

## The University of Bridgeport expunges the Unification Church

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A unanimous decision to expunge any reference to the [Professors World Peace Academy](#) or Unification Church from the University of Bridgeport bylaws was done to set the record straight, according to an architect of the decision.

"Bottom line, we made official what has been truth for a long time," Robert Berchem, a Milford attorney and chairman of University of Bridgeport's Board of Trustees, said Tuesday.

Berchem has been on the board for about a decade and its chair for the past year. In all that time, and probably longer, he said the university has not seen a dime of money from the church, which is officially called the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#).

In 1992, the PWPA, which was founded by the Unification Church, gave the university an initial \$50,000 loan that was to be forgiven in eight years. In exchange, the PWPA had the right to approve a majority of University of Bridgeport trustees and have a University of Bridgeport president of its liking.

The deal kept the financially broke University of Bridgeport open. It also set off a firestorm of controversy and concern from those who questioned the motives of what many considered a cult.

By 2002, the loan had not only turned into a gift, but had grown to \$113 million. As of a year ago, only a handful of trustees were still being named by the PWPA, according to Gordon Anderson, U.S.A. Secretary General of the PWPA, and a University of Bridgeport trustee until a year ago.

Anderson called [University of Bridgeport's decision](#) to officially part ways with the PWPA as a long time in coming.

"Am I disappointed? Sure, but on the other hand, I am very proud of what we did," Anderson said. "We graduated 27,000 students who never would have graduated in Bridgeport and we rebuilt a university."

Few, if any, members of the church remain as trustees, Anderson said. He described the PWPA, which was founded by the church, as "legally alive."

"We expended all the resources we had on the university," Anderson said of what was an organization of academics from around the world.

Over the weekend, the church also acknowledged the break up.

"While Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, commonly referred to as the 'Unification Church,' has no formal relationship with the University of Bridgeport, we are proud that our founders could financially rescue this admirable academic institution in a time of need," said Demian Dunkley, president of the federation, in an email. "Many of our youth have proudly graduated from University of Bridgeport and went on to have very successful careers in a multitude of industries. We hope that the University of Bridgeport continues to fulfill its noble calling."

Berchem said like any university, University of Bridgeport has its challenges but has shown solid financial performances for some time. It has a small endowment now, where two decades ago it had none.

The endowment has helped offset year-to-year shortfalls, Anderson said. Anderson was on the finance committee of the University of Bridgeport Board of Trustees for 25 years.

Berchem said every change University of Bridgeport has made since he has been on the board has been to improve the university. He was chair of the presidential search committee that brought Laura Trombley to campus a year ago. He took over as board chair with the passing last year of Frank Zullo last May.

Since Trombley arrived, the university has reorganized academic programs and dropped unprofitable majors.

Several members of University of Bridgeport community who would not speak for attribution said on Tuesday the decision was a welcome one.

"They needed to do something public to explain the church is not here, to inform the greater world that they don't own the university and are not part of it," one staffer said.

Attempts to reach Trombley were unsuccessful.