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Yeshiva University recognizes LGBTQ student club, reversing a longtime ban

The announcement marks a significant shift for the Modern Orthodox flagship university in Manhattan.



A pedestrian on the campus of Yeshiva University in New York City on Aug. 30, 2022. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

By [Ben Sales](#) March 20, 2025

This article has been updated with an additional statement from Yeshiva University.

Yeshiva University has approved a new club for LGBTQ students, reversing a policy that it has spent years defending in court.

The school's announcement on Thursday marks a significant shift for the Modern Orthodox flagship in Manhattan. For years, and particularly during a stretch of fall 2022, the school fought to avoid recognizing the Pride Alliance, a

support group for LGBTQ students that launched unofficially in 2009 but had not received formal recognition as a student club.

The dispute revolved around Orthodoxy's prohibition against homosexual relations. Y.U. seeks to embody the idea that its students can live fully committed Orthodox Jewish lives while participating in modern society. The question of welcoming LGBTQ students has strained that mission for more than a decade as LGBTQ students, some of them anonymously, have sought a more supportive atmosphere on campus.

Now, the university, which is split between men's and women's campuses in two separate Manhattan locations, announced that it was ceasing its court battle and recognizing an LGBTQ-oriented club.

"The parties have reached an agreement and the litigation is ending," the statement said. "Current students will be implementing a club, to be known as Hareni, that will seek to support LGBTQ students and their allies and will operate in accordance with the approved guidelines of Yeshiva University's senior rabbis."

The statement added, "The club will be run like other clubs on campus, all in the spirit of a collaborative and mutually supportive campus culture."

The statement did not detail why Y.U. made the decision to recognize the LGBTQ club now. But the announcement comes weeks after a student was allegedly assaulted on campus and called homophobic slurs. It also comes as Y.U. has positioned itself as a refuge for Jewish students seeking to transfer from non-Jewish schools.

Immediately after Y.U.'s announcement, the Pride Alliance WhatsApp group changed its name to "Hareni," [according to the Commentator, the student newspaper](#).

"It is with great pleasure and excitement that we announce to everyone that we are now an official club at YU!" students Schneur Friedman and Hayley Goldberg wrote in the WhatsApp group, according to the Commentator. "We

are honored to begin this official club as your co-presidents and will continue to foster a strong community within YU!”

Conditions at Y.U. have changed since the school first mounted a legal battle to avoid recognizing an LGBTQ club. For one, the school has — since Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel — appealed to Jewish students at nonsectarian colleges to transfer as a way of avoiding the spread of campus antisemitism, which could draw a more religiously diverse student body.

“I have heard people talk about Y.U. and the Pride Alliance as — ‘People know what they’re getting into when they come here, and if they wanted a queer club, they should have gone somewhere else,’” said Rachael Fried, executive director of Jewish Queer Youth, which has provided support to the Pride Alliance. “That sentiment doesn’t work in the current climate. ... The message of, ‘Go somewhere else and be a queer student somewhere else,’ it doesn’t land.”

In addition, a March 6 column in the Commentator alleged that one of the organizers of the Pride Alliance had been [assaulted at a student activities fair](#). A student is accused of taking photos of the organizer, then shoving him while calling him homophobic slurs and telling him that he did not belong at Y.U. The column said victim reported the incident to campus security.

The university had previously argued in court that recognizing an LGBTQ club violated its religious liberty, though the plaintiffs argued that because [it was chartered as a secular institution](#), that argument did not pass muster. The case at one point made it to the Supreme Court, which ruled 5-4 to send it back down to lower courts.

Shortly afterward, the university briefly [suspended all student clubs](#) rather than recognize the Pride Alliance. It later [announced its own club to support LGBTQ students](#) “under traditional Orthodox auspices.”

The Pride Alliance and its allies rejected that club, but a Y.U. spokesperson suggested in a statement that the school views Hareni as the current version of that club.

“Our students’ well-being is our primary concern,” the statement said. “We have always been focused on providing our undergraduate students the right spaces that fit within the unique religious environment of YU, which is different than any other college campus. We are pleased that our current undergraduate students will be leading the new club announced today that was envisioned and approved by our Senior Rabbis over two years ago.”

One of the plaintiffs in the case, Doniel Weinreich, said the school’s announcement was a milestone for LGBTQ Orthodox inclusion.

“This agreement affirms that there has never been a genuine conflict between Torah values and open LGBTQ+ identity,” Weinreich said in a statement. “It demonstrates that fully committed Orthodox Jewish environments can also be affirming of LGBTQ+ constituents. This is a great moment for the entire Modern Orthodox community.”

The new name for the club, Hareni, is the beginning of a Jewish statement of commitment to love one’s neighbor.

“This has been an ongoing conflict so there’s work that has to be done to make sure that Y.U. actually feels like a space where queer students can feel like their whole selves,” Fried said. “The administration working with the actual queer students is the right path to actually get to that place.”