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CBF studies nature, funding
of 'partner' relationships

By Mark Wingfield

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- What does it mean to be a "partner" ministry with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and how much financial support should go with that title?

Currently the CBF devotes 28 percent of its budget to fund partners, which include 13 theology schools, the Baptist Joint Committee, Associated Baptist Press, Baptist Center for Ethics, Baptists Today and the Baptist World Alliance. A CBF task force studying budget priorities has recommended reducing partner funding to 20 percent of the CBF budget, presumably channeling more money to global missions and ministries run by CBF's Atlanta staff.

That means the total amount of money partners receive would be 30 percent less. Such a reduction would follow on the heels of a mid-year budget cut for partners in 2002-03.

Funding for these partners has become a front-burner issue as the CBF faces the budget challenges confronting almost all non-profits in the current national economy.

Contributions to CBF grew rapidly in the early 1990s but began to level off in 1996, initiating the first reduction in its funding of partners. Since the 1996-97 fiscal year, basic funding for those traditional partners has dropped 16.3 percent.

During that period, however, CBF's undesignated contributions - the pool of funds that supports partners -- have grown 17.4 percent, to \$8.7 million. The additional money has been used to grow the CBF's Atlanta staff, increase its own ministry initiatives and provide project funding to about a dozen new non-missions partners. During the six-year period, the CBF staff has grown from 33 to 52 and administrative costs have risen 90 percent, from \$1.3 million to \$2.5 million.

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The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and its partners have much looser connections than most denominational bodies have with schools and publishing houses and missions agencies. None of the partner ministries are owned by the CBF, and the CBF has not asked for any authority to name members to the various ministries' boards of directors.

In his address to the CBF general assembly June 27, Coordinator Daniel Vestal called on the CBF to strengthen relations with its partners. But he also called for clarification on what it means to be a partner.

"For us, partnership is more than a word," he said. "It represents one of our core values and defining characteristics. ... Our mission statement says that 'we prefer to cooperate in mutually beneficial ways with other organizations rather than to establish, own and control our own institutions.'"

That doesn't mean the CBF doesn't believe in institutions, Vestal added. "Theologically, we believe in them. But many of us are afraid of them. Perhaps it's because of our past. We have seen how people can worship institutions more than God or be more committed to preserving them than being committed to the mission for which the institutions were created."

The CBF was birthed as a dissident movement out of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant body -- and one that has honed institutional life to a fine art. In fact, one of the foremost drivers in creating the CBF was the desire of moderate Southern Baptists to create alternative ways of funding missions and ministries they once had supported through the SBC.

But the CBF made an intentional decision not to structure itself like the SBC, due in part to leaders' observation that blind loyalty to institutions prevented some people from abandoning the SBC even though leadership of those institutions changed radically.

The main component the CBF offers internally is its global missions program, which draws about 56 percent of undesignated budget funds. The percentage going to global missions increases significantly when designated gifts are factored in. Largely because of designated gifts to missions, CBF's total revenues have increased 93 percent since 1996-97.

The recent report of the budget priorities task force, while not officially adopted or binding, could help determine the allocation of future money among the causes competing for CBF dollars. The document has not been put to a vote at a general assembly.

In addition to proposing the cap on partner funding, the task force identified six areas for highest-priority funding -- reaching the most-neglected and unevangelized people, starting churches, developing partnership missions with local churches, supporting theological education, nurturing congregational health, and fostering congregational leadership. Except for theological education, all the top priority areas relate to the CBF's own Atlanta-based programs.

It also identified four areas least important and, presumably, the first suggested for budget cuts -- collegiate ministries, marriage and family, chaplaincy and Baptist identity.

In the new budget, Baptist identity includes funding for ethnic and regional networks, interim pastor support and allocations to the Baptist Joint Committee, ABP, BCE, Baptists Today and the BWA.

Vestal hinted at the coming struggle over partner funding in his Charlotte address: "Who exactly is a partner, and how should they be funded? What are the reasonable expectations from partners, and what are the different kinds of partners? This next year, our Coordinating Council will be working hard to clarify and strengthen our institutional partnerships."

Those words, combined with the sagging gifts to the CBF budget and the report of the task force, have generated concern among leaders of the CBF partner ministries.

"Baptists Today is grateful for a voluntary, mutually beneficial partnership with CBF," said John Pierce, editor of Baptists Today, a Georgia-based newspaper. "However, I am concerned about the continual decline in financial support."

