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FAQs on SPU Board Decision

Updated: 5/23/22

Here are some of the most commonly asked questions and answers about the Seattle Pacific University Board of Trustees recent decision to retain SPU's employee lifestyle expectations.

Related documents mentioned in this FAQ.

[SPU's Statement of Faith](#)

[SPU's Mission, Core Themes, Vision Statement](#)

Employment policy

Who made the decision to retain SPU's Employee Lifestyle Expectations regarding sexual conduct?

SPU's Board of Trustees is the governing authority for the University, and they made the final decision.

Why did the SPU Board of Trustees retain this employment policy?

[The board issued a statement](#) on May 23, 2022, explaining their decision.

What is SPU's current employment policy related to human sexuality?

Regular faculty and staff are expected to affirm SPU's Statement of Faith and to abide by conduct standards in the Employee Handbook, including the Employee Lifestyle Expectations, which states in part that employees are expected to refrain from sexual behavior that is inconsistent with the University's understanding of Biblical standards, including cohabitation, extramarital sexual activity, and same-sex sexual activity.

Does SPU have conduct expectations for employees based on religious beliefs?

As a religious organization, and as permitted by law, the university reserves the right to prefer employees or prospective employees on the basis of religion, including the right to expect university employees to hold certain religious beliefs, to participate in certain religious observances, and to refrain from certain conduct based on the university's religious beliefs.

Do you have to be a Christian to be a faculty or staff member at SPU?

Regular faculty and staff members are expected to affirm SPU's Statement of Faith. Our faculty and staff come from a wide range of Christian traditions, including Greek Orthodox, Baptist, Catholic, and Free Methodist. While SPU does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, SPU does have religious-based conduct expectations for faculty and staff.

Do other Christian universities have similar employment policies?

Yes, many faith-based universities have similar policies, including many in the [Council for Christian Colleges & Universities](#).

Free Methodist affiliation

What is SPU's relationship to the Free Methodist Church?

Seattle Pacific University was founded by [Free Methodist](#) pioneers in 1891 and is affiliated with the Free Methodist Church USA. SPU also has close relationships with local Free Methodist churches.

What does it mean to be affiliated with the Free Methodist Church?

SPU is one of a number of educational institutions that is part of the Association of Free Methodist Educational Institutions (AFMEI). The Free Methodist Church has identified three categories of AFMEI institutions (denominational, affiliated, and associate) and has listed criteria for qualification as an AFMEI institution in the Free Methodist Book of Discipline. SPU has provisions in its Articles of Incorporation and bylaws that reflect its affiliation with the Free Methodist Church.

Students

Does this decision by the Board affect students?

The Board decision is related to SPU's employment policy for faculty and staff. Undergraduate students are governed by [SPU's Student Standards of Conduct](#), which are based on the University's Christian mission and are intended to provide a positive learning environment, promote the intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical well-being of students, and facilitate character formation.

Do students have to be Christian to attend SPU?

No, students do not have to be Christians to attend SPU, nor are they required to have any faith affiliation. SPU offers a liberal arts education grounded in the Christian faith to any student who wants to apply.

Are there LGBTQIA+ students on campus?

Yes, there are LGBTQIA+ students enrolled at SPU. The university is committed to

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welcoming and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students in
all academic pursuits, faith practices, and life together in community. Acknowledging
the complexity of ongoing issues related to LGBTQ gender identity and sexual
orientation, SPU desires to engage these conversations with humility and care.

Are there LGBTQIA+ students on campus?

Yes, there are LGBTQIA+ students enrolled at SPU. The university is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion for all undergraduate and graduate students, welcoming and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students in all academic pursuits, faith practices, and life together in community. Acknowledging the complexity of ongoing issues related to LGBTQ gender identity and sexual orientation, SPU desires to engage these conversations with humility and care.

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