



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION

Shorter University President Dr. Donald V. Dowless  
Shorter University  
315 Shorter Avenue  
Rome, GA 30165

November 2, 2011

Dear Dr. Dowless,

I am writing on behalf of the over one million members and supporters of the Human Rights Campaign – the nation’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization. I wanted to share our concern over the new “Personal Lifestyle Pledge” Shorter University recently adopted. Specifically, we are concerned that this pledge requires university employees to “reject as acceptable” homosexuality.

We respect that, as a private institution, you are within your rights to create and implement these guidelines. But that doesn’t make it right. As an institution of higher learning, you strive to prepare students for the modern world they will face upon graduation. That’s a world where a majority of Americans support issues like employment non-discrimination policies, and recognize that anti-LGBT bullying and rhetoric can have serious consequences.

Your discrimination against LGBT employees has two profound impacts – you are filtering out qualified individuals who have risen to where they are in their field through hard work and talent; and you are sending a message to your students that being LGBT is wrong. The latter is particularly dangerous. People should be judged on their merits -- on their qualifications to do a job or their academic success -- not on who they are.

I recognize and respect the Christian values you seek to instill in your students. In discussing this matter with our Religion and Faith Program Director, Sharon Groves, she suggested, as a Christian herself, that truly imbuing those values would, in fact, have you to embrace the diversity of your community. I leave you with what she said to me:

“Most mainline Christian and Jewish denominations and a growing number of people of faith have wrestled with the Bible and their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender neighbors and have come to the conclusion that sexual orientation and gender identity are not incongruent with Biblical teaching. Shorter University is asserting its own interpretation of Christianity at the expense of LGBT people.”

I welcome the opportunity to have additional dialogue with you on this matter,

Joe Solmonese  
President, Human Rights Campaign

WORKING FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER EQUAL RIGHTS

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