"There seems to be a disconnect between CBF's stated priorities and an appreciation for the role we play in fulfilling those priorities. In his report to the CBF Coordinating Council, Daniel Vestal stated that CBF's primary focus is on serving churches, developing leaders and supporting missions. Then partnerships were listed as a low priority. However, Baptists Today helps the Fellowship achieve their highest priorities. ... Key church leaders routinely tell us that the information provided through Baptists Today enables them to make wise choices about supporting mission causes that are consistent with their values."

Rebecca Wiggs, immediate past chairman of the board for ABP, echoed Pierce's concern that the value of CBF partner ministries might be understated.

"In a perfect world, we would get no money from CBF," she said, citing the news service's desire to report objectively on all Baptist entities, including the CBF. However, she added, "I think CBF must see ABP as a vital part of its overall ministry by keeping Baptists informed."

Wiggs, an attorney from Jackson, Miss., said she hopes CBF leaders "understand that the whole CBF constituency does desire for a partner like us to be funded. ... I hope [CBF] continues to be an organization that exists to support its partners instead of the other way around."

Ideally, CBF should be "more of a flow-through organization rather than one that starts needing more money to support its own infrastructure," she added. "I don't like the trend toward supporting more internal CBF organizations as opposed to where the people want to go."

Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, said the CBF's partner organizations "are the most visible and tangible evidence of the investment that churches and individuals make in CBF with their financial gifts."

While grateful for those gifts, he said, BCE in turn "provides an excellent return on their investment by building constituency and providing resources to local churches. Imagine what we could do with more funding."

Brent Walker, executive director of the BJC, also expressed appreciation for CBF financial support as one of the "primary avenues through which churches and individuals have supported the BJC's ministry."

At the CBF Coordinating Council meeting prior to the general assembly, the partnership question drew comment from several council members.

"I operate on the philosophy that if you don't have money, you can't spend money," Chuck Moates, chairman of the budget priorities task force, told the Coordinating Council. All the CBF priority areas are "significant and very important," Moates said, "but when you are faced with a scenario of having limited dollars to spend, where do you want to spend the money?"

Added CBF Moderator Phill Martin of Dallas: "We want to be good partners, but we want to be fiscally responsible for CBF national."

"We are paying partners at our detriment," said Philip Wise, chairman of the budget committee and pastor of Second Baptist Church in Lubbock.

Tim Brendle, another member of the budget priorities task force, pushed the issue further, suggesting the partners need to be more proactive in raising money for all of the CBF. Partners ought to be "promoting together our budget, rather than this being a cash cow," Brendle said.

-- Greg Warner of ABP contributed to this article.

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Muslim group says Vines, others contribute to anti-Muslim hate

By Hannah Lodwick and Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A Muslim-American civil-rights group released a report July 15 that said "evangelical leaders and neo-conservatives" contributed to a 15 percent increase in reports of anti-Muslim incidents in 2002.

The report, conducted annually by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, compiled what the agency called "credible reports" of anti-Muslim discrimination, harassment and action during 2002. It also catalogued what the group considered public incidents of anti-Muslim bias, blaming Religious Right figures like Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and former Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines, among others, for inciting anti-Islamic actions with their statements.

"Calling this report 'Guilt by Association' is appropriate," Nihad Awad, the council's executive director, said during a press conference at the agency's Capitol Hill headquarters. "Tens of thousands of people have been impacted in a negative way."

The report noted that, from January to December of 2002, there were 602 reported incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination, a 15-percent increase over the 525 incidents in the previous reporting period. Researchers also said reports of violent physical attacks on Muslims increased by 8 percent in 2002.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations changed its reporting period this year from the previous period, which ran from March 15, 2001-March 14, 2002 -- meaning incidents from Jan. 1-March 14, 2002 were counted twice. But Mohamed Nimer, CAIR's research director, said that either way, the number of incidents in a one-year reporting period increased significantly.

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The report also noted that since CAIR first started compiling such statistics in 1995 there has been a more than seven-fold increase in reports of anti-Muslim discrimination and bias.

The report also contains harsh criticisms of the federal government, particularly singling out post-Sept. 11 U.S. policies. They said such policies as the USA Patriot Act of 2001 allowed the executive branch of government to get around the Fourth Amendment's requirement of probable cause when conducting police searches.

"We believe the Muslim community can defend their civil rights by being more politically active," Awad said. "One main reason why anti-Muslim sentiments remain prevalent involves misinformation. Muslims feel like they're on the forefront of civil liberties just like the African-Americans in the 1960s."

Government actions mentioned in the report include raids on Muslim homes and businesses, special registration requirements, FBI mosque-counting programs and Department of Justice interviews with more than 11,000 people of Iraqi descent.

