News



Former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy speaks during the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC 2024, at National Harbor, in Oxon Hill, Maryland, on Feb. 24. Some alumni of Ramaswamy's Jesuit high school in Cincinnati want him removed from the school's board of trustees. (AP/Alex Brandon)



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Angered by former presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy's campaign rhetoric that at times amplified far-right conspiracy theories, some of his fellow alumni at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati want the young Republican politician removed from the Jesuit school's board of trustees.

Some have written letters to the editor in newspapers while others have expressed their concerns to the board, which in early January told local media outlets that it did not want to involve the school in partisan politics by removing Ramaswamy.

Ramaswamy, who graduated from the school in 2003 as the class valedictorian, is still on the board, though he has been listed as "on sabbatical" since launching his presidential campaign in February 2023.

In a prepared statement provided to NCR, Nicholas Vehr, chairman of the St. Xavier High School Board of Trustees, said Ramswamy will remain on sabbatical until the current academic year ends on July 1.

In his statement, which devoted a paragraph to highlighting Ramaswamy's academic and professional successes, Vehr said trustees have been advised "by legal counsel" that any action taken against Ramaswamy, or statements about his political rhetoric, could endanger the school's tax-exempt nonprofit status.

"Therefore, we will not, and have no plans to, take any action regarding Mr. Ramaswamy's  status as a member of the Board of Trustees on sabbatical," Vehr said in the statement. He added that the trustees recognize "the sincerity and honest intentions" of Ramaswamy's critics.

The board's explanation for not removing Ramaswamy, who on the campaign trail on occasion invoked life lessons that he credited to his teachers at St. Xavier, dissatisfied some who called for his ouster. That includes Tim Mulvey, a communications professional who graduated from the school in 2001.

"I don't believe someone like Vivek Ramaswamy has any place being associated with St. Xavier," Mulvey said. He told NCR that he spoke out after a Dec. 13 CNN town hall where Ramaswamy said the Jan. 6, 2021, attack at the U.S. Capitol appeared to be an "inside job."

Mulvey served as the communications director for the U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol.



Tim Mulvey, a 2001 St. Francis Xavier graduate, said Vivek Ramaswamy should not be associated with the Jesuit school. (Courtesy of Tim Mulvey)

The committee, which held a series of high-profile public hearings in 2021 and 2022, concluded that former President Donald Trump instigated his supporters to siege the Capitol in a last-ditch attempt to retain power by preventing Congress from

certifying President Joseph Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election.

Mulvey said Ramaswamy's "inside job" statement deflected responsibility from Trump and stoked the sort of misinformation the former president still peddles about the election being "stolen" that the committee said resulted in violence.

"St. Xavier aims to educate young men through a lens of social justice, fidelity to the truth, an embrace of diversity, the idea that we do well by doing good, and everything that [Ramaswamy] was saying struck me as being at odds with everything the school is supposed to stand for," Mulvey said.

Attempts to reach Ramaswamy for comment through his campaign spokesperson were unsuccessful.

Ramaswamy, who was born to Hindu immigrant parents from India, told the CNN town hall audience that his experience attending an all-boys Catholic high school in Cincinnati had broadened his religious outlook.

"My faith teaches me that God puts each of us here for a purpose. That we have a moral duty to realize that purpose. That God works through us in different ways, but we're still equal, because God resides in each of us. I think those are the same Judeo-Christian values that I learned at St. X," Ramaswamy said.

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In his stump speeches and during televised debates with other Republican candidates, the 38-year-old Ramaswamy presented himself as a brash young conservative cut from Trump's combative mold who was not afraid to be provocative and challenge the political establishment.

A rising star in Republican politics who endorsed Trump after ending his campaign in January, the Harvard-educated Ramaswamy has also taken a page from the former president's playbook by pushing unfounded conspiracy theories.

Ramaswamy suggested that the pop singer Taylor Swift was at the center of a plot to secure Biden's reelection. He also speculated that U.S. federal agents were somehow involved in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. His statements that all undocumented migrants should be deported and that racism is often "manufactured

" have sparked furor. During one Republican debate, he gave credence to white nationalist beliefs that Democrats are seeking to replace white Christian Americans with foreign-born migrants, Muslims and refugees.

"I would think that [Ramaswamy], coming from a family of immigrants, wouldn't think that way. It just doesn't seem to jell with St. Xavier's mission of being for and with others. He's more divisive," said Tim Morse, who graduated from St. Xavier in 1983.

Morse, who is involved with the school's alumni association, told NCR that he believed the trustees' public response was "less than forthright," and added that he intends to contact the board with his concerns now that Ramaswamy is positioning himself for a political career.

"He has supported too many false narratives and conspiracy theories," Morse said. "And it does impact us from an alumni perspective. I just don't believe his public persona fits in with what the school is trying to accomplish."