed have misleading information" related to financial aid for prospective students.

The outsize focus on rebuking faith-centered establishments imperils the academic health of our nation.

It bears mentioning that Liberty University is also grappling with an investigation by the government over its handling of sexual assault allegations, with some reports indicating targeted maneuvers by sources at Mr. Biden's Department of Education to disparage the school through publicly leaking information about the case.

The discrediting of Christian universities represents liberalism's fractious relationship with religion and aims to deflect from the pervasive moral failures across other American academies.

Indeed, increased matriculation at religious schools reveals Americans' discontent with politicized instruction.

In recent years, Christian schools such as Tennessee's Belmont University have benefited from rising enrollment, with other religious establishments, including New York's Yeshiva University, Judaism's flagship modern Orthodox institution, partnering with Christian groups like the Philos Project to create collaborative academic avenues for the faithful.

The targeting of Christian colleges is part of a predictable pattern by the Biden administration to devalue religion's role in American society and punish those who espouse an ideological ethos separate from the enlightened academic spaces largely responsible for our nation's secularization.

By casting attention on establishments committed to preserving principled education, Democrats are setting a damaging precedent under which the only educational enterprises worth protecting will be those conforming to a progressive tenor.

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