Aysha Unus, a guest of the council who spoke at the press conference, said she voted for President Bush in 2000 but now feels his policies have hurt her civil rights.

"I chose to become a citizen of the United States because of its civil rights," Unus said. "I'm here in the hope that things will change."

Unus said she will never forget March 28, 2002, when federal agents broke open her door and handcuffed her in her home. They were part of a massive operation to uncover Northern Virginia residents suspected of cooperating with or supporting Islamic terrorist organizations.

"It is like a videotape inside me, playing almost every day," Unus said. "I go through the experience again and again. It's not fair." Ibrahim Hooper, CAIR's national communications director, noted that no charges have been filed as a result of the raid on Unus' house or any of the other March 2002 raids in Virginia.

While the report focused on increases in anti-Muslim sentiment, it did note that unreasonable searches and passenger profiling of Muslims decreased from 2001 to 2002. In addition, council leaders said, nationwide there were nine successful prosecutions of anti-Muslim hate crimes last year.

Council leaders noted they are attempting not only to point out government shortcomings in respecting the rights of Muslims but also to provide instruction on how better to work with Islamic communities. In an attempt to educate people about civil-rights issues, CAIR published a manual titled the "Law Enforcement Officer's Guide to the Muslim Community."

Awad said the Muslim community must support both civil rights and security, and he hopes the guide will help build a bridge to bolster both objectives.

"Although the government is part of the problem, it is also a part of the solution," Awad said. "We believe in building bridges. The government should look on the Muslim community as an ally. We will help the government do its job and do it properly."

Regarding some Christian leaders, the report said, "Contributing to the rise of discrimination against Muslims is the continuing anti-Muslim rhetoric, especially by some evangelical and

leaders and neo-conservatives."

Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, raised a national controversy in a June 2002 speech to Southern Baptist pastors when he called Islamic prophet Mohammed a "demon-possessed pedophile."

Both Vines and SBC spokesman Bill Merrell were unavailable for comment when contacted by Associated Baptist Press regarding the Council on American-Islamic Relations' report.

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Youth gambling on rise, recent studies indicate

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Though legal gambling is more widespread than in the past, it remains illegal for Americans in most situations -- and especially for minors. But several recent studies suggest that the rate of gambling among American teenagers is skyrocketing.

"This is the first generation of kids growing up when gambling is legal and available virtually nationwide," George Meldrum of the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems told the Associated Press. "Casinos, racetracks -- they take it for granted."

In the past 10 years, dozens of states and municipalities across the country have legalized lotteries and casino gambling. Additionally, the growth of the Internet has made online casino gambling accessible even to the youngest children.

Several regional surveys suggest that nearly a third of all high-school students gamble regularly. Although most teenage gambling is confined to low-stakes games -- craps, betting on sporting events, Internet gambling -- teenage gambling has been linked in many studies to higher rates of other illegal behavior, such as underage drinking, drug use and criminal activity.

Rates of compulsive, or problem, gambling among teenagers is higher than among adults -- 8 percent compared to 3 percent. Those figures are according to the International Center for Youth Gambling Problems, based at Canada's McGill University.

The problem isn't confined to older teens. A recent statewide study conducted by the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems showed that nearly a third of 6,734 eighth-graders surveyed had gambled in 2002. The survey was among the largest teen-gambling study ever conducted.

The study also found that nine percent of the eighth-graders had gambled on Internet casinos. The casinos offer not only instant access, but also the ability to gamble with credit cards.

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400 youth evacuate camp before hurricane damages buildings

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By John Hall

PALACIOS, Texas (ABP) -- More than 400 youth evacuated the Texas Baptist encampment Palacios by the Sea a day before high winds from Hurricane Claudette turned the site "upside down" -- demolishing a tabernacle, ripping roofs and walls off buildings and tearing down trees.

Approximately 80 mph winds and up to eight inches of rain accompanied the hurricane's landfall. The storm turned the "place basically upside down," according to Gene Grounds, executive director of Texas Baptist Men's Victim Relief Ministries, who was at the camp shortly after the hurricane passed.

The roof or some walls were torn off every building except one where a few camp staff members hunkered down as the hurricane raged overhead.

The storm knocked out power and running water at the camp. Water from the Gulf of Mexico washed up on some of the roads. Harold Sellers, director of missions of the Coastal Plains Area Baptist Association, roughly estimated there is "millions of dollars in damage."

"There isn't hardly anything without any damage, and a number of buildings are destroyed," Grounds said.

