

# Religion Majors in Kentucky Can Keep Scholarships

Religion majors are not exempt from state scholarship funds, according to a recent decision by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority.

The Kentucky group reversed its earlier decision to withdraw state funding from a Cumberland College junior majoring in religious studies, according to Associated Press.

The previous policy stated that Kentucky may not grant financial assistance to a student “enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree in theology, divinity, or religious education,” according to the KHEAA Web site.

In December, the American Center for Law and Justice filed suit on behalf of Michael Woods Nash, claiming that the KHEAA’s decisions to pull Nash’s funding amounted to “religious discrimination,” according to the ACLJ’s Web site.

Nash had already received \$2,900 from his Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship, AP reported.

Joe McCormick, executive director of the KHEAA, told AP that “the basis upon which [Nash] was denied the funds did not hold up upon further examination.” The state agency informed Cumberland College that any students in the same course of study would be eligible for the scholarship funds as well.

McCormick told AP that the decision was not a policy change, but rather a “re-examination of the course of study” in which Nash was enrolled.

Cumberland College’s Web site describes the Department of Religion and Philosophy’s major as training for students interested in church-related ministry, with courses in biblical studies and languages, as well as philosophy.

“We’re extremely pleased that the state of Kentucky is taking corrective action

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and changing the policy to remove discriminatory barriers that prohibit students who want to focus on religious studies from being eligible to receive state scholarship funds,” Francis J. Manion, senior counsel for the ACLJ, said in a release.

The ACLJ has since dropped its suit.

*Jodi Mathews is BCE’s communications director.*