

Georgetown University Law Center's dean says the top federal prosecutor for Washington, D.C., attacked the university's Catholic mission when he threatened to blackball its graduates from internships if the school doesn't eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs and curriculum. (Courtesy of Georgetown Law Center)



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The dean of Georgetown University's law school accused the top federal prosecutor for Washington, D.C., of attacking the university's Catholic mission when he threatened to blackball its graduates from internships if the school doesn't eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs and curriculum.

Dean William Treanor called the threats an "attack on the University's mission as a Jesuit and Catholic institution" in his March 6 response to interim D.C. U.S. Attorney Ed Martin, who is also Catholic.

"As a Catholic and Jesuit institution, Georgetown University was founded on the principle that serious and sustained discourse among people of different faiths, cultures and beliefs promotes intellectual, ethical and spiritual understanding," Treanor wrote.



William Treanor, dean emeritus of the Georgetown University Law Center (Courtesy of Georgetown Law Center)

He added that the U.S. Supreme Court has "continually affirmed that among the freedoms central to a university's First Amendment rights are its abilities to determine, on academic grounds, who may teach, what to teach, and how to teach it."

The Georgetown law incident comes as the Trump administration continues to pressure universities to adhere to its policies. On March 7, the administration announced in a statement "the immediate cancellation of approximately $400 million in federal grants and contracts to Columbia University due to the school's continued inaction in the face of persistent harassment of Jewish students."

Columbia's interim president said "the school is working to address the 'legitimate concerns' of the Trump administration,' " Reuters reported March 9. Columbia has been the site of numerous pro-Palestinian protests since Hamas attacked Israel Oct.

7, 2024.

Martin, a 2020 election denier and defense lawyer for Jan. 6 rioters, was named interim U.S. attorney for D.C. minutes after Donald Trump's inauguration. On Feb. 17, Trump nominated Martin for the permanent job.

Since assuming the office, Martin has used his power to roil the office that oversaw the massive prosecution of the U.S. Capitol attack by reassigning at least seven of the most senior and experienced prosecutors and forcing the resignation of the office's criminal chief chief, according to the Associated Press.

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3.7.24 Ed Martin letter to Georgetown law.pdf
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3.7.24 Georgetown law dean response to Ed Martin.pdf

In his letter to the Georgetown dean, Martin said a whistleblower informed him that the law school "continues to promote and teach" diversity, equity and inclusion, known as DEI, which he said was "unacceptable."

"At this time, you should know that no applicant for our fellows program, our summer internship, or employment in our office who is a student or affiliated with a law school or university that continues to teach and utilize DEI will be considered," Martin wrote in the letter dated Feb. 17 but emailed on March 3.

This latest threat to Georgetown is not mentioned in a letter Senate Democrats sent on March 6 asking the D.C. Bar Association to open a misconduct investigation into Martin. The letter cites Martin's dismissal of charges against a Capitol riot defendant he represented before taking office and his use of "the threat of prosecution to intimidate government employees and chill the speech of private citizens."

The investigation could result in the suspension of Martin's law license and other penalties.

Martin attended the rally that preceded the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, but there is no evidence that he entered the building or violated the law. He was never charged, but helped raise money for those who were and defended three rioters in court.



Ed Martin speaks at an event at the Capitol in Washington, June 13, 2023. Martin was named interim U.S. attorney for D.C. minutes after Donald Trump's inauguration; Trump has since nominated Martin for the permanent job. (AP/Amanda Andrade-Rhoades, file)

A New York Times profile of Martin notes that he has never been a prosecutor and has spent more time as a political operative and radio host. His support for Trump goes back to 2016, when he co-authored, with anti-Equal Rights Amendment activist and Catholic Phyllis Schlafly, the book *The Conservative Case for Trump*, at a time religious conservatives were skeptical of Trump.

Martin was chair of Schlafly's Eagle Forum until the organization endorsed Ted Cruz in the 2016 presidential primary. He then became president of an alternative organization Schlafly created, Phyllis Schlafly Eagles. He also served as chair of the Missouri Republican Party, as a CNN contributor and as an organizer in the Stop the Steal movement that falsely claimed the 2020 election was rigged against Trump. He also has unsuccessfully run for office in Virginia and Missouri, and his tenure as

Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt's chief of staff was mired in controversy over his illegally destroying emails in a case alleging wrongful termination. Martin eventually resigned.

He also courted controversy in one of his first jobs. In 1998, he was director of the Human Rights Office for the St. Louis Archdiocese, a position he secured after becoming chummy with then-Archbishop Justin Rigali, who had previously secured Martin a role as a lay youth expert at the 1997 Synod of Bishops in Rome. Critics told the Riverfront Times that Martin "decimated" the office, which had been founded in the 1960s to focus on civil rights and had expanded to include other Catholic social issues. Martin told the St. Louis alternative news site that he thought the office had "gotten too far left for no good reason."

Martin also had shifted the office to focus on anti-abortion causes and has been involved in several anti-abortion groups, according to his LinkedIn profile and has done legal work for Americans United for Life, according to the group's website.

He grew up in a Catholic family in rural New Jersey and attended St. Peter's Preparatory School, founded by Jesuits, and the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, according to his LinkedIn profile. He also studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, before attending law school at the Jesuit St. Louis University.

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On March 7, he posted a quote from the Book of Romans on X social media platform: "Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?"

Jesuit Fr. James Martin, an author and editor at large at the Jesuit-run America magazine, said as a member of Georgetown's Board of Trustees he supported the dean's letter. "Jesuit education means care for the whole person, in both their spiritual and intellectual lives," he wrote on social media. "And Jesuit practice often involves speaking truth to power."

The U.S. attorney's office and Georgetown Law School did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, a

national organization that represents Jesuit higher education, declined to comment, saying the issue regarding the DEI letter "is being handled directly by Georgetown Law."