Grounds, assessing damage in preparation for disaster-relief efforts, described the nearby town of Palacios as "slammed," with missing roofs and blown-down trees. There is "significant" damage to the roof of First Baptist Church, he indicated.

Jeff Klutz, director of One Camp which was at the encampment, said he hoped to avoid evacuating the camp. But as the eye of the storm approached, he "had to make a decision based on the best information we had."

The campers relocated to First Baptist Church in Katy, near Houston, where they are continuing the weeklong event, which brought youth from several Baptist associations.

"A lot of churches we cater to are small churches, and this is the only [youth] thing they do all year," Klutz commented. "We didn't want to cancel camp."

With the help of First Baptist Church in Katy, the camp has continued mostly as planned, Klutz said. "It's really been amazing how everyone jumped in and helped," he added. "We've been able to go right on doing camp."

The Texas Baptist Men's feeding unit from the Dallas Association is en route to provide meals for the youth, and a shower unit is on the way to supply showering facilities. A chainsaw unit is preparing to go to Palacios for clean-up efforts.

Other units are on alert waiting to be called by the Red Cross to assist in disaster-relief around the state.

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**Brisco named theology-school dean
at Hardin-Simmons University**

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By Charles Richardson

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) -- Thomas Brisco is the new dean of Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology, succeeding Vernon Davis, who is retiring.

Brisco has been professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco since 2001. He previously taught and was an administrator at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and was on the faculty at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

A native of Hot Springs, Ark., Brisco earned a master of divinity degree (1973) and PhD in biblical backgrounds and archaeology from Southwestern Seminary (1981). His bachelor's degree is from Ouachita.

He taught at Southwestern from 1980 to 2001, serving as associate dean of the school of theology and chair of the department of biblical backgrounds and archaeology. He is author of "The Holman Bible Atlas."

Brisco also has served as pastor of churches in Texas, Mississippi and Switzerland. He is married to the former Judy Carol Gunter. They have a grown daughter and son.

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BWA accepts CBF as member despite Southern Baptist opposition

By Trennis Henderson

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was elected to full membership in the Baptist World Alliance July 11 despite strong opposition from Southern Baptist Convention representatives.

The 75-28 vote by the BWA General Council came two years after the CBF's initial application for membership. The vote also followed a decision last month by SBC messengers to reduce BWA funding by more than 30 percent.

The flap over CBF's membership escalated last year when SBC leaders voiced concerns about how the BWA membership committee handled CBF's application. Rather than declining CBF's application a year ago, committee members publicly outlined the steps necessary for CBF to qualify for membership in the global Baptist fellowship.

Membership committee chairman Ian Hawley told participants at last week's BWA General Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro that CBF leaders had fulfilled the requirements for membership by declaring last fall that "they have separated themselves from the structures and organization of the SBC." Additionally, CBF leaders submitted 20 "indicators" the fellowship is a separate Baptist body, including the organization's own mission statement, funding channels and missions structure.

Hawley, director of international missions for Australian Baptists, expressed regret that the membership process contributed to heightened tensions. "We certainly did not have any

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intention of hurting or embarrassing the SBC," he emphasized.

Noting that committee members "agonized and prayed for guidance over this decision," Hawley added, "The membership committee is of the opinion that the necessary degree of separation from the SBC by the CBF has been met."

He said the committee determined that recommending CBF as a BWA member body was "the only fair and right decision that could be made."

Prior to the secret-ballot vote, SBC representatives sought to defer the vote until next year. They suggested that the CBF might be better qualified for associate membership, a new category to be considered next year that would include local churches as well as other Baptist groups such as state, regional or associational entities.

The primary issue is whether CBF is "eligible under our present rules of membership," responded Tony Peck, a representative from the Baptist Union of Great Britain. "If so, we ought to vote on it now."

General Council members declined to consider the motion to defer before voting by a margin of nearly 3-1 to accept the CBF as BWA's newest member body.

CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal described the vote as "a kind of validation by other Baptist bodies worldwide of our value, worth and place in the Baptist family. Baptist World Alliance is an important ministry and I'm excited about being a part of it."

Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, noted that "the world Baptist family considered carefully the recommendation of their membership committee."

Accepting CBF despite the controversy surrounding its application demonstrates that "Baptists around the world clearly will relate to all the Baptist family," Wade added. "They do not want to play favorites."

Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said he believes the membership process was fair and appropriate. "We are Baptists," he emphasized. "We believe in democracy. We believe in the will of the people. ... We would just plead that we all love one another."

