



University of Central Oklahoma Reverses Itself and Will Let Ken Ham Speak

Faced with a growing backlash of legislators and citizens concerned about anti-Christian bias and disrespect for free speech at a public institution, the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) in Edmond, Oklahoma, reversed itself late Thursday, and has invited Answers in Genesis founder Ken Ham to speak on the campus. The presentation will happen on the same day as Ham was originally scheduled to speak, before the invitation was rescinded.



According to UCO President Don Betz, the university will offer a presentation on March 5 on the First Amendment at 10:00 a.m. Ham will speak at 3:00 p.m. in, ironically enough, Constitution Hall. Accompanying Ham will be Dr. Georgia Purdom, who will speak on “Genetics and the Bible.”

But rather than simply allowing Ham and Purdom the opportunity to present their perspective and letting the audience draw their own conclusions, as would be the case with most speakers, the university has scheduled a second program the next day, on March 6 (thus allowing a rebuttal to Ham and Purdom, without any chance for the two to rebut back). The second day’s discussion will cover the contemporary processes of scientific inquiry and evolution.

The invitation, subsequent rescission, and eventual re-invitation for Ham to speak is shrouded in mystery. As Paul Blair, pastor of Edmond’s Fairview Baptist Church, noted, “Subsequent university press releases continued to shirk any responsibility and confused the facts. They failed to protect the safety and well-being of student Duvall, neglected to protect Mr. Ham’s First Amendment rights and then refused to admit their mistake.”

Stockton Duvall, president of the UCO student body, explained that the student association had worked with the student group Valid World Views to bring Ham to campus in early March. But then the invitation to Ham was suddenly rescinded. According to Duvall, he was bullied by a group on campus into revoking the speaking invitation.

“I want to be very clear on this,” Duvall said. “There have been members of our campus who have tried to bully me in my decision. While none of the examples has involved members of the administration, there is definitely something that must be done to address this issue. I am not the first person to be personally attacked by a very vocal group on campus that has little tolerance for opposing views.”

Ham’s talk was to have been on the issues involving Darwinian evolution theory, not same-sex marriage. Ham is a creationist, president of Answers in Genesis, and the creator of an Ark Encounter exhibit in Kentucky, lit up each night in rainbow colors. Apparently, a statement he made about the rainbow being a “reminder that God will never again judge the wickedness of man with a global flood,” and his companion comment, “The rainbow itself wasn’t designed to be a symbol of freedom, love, pride or the LGBTQ movement,” angered members of that LGBTQ movement.



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 17, 2018

Duvall said that when the LGBTQ organization at UCO began “bullying” him to prevent Ham’s presentation in opposition to the Darwinian evolution theory, he suggested a compromise: Ham could sign a statement that he would not even address same-sex marriage if it came up during question-and-answer time. Ham refused, saying, “I wasn’t prepared to do that because I believe there should be freedom of speech and that’s what the university should allow. I don’t attack these people. I don’t hate them. I wasn’t going to talk on them or deal with that in my presentation, but if it came up in question time I would want the freedom to answer those questions.”

The disinvitation of Ham touched off an unhappy reaction, and UCO President Betz issued a statement, which seemed only to cloud what had happened. After offering praise to the concept of a “free exchange of ideas” on the college campus, he added, “Our campus community is composed of many people and organizations that offer various viewpoints on many topics. A diverse group of students posed questions about the decision to invite Mr. Ham to campus.”

Betz then made a statement that appears contradictory. “While any reports of bullying will be and are being investigated, it is important to state that reports that the LGBTQ community prevented Mr. Ham from being invited to campus are inaccurate and unfair to members of our campus community.”

This makes no sense.

How can President Betz know that the LGBTQ community didn’t attempt to prevent Ham from being invited to the campus, *before he has even conducted an investigation*? Is he calling Duvall a liar? Clearly, Duvall felt threatened. Obviously, someone did something or said something to get Ham’s invitation rescinded. Betz seems to be hanging Duvall out to dry.

Rachel Watson, president of the Student Alliance for Equality, also took issue with Duvall’s remarks. She said, “Any individual affected by a governing body’s decision should have the right to *ask probing questions* in the course of frank, open, and civil discussion, and *to seek thoughtful explanations of decisions, including those regarding the allocation of our student body’s shared resources.*” (Emphasis added.)

What Watson appears to be saying is that her group was *just asking questions* about the decision to bring in Ham, and they wanted answers. In other words, the decision to bring in a person who does not believe in same-sex “marriage,” even that was not his speech topic, should be challenged with “questions.” That hardly seems to exhibit a robust dedication to a “free exchange of ideas,” which President Betz said UCO is dedicated to.

Pastor Blair remarked that “many are attempting to confuse the facts,” adding, “There is MUCH more to come.”

As Blair noted, UCO “has a record of spending substantial taxpayer dollars on Drag Queen Shows and Sex Carnivals. However, it resists allowing conservative or Christian voices to be heard. There is a systemic problem that has still not been addressed.... It is shocking to see a public university so out of touch with the people who fund it.”

Ham will speak at Blair’s church on March 5 at 6:30 p.m., after his campus speech. The church is located at 1230 North Sooner Road in Edmond.

Photo of Ken Ham: AP Images



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