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Moot Supreme Court Case

Hastings Christian Fellowship v. Martinez

The Christian Legal Society Chapter of the University of California, Hastings College of Law (CLS) filed suit against the university in a California federal district for violating its First Amendment rights. The Hastings College of Law failed to recognize the CLS as an official student organization because state law requires all registered student organizations to allow "any student to participate, become a member, or seek leadership positions, regardless of their status or beliefs." In contrast, CLS requires its members to attest in writing that "I believe in: The Bible as the inspired word of God; The Deity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, God's son; The vicarious death of Jesus Christ for our sins; His bodily resurrection and His personal return; The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration; [and] Jesus Christ, God's son, is Lord of my life." The district court dismissed the case.

On appeal, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed, holding that the school's conditions on recognizing student groups were viewpoint neutral and reasonable. Therefore, the school's conditions did not violate the CLS's First Amendment rights.

Question: Did the Hastings College of Law violate the First Amendment rights of the members of the Christian Legal Society by denying their right to freely exercise their religion? Should the Appeals Court decision be reversed?