

Department of Education must end its bizarre witch hunt against GCU

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By Jon Gabriel

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As the Biden administration closes cases and clears its books, it's time for his Department of Education to end its bizarre witch hunt against Grand Canyon University.

A recent court decision ruled that the department [unlawfully handled GCU's nonprofit status](#) and must fix their costly error.

The university operated as a nonprofit until 2004, when financial difficulties nearly forced it to shutter. An investor put up money for the west Phoenix school, and it switched to a for-profit model until its situation recovered.

In 2018, before Biden took office, the university reverted to nonprofit status, a move recognized by the state, the IRS and the Higher Learning Commission. For some strange reason, the Department of Education refused.

The DOE had never refused nonprofit status in its history.

What did GCU do? Education secretary won't say

This kicked off years of lawsuits, allegations and fines, leaving GCU's leadership to wonder what on earth they had done wrong.

Nothing, as it turned out.

Why the witch hunt against a 75-year-old private Christian school? Grand Canyon was originally founded by the Southern Baptist Conference, but that affiliation was dropped in 2000.

Did Education Secretary Miguel Cardona think the university was too conservative? Too religious? No one really knows, since his anti-GCU crusade is so unprecedented, and Cardona has said so little of substance about it.

In 2021, the [school finally sued the DOE](#) over its nonprofit status. Two years later, GCU publicly accused federal officials of unfairly targeting the school with frivolous claims.

It fined GCU way more than other schools

The department reacted by issuing a record-breaking [\\$37.7 million fine](#). That was followed by multiple federal audits.

For the fine against GCU, the department didn't cite a single student's complaint, nor did its personnel even visit the school. It simply decided that [GCU insufficiently informed](#) Ph.D. students that they may have to take continuing courses while completing their doctoral dissertations.

To demonstrate how insane the amount was, the DOE only [fined Penn State \\$2.4 million](#) for failing to report the crimes of serial pedophile Jerry Sandusky, and [fined Michigan State \\$4.5 million](#) for the crimes of its athletic director, Larry Nassar.

The DOE's harassment was soon taken up by another Biden agency.

The Federal Trade Commission filed [more claims against the university](#), which an Arizona district court shot down. So, the FTC amended its complaints and took GCU back to court.

That case is currently pending.

GCU has been forced to spend [\\$10 million a year defending itself](#), money that should go to students. Miguel Cardona understands that, in lawfare, the process is the punishment.

Back off. This is an Arizona success story

The vexing question remains: Why is the Biden administration wasting time and taxpayer money attacking a private Arizona university?

GCU President Brian Mueller has no idea.

"This is a Christian university. We support very traditional American values," he said in a recent interview. "It's kind of right-leaning, I guess, from a political standpoint, as far as our student body is concerned. Is that it? I don't know. It's very, very confusing."

To determine an answer, the Goldwater Institute submitted a [Freedom of Information Act request](#) seeking key emails from the DOE. The department refused, so Goldwater sued for their release. That case, too, is pending.

Grand Canyon University boasts a 75-year record of excellent education, high-demand training and successful alumni. As other schools shrink, GCU has [increased enrollment](#), expanded its academic offerings and hasn't raised tuition in 17 years.

It's an Arizona success story.

Fortunately for GCU, a new administration is on its way. But Miguel Cardona and his rogue legal team should take their recent court losses as an excuse to end their witch hunt immediately.

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