



Female College Backtracks on Decision to Allow Males to Attend

St. Mary's College, an all-female institution in Notre Dame, Indiana, has reversed a decision announced in November that would have allowed men who refer to themselves as women to enroll in the school. Initially, so-called trans women would have been accepted as students beginning with the fall 2024 semester.

However, after anger from students and Catholic leaders objecting to the announcement, the school has backtracked on the decision and will remain a female-only college.



Ken Lund/flickr

“Some worried that this was much more than a policy decision: they felt it was a dilution of our mission or even a threat to our Catholic identity,” wrote university President Katie Conboy in an email obtained by [The Daily Signal](#) explaining the reversal. “Moreover, we clearly underestimated our community’s genuine desire to be engaged in the process of shaping a policy of such significance. As this last month unfolded, we lost people’s trust and unintentionally created division where we had hoped for unity. For this, we are deeply sorry.”

“Taking all these factors into consideration, the Board has decided that we will return to our previous admission policy,” Conboy wrote. “Although this has been a challenging time for our community, we believe that the College should continually grapple with the complexity of living our Catholic values in a changing world.”

In [updating](#) their nondiscrimination policy in November, the school changed it to allow applicants “whose sex is female or who consistently live and identify as women.” According to Conboy, the school’s board completely supported the new policy.

“This confidence from our Board underscores their commitment that as an employer, Saint Mary’s must stand firm in its position as an inclusive community leader, and that as educators, we should continue to create an environment where all women belong and thrive,” Conboy wrote at the time.

However, the change was not well received by the university community.

One Catholic leader who was particularly vexed by the decision was Bishop Kevin Rhoades of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese, where the school is located. Rhoades said he believed he should have been consulted about such a change in policy for the school but was not.

“On many occasions, Pope Francis has reaffirmed the Church’s teaching on the sexual embodiment of the human person and has criticized various forms of gender ideology,” Rhoades wrote in a [statement](#) blasting the new policy. “The letter from the president of Saint Mary’s quotes Pope Francis on the importance of love but does not mention the Holy Father’s continual rejection of gender ideology — the same ideology behind this new policy.”



Written by [James Murphy](#) on December 23, 2023

“The Church has always rejected a dualistic anthropology that separates body and soul, and which consigns sexual identity to one’s individual self-declaration,” Rhoades added. “The new admissions policy at Saint Mary’s College erroneously suggests that ‘woman’ is a purely social category that anyone, regardless of sex, can inhabit.”

Reportedly, incensed alumni threatened to pull donations from the school over the new policy, which, along with Rhoades’ statement, may have been a main reason for the reversal.

“When this admissions decision became public hundreds of alumni banded together to stand for the Church and her teachings,” said Clare Ath, a 2018 graduate of St. Mary’s. “While I would hope the reversal is because administrators realized we must teach the truth with love, my guess is the reversal is because alumni banded together, pulled their donations, notified their diocese and media, and said we will not let Our Lady’s college be corrupted by secular gender ideology.”

While President Conboy is correct when she states that we live in a “changing world,” as the president of a Catholic college, she must be aware that one thing that never changes is God’s immutable Word. Thankfully, many in the St. Mary’s community and their bishop understand this truth.

“No doubt Saint Mary’s College desires to promote love, inclusion, and acceptance within the community. But it does not do so authentically when it separates love from truth,” wrote Bishop Rhoades.



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