Four other groups -- the Community of Baptist Churches of Eastern Congo, the Association of Baptist Churches in the Central African Republic, the Baptist Church of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Fraternity of Baptist Churches in Cuba -- were approved for membership without debate earlier in the session.

The five additions expand BWA's global membership to 211 member bodies representing more than 46 million baptized believers worldwide.

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Will SBC drop BWA membership in wake of vote to admit CBF?

By Trennis Henderson

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RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Convention is a founding member of the Baptist World Alliance, a global Baptist organization established in 1905. With last week's vote to grant BWA membership to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, however, the SBC's future involvement in the BWA is in doubt.

Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson, the chief strategists in the SBC's conservative shift since 1979, were among SBC representatives at last week's BWA General Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

During debate on CBF's membership, Pressler accused CBF leaders of repeated statements critical of the SBC. "That is not the rhetoric that promotes harmony and promotes peace," he declared.

"If you want them and their theology, that's your decision," Pressler told General Council members, "but it is not our decision to accept them."

In an interview moments after the 75-28 vote to accept CBF as BWA's newest member body, Pressler described CBF as "a small, dissident, liberal group."

Patterson, a former SBC president and newly elected president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said after the vote, "If I had to make a guess, I would say that what probably happened today is they probably accepted 150 [CBF-affiliated] churches in order to bid goodbye to 42,000 [SBC churches]. I would be surprised if that's not the eventual result."

The CBF reports contributions from about 1,700 churches, most of which also support the SBC. About 150 churches affiliate with the CBF alone.

Claiming that "the BWA has been drifting left now for 20 years," Patterson added, "What you have here is a huge affirmation of their intention to continue in that direction."

"The BWA has a right to accept as a member whomever it wishes," he noted. "I affirm their right to do so. But I also say as the leftward drift goes on, Southern Baptists are going to find the compromise involved to be too much."

Those views stand in sharp contrast to perspectives voiced by CBF and BWA leaders.

"My sincere hope is that the SBC will not leave the BWA," said Daniel Vestal, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. "CBF desires very much to work alongside the SBC in BWA as well as other Baptist bodies."

The relationship between the SBC and BWA is "much more complex than just saying CBF being admitted to membership will cause them to leave," Vestal said. "I think that would be too simplistic. If the SBC leaves BWA, I don't see it as our fault. ... Baptists have had disagreements about a lot of things in the past and still worked together."

Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said BWA leaders "regret any separation in the body and pray for unity."

"We continue to want to engage our Southern Baptist brothers and sisters in the world body which they were instrumental in forming," he added. "I believe we will continue to have a good

relationship with millions of Southern Baptists in the U.S.A. and their mission around the world."

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Competing visions of Baylor's future underlie school's current turmoil

By Mark Wingfield

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University is changing. Everyone affiliated with the university seems to agree on that. Whether that change is for the better or worse, however, sparks intense debate among Baylor loyalists.

That debate could come to a head when concerned alumni convene on campus July 18 for a "Baylor family dialogue" during a board of regents meeting. That regents meeting would be a watershed event even without the alumni rally.

On July 16, regents are scheduled to hear a report from a special committee investigating the conduct of regent Jaclanel McFarland, who has been accused of tipping off members of a Baylor fraternity about the work of an undercover drug officer. They could be asked to remove her from the board -- the first such dismissal in the university's 158-year history.

McFarland, a Houston attorney who earned two degrees from Baylor, vigorously denies the allegations against her. She and others contend Baylor President Robert Sloan wants her removed from the board because she has been critical of his leadership and of elements of the university's 10-year plan, Baylor 2012.

Sloan, citing the confidentiality of the ongoing investigation, will not comment on the McFarland case. However, he did talk with Baptist Standard editors for 90 minutes July 1 and fielded questions on a wide range of other criticisms raised by alumni, faculty, regents and former regents.

McFarland, a former vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, has plenty of supporters, including some among the regents. To some alumni, her plight represents the tip of an iceberg of concerns that have been mounting over the last two years.

Baylor alumni tend to be passionate about their alma mater. In that context, adoption of Baylor 2012 set fax machines humming and e-mails flying with a mixture of praise and criticism. Along the way, the strongly divided opinions about Baylor 2012 snowballed into a virtual referendum on Sloan's leadership.

Recurring themes of those critics include a significant tuition increase two years ago, taking on \$190 million in new debt, changing the emphasis of faculty hiring from teaching to a mixture of research and teaching, and fears that Sloan may be a "closet fundamentalist" leading Baylor into the kind of narrow-minded dogma regents sought to avoid when in 1990 they amended the school's charter to avert a "fundamentalist takeover."

