NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Gonzaga University reverses decision on Knights of Columbus student group

Dan Morris-Young | May. 1, 2013

A March decision to decline official club status to a Knights of Columbus college council at Gonzaga University because the group was all male and exclusively Catholic [1] has been reversed by Gonzaga president Thayne McCulloh.

A statement issued from the president's office Tuesday also said McCulloh has "directed the Student Activities department to review and update the 'Clubs and Organizations Recognition Policy' with the goal of more clearly and explicitly identifying benefits of recognition and criteria for club eligibility."

The revisions are expected to be in place for the next academic year.

McCulloh "once again affirmed the University's value, respect and support for the purpose and good works of the Knights of Columbus, with which the University has enjoyed a long and mutually collaborative relationship at the local level," the statement said.

As a result, Knights of Columbus St. Aloysius Gonzaga Council No. 12583 is "granted permission to utilize the university's name in its title, fund-raise on campus for the purpose of advancing the Council's mission and activities, meet in and utilize campus facilities ... and to recruit members and participants in membership activities such as the semi-annual Club Fair."

In a story in Wednesday's daily Spokane newspaper [2], *The Spokesman-Review*, the Knights' campus organization's faculty adviser, Eric Cunningham, says Spokane Bishop Blase Cupich instructed student members not to talk with the media.

In an email response issued Wednesday morning through his public relations director, Cupich told *NCR*, "While I have not been involved in the university's decision-making, I have always insisted that this is a matter to be worked out between the student group and the university without outside interference and I have encouraged everyone involved to pursue that course."

A Gonzaga professor and assistant director of Gonzaga's Catholic studies curriculum, Cunningham told reporter Jody Lawrence-Turner, "I don't get the sense the opinion of the club has changed any. It would be nice for the administration to say the (Knights of Columbus) exemplifies the values of Gonzaga. ... I'm not entirely sure that the campus climate is the most salubrious for the club."

Requests for comment from the national office of the Knights, which oversees its college campus program, were not returned Wednesday morning.

The Knights of Columbus have college councils on more than 275 U.S. college and university campuses. Those schools include the University of Notre Dame, The Catholic University of America, Texas A&M University, the Air Force Academy, Louisiana State University and Harvard University.

College councils include more than 24,000 members, the knights' website reports.

A March letter explaining the original decision signed by Sue Weitz, vice president for Student Life, has been quoted as saying the Knights of Columbus' all-male, Catholic-only membership criteria was "inconsistent with the policy and practice of student organization recognition at Gonzaga University, as well as the university's commitment to non-discrimination based on certain characteristics, one of which is religion."

Source URL (retrieved on *2016-05-29 08:30*): http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/gonzaga-university-reverses-decision-knights-columbus-student-group

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/49641
[2] http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2013/may/01/gonzaga-president-overturns-decision/