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California State University-San Marcos has agreed to revise its student fee policies after a federal district court ruled last August that the university cannot block fees to pro-life students.

The university said it will make sure funding decisions going forward are "viewpoint neutral" and also agreed to pay more than $240,000 in legal fees and other costs to settle a 2017 lawsuit filed against the university by the Alliance Defending Freedom on behalf of Students for Life of America.

The pro-life organization brought the suit as a violation of the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech after its campus group could not get funding for an event with a pro-life speaker.

The university had allocated $300,000 from mandatory student activity fees to the Gender Equity and the LGBTQA Pride Center on campus, but refused a request for $500 from the Students for Life group to bring University of North Carolina-Wilmington professor Mike Adams in for an event.

"Public universities have no right to use their power, including mandatory student fees, to fund speech they prefer while blocking speech they don't like," said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, which is based in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

"Because of the initiative and courage of student leaders at Cal State-San Marcos, pro-life students at public universities across California will benefit from the administration's policy reversal," she said in a statement Feb. 4, the day the university announced its policy changes.

"Pro-life students should have every opportunity available to them that pro-abortion students enjoy," Hawkins continued. "Anything less is a failure on the part of the university to abide by the First Amendment. Schools cannot use the power of the purse to punish students who value mothers as well as their preborn babies."

California State University is the largest four-year university system in the United States; it has close to half a million students on 23 campuses. News reports said the university's chancellor issued a directive ordering all 23 campuses to review and revise their policies to comply with viewpoint neutrality policy.

Caleb Dalton, legal counsel with the Alliance Defending Freedom, described the original policy that denied funding to the Students for Life group as an "elaborate and secretive" scheme to fund the university's "favorite groups."

"We're grateful the district court rejected the university's unfair, secretive and discriminatory policy, and that the university has agreed to allocate student fees only in a viewpoint-neutral manner, instead of picking favorites," Dalton added.

"The university system's policy changes don't simply benefit our clients but also benefit any student with a minority viewpoint and every citizen who cares about dialogue and intellectual freedom within our public colleges and university communities," he said in a statement.

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