By any measure, Baylor 2012 proposes drastic changes for the nation's largest Baptist university. It calls Baylor to become a "tier-one" school, meaning it would be ranked by U.S. News & World Report as among the top 50 universities in the United States.

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It calls for a \$262 million construction program, including a science building, parking garages, classrooms and residence halls. It calls for hiring "world-class" faculty that will teach less and research more. It calls for strengthening Baylor's religious commitment while becoming more academically rigorous as well - "a Protestant Notre Dame" is how supporters often describe it.

"I know when you aspire to changes that are more than incremental, it does create a change in dynamic, and there is some anxiety over that," Sloan said. "I understand that. But I'd rather be too ambitious than timid."

Sloan recently wrote a two-page letter to the university's 100,000 alumni and other supporters -- an unprecedented move. In it, he sought to reassure that Baylor is healthy, wealthy and wise in its course.

Vision problems

But the letter offered no balm for troubled souls like Ella Prichard, a Baylor alumnus and former regent from Corpus Christi who has become a vocal critic of Sloan and 2012's implementation. She is a member of the Baylor Development Council and a board member of the Baylor Alumni Association.

"I don't think the vision of becoming the foremost Protestant university in the country needs to be tossed out," Prichard said. "But I think Baylor needs to slow down -- slow the spending, slow the pursuit of new faculty with different values, slow the tuition increases. No one could anticipate 9/11 and the economic downturn when Vision 2012 was adopted.

"Now it's time to address current realities. It's been too much, too fast. Too many people have been alienated. The administration and board need to reach out to faithful faculty and staff, to alumni, to Texas Baptists. They need to listen, to stop the unrelenting spin. And they need to quit acting like the ends justify the means."

Charles Weaver, outgoing president of the Faculty Senate, has been a vocal critic of Sloan's leadership and the implementation of the 2012 vision. He too concedes that the 2012 vision on its face is a good idea. The problem, he said, is how the vision is being implemented and how fast.

"Most faculty agree with 2012. It's hard not to," the professor of psychology and neuroscience explained. "But ... in some sense, we're losing Baylor's historic strength in the attempt to be tier one by the U.S. News standards.

"Baylor has kind of always gone by its own drummer," Weaver added. "We have said we're not as concerned as other institutions as to what Princeton and Harvard might be doing. I think we're losing some of that as we push toward more emphasis on grant-getting and publications."

Sloan makes no apologies for pushing the 2012 vision aggressively. "Baylor is attracting outstanding Christian academics from around the world," he said. "Why are we drawing such great scholars? The answer is many of them are excited about the direction of the university, and they come here because of Baylor 2012."

These new hires, Sloan said, are asking, "Can't there be just one university in America in the free-church tradition that fully embraces its Christian identity -- in our case within the Baptist

tradition -- and is a comprehensive university which is committed to undergraduate teaching, committed to professional schools, has doctoral programs, has a faculty that does research and plays in Division I athletics?"

An irony of the tension between the president and faculty is that Sloan himself rose to leadership from the faculty ranks -- and he was championed by some of the regents who now are his harshest critics.

Sloan came to the presidency from Baylor's Truett Theological Seminary, where he served as founding dean after 10 years in the university's religion department. Prior to that, he taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

Two of Sloan's foremost advocates at his election were McFarland, the regent now under investigation, and John Wilkerson of Lubbock, immediate past chairman of the board and a strong critic of Baylor's current direction. Were it not for Wilkerson and McFarland, Sloan perhaps would not be president of Baylor today.

Evangelical mission

A starting point in understanding the Baylor brouhaha is buried in Sloan's declaration that Baylor will beef up its academic and research record while strengthening its faith commitment. To some, these are contradictory goals. To others, the terms demand more careful definition.

The academic advancement, according to the Baylor 2012 document, will come by recruiting more faculty who not only publish in their field but also perform research. But unlike many other research universities, these same faculty members will be expected to present engaging classroom lectures as well.

The faith component refers to a desire to build upon Baylor's Baptist heritage to become known nationally as a devoutly "Christian" school. Despite frequent references to faith, the Baylor 2012 vision document employs the word "Baptist" only once. Sloan and other Baylor administrators most frequently refer to their aspirations to be a premier "evangelical" school.

While such a transition may appear subtle to the average observer, to some Baylor insiders it's like jumping from one side of the nearby Brazos River to the other.

"The university's language is 'evangelical,' not a term I've ever heard associated with Baylor," said Weaver, the Faculty Senate president who has taught at Baylor 14 years. "That's ... a more public display, a more demonstrative kind of religion than Baylor has had in the past. It's a more restrictive set of expectations, a tradition fewer people would feel comfortable in."

Despite the "evangelical" label, Sloan sees Baylor 2012 anchoring the university firmly to its Texas Baptist roots.

"I think Baylor should continue ... its longstanding practice and policy of hiring people who embrace the Christian faith," he said. "I don't apologize for that."

"I don't want people to come to Baylor who merely tolerate the fact that we have an affiliation with the Baptist General Convention of Texas or merely tolerate the fact that we have an unapologetically Christian worldview, both at our founding and in our present makeup."

He doesn't want Baylor to go the way of Harvard, Yale, Princeton and other schools that were founded with religious purposes but today have become highly secularized, he said.

Head and heart

Still criticism persists that Baylor cannot have both tier-one academic excellence and intensive Christianity.

This conflict surfaced with the much-publicized Polanyi Center, which Sloan created by presidential order in 1999 to study and teach about intelligent design. To supporters, intelligent design offers a way to reconcile the Bible's creation accounts with modern science by noting ways science requires the existence of an intelligent designer behind creation. To critics, intelligent design is anti-intellectual creationism dressed up in new clothes.

Some science faculty complained the president created the Polanyi Center without their input. After a series of confrontations mixed with criticisms of the center's director, the emphasis was de-emphasized, although a germ of the intelligent design work continues at Baylor.

In an essay presented to the Faculty Senate, economics professor Kent Gilbreath said intelligent design attempts to push an agenda onto a scientific community "that scoffs at and finds irrelevant the idea that 'intelligent design' has anything to do with science.... "Intelligent design' is apparently 'religiously correct' and a highly desirable, generously funded research agenda to religious groups or individuals who may be more interested in confirming their beliefs than in discovering truth."

On the larger issue of faith and academics, Sloan counters that the assumption that "if you have a Christian faith you have to back off your academics" is fundamentally flawed. "If you make the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, it requires of you a pursuit of the truth. ... Why should Christians cede to secular academics the pursuit of truth in all areas and venues of life and creation?"

Bricks and mortar

Baylor 2012 calls not only for building faculty but for building buildings. Foremost among them is a four-story, 500,000-square-foot facility to provide space for science studies. Last year, regents approved a \$246 million bond issue to cover existing and new debt, including \$105 million for the science building.

"The debt is tremendously worrisome, unprecedented in Baylor's history," said Prichard, the former regent. "... Baylor could reverse everything, fire Robert, elect new regents, but the debt remains. It's about 50 percent of the endowment. Barring a \$100 million gift to pay for the science building, any administration is going to be saddled with the debt for years to come."

Sloan says Baylor had to move forward with the science building to remain competitive in recruiting students, explaining that the current science buildings were constructed in the mid-1960s. "We've had students come to campus and look at our science buildings and say, 'I had better laboratories at my high school.'"

Sloan views the debt not in relation to endowment but in relation to annual budget. The debt isn't a threat but a tool to advance the university's mission, he said.

"Families and businesses and institutions of higher learning and churches regularly use debt to forward their mission," Sloan said. While Baylor historically has not taken on major debt, the time was right to do so now, he added, explaining that Baylor entered the bond market "at an all-time historic low" and borrowed far less than it could have.

The blended rate of the bond issue is 3.8 percent, he said.

"We spend the grand total of 4.7 percent of our operating budget on debt retirement. I suspect the average Baptist family would love to have a house mortgage and credit cards, car loans and everything else add up to 4.7 percent of their monthly budget."

The flip side of Baylor entering the bond market at all-time low interest rates is that Baylor has taken on major capital projects at a time when donations are drying up due to the sagging stock market.

The 2012 vision calls for increasing the university's endowment from \$645 million to \$2 billion. Yet donations have been on a downward trend in recent years. Efforts to fund the science building through foundation grants "has been singularly unsuccessful," said Prichard.

Baylor remains in excellent financial health, Sloan insisted. "We're just closing the books on our fiscal year, and for the 34th year in a row, Baylor finishes in the black. We have a strong, not huge, but strong surplus."

Chief Financial Officer David Brooks likewise assessed the university as fiscally healthy. Baylor's internal operating budget ended the 2001-2002 academic year with a \$2.8 million surplus, he said, and the 2002-2003 year closed May 31 with a \$1.35 million surplus.

Other issues frequently cited in the Baylor debate include:

-- Faculty hiring -- Armed with a mandate to add 237 new faculty as part of 2012, Sloan set about reshaping the faculty by addition rather than subtraction, often scrutinizing candidates himself. Stories abound of candidates courted by faculty committees, approved by deans, only to be nixed by the senior administration - as many as a fourth of the nominees, according to a faculty survey. "There's a growing sense that faculty aren't trusted to make these important decisions," said Weaver, the faculty president. Added Prichard, the former regent, "Many charge that a theological litmus test is being applied at the time of hiring and tenure." Sloan discounted the assertion that most faculty candidates who are rejected by senior administration fail due to theological reasons.

-- Fundamentalist vision? - Largely because of hiring scrutiny, critics claim Sloan is a fundamentalist or is enforcing a more ultra-conservative theological standard. "If people want to holler 'fundamentalist' at everything they don't like or with which they disagree, then they need to broaden their worldview," Sloan countered. "Fundamentalists typically have creeds to sign. You have certain very circumscribed behaviors. ... Our students and faculty do not sign any sort of creedal statement." Weaver is unconvinced: "There certainly is some kind of acceptable expression of faith. It's not a creed because it's simply not written down." But Barry Hankins, who teaches history and church-state studies, disagrees: "I study fundamentalism for a living, and this isn't it."

-- Faculty division -- Under 2012, Baylor's faculty has been divided into two groups. Those in Group A consider their primary calling to the classroom, not research. Those in Group B are

the new hires, or older faculty who chose to switch over, who are committed to pursuing research as well as teaching. Among the 561 tenured or tenure-track faculty, research faculty outnumber teaching faculty by about three to one. Critics see a caste system that values B faculty over A faculty in hiring and promotion. "What will happen to Baylor after the tenured faculty have all retired and students are left to be taught by those for whom quality instruction is a low or non-existent priority?" added Bette McCall Miller, daughter of former Baylor President Abner McCall and a leader in the alumni opposition. But Sloan contends: "You can't be a serious university in today's world and say we don't care about the discovery of new knowledge."

-- Tuition -- The new flat-rate tuition structure implemented through Baylor 2012 has raised the typical tuition rate 41 percent since 2001. It now stands at \$17,200 per year, with annual increases of 6.8 percent planned for the future. Critics believe this makes Baylor inaccessible to average Baptist families. "Baylor ...is now tied with Rice as the second most expensive school in the state," said Miller, a school teacher in Mesquite. According to administrators, the tuition increase actually has made Baylor more accessible to middle-class students because the amount of financial aid also has increased. Charging a higher price to students who are able to pay full price allows the university to more deeply subsidize the cost for students who are not. "Baylor is more accessible to the middle class today than it was three years ago," Sloan said. "I know that may be counter-intuitive, but those are the facts."

-- Recruiting freshmen -- Tuition increases are essential to make the 2012 vision a reality, so meeting enrollment goals has become vital. Last year, Baylor missed its goal for incoming students by about 8 percent, losing several million dollars in revenue. This year's entering class looks more promising, and Baylor could make its budget goal of 2,775 freshmen. But some faculty worry the university has loosened its admissions standards to make the goals. Sloan points to an increase in average SAT scores among Baylor freshmen as an indicator that the student body is getting brighter, however. The average SAT score has increased from about 1140 to about 1180, he said.

-- Alumni association -- The administration created an alumni services division to communicate regularly and directly with Baylor's 100,000 alumni. That was seen by some critics as an attempt to put the Baylor Alumni Association, an autonomous body with 25,000 dues-paying members, out of business. The association lost \$350,000 in annual funding from the university. To Sloan's critics, this is further evidence of the administration's attempts at control. To Sloan's defenders, it was a logical step to strengthen the university's direct communication with alumni.

Many of these issues will no doubt be discussed during the regents and alumni meetings. Some critics hope to see Baylor back away from the 2012 vision or at least slow it down.

"I'm not sure Baylor needs to worry about being on any magazine's list," said Miller, the school teacher. "The university may have to sacrifice too much on the altar of the top tier and will be diverted from its longstanding mission of serving Texans and Baptists. I don't want to be a Protestant Notre Dame. I just want Baylor to go on being Baylor."

Indeed, what Baylor was and is stands at the center of the current debate.

Said Gilbreath, the economics professor, in another essay: "I believe the growing divisiveness in the Baylor family today transcends any one person or any temporal administration and goes to the heart of what Baylor University is about, has been about and should be about in the future,"

The administration and its critics seem to agree wholeheartedly on this point.

Baylor spokesman Larry Brumley, acting vice president for university relations, summarized the debate in one sentence: "This is a struggle for the heart and soul of the university."

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