

Nashville, Tennessee SEP 18 2003

Associated Baptist Press

September 10, 2003 Volume: 03-84

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Baylor faculty senate votes 'no confidence' in Sloan

By Mark Wingfield

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University's faculty senate passed a strongly worded resolution of no confidence in university President Robert Sloan Sept. 9, urging the board of regents to remove him.

Five regents already have announced they will offer a motion to terminate Sloan when the regents meet Sept. 11.

Sloan, who has been criticized throughout the summer by segments of the faculty and alumni, greeted reporters cheerfully after learning of the faculty senate vote, vowing he has no plans to step down.

The resolution of no confidence, adopted on a 26-to-6 vote in closed session, says Sloan's administration "has produced a chilling work environment, a climate characterized by distrust, anxiety, intimidation, favoritism, as well as profound concerns about the sanctity of academic freedom and professional standards."

It continues: "But above all else, this climate is marked by fear -- fear of losing one's job, one's hope for tenure, a promotion, a pay raise or a friend, over an opinion or activity that might be labeled 'disloyal' or 'not mission-friendly' by a representative of the administration."

Such a culture, the resolution contends, is "incompatible with our Christian faith and our noblest Baptist traditions."

The resolution cited a poll of faculty and staff conducted by the administration last year as evidence of discontent, as well as "an avalanche" of faculty grievances.

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"Faculty confidence in President Sloan's leadership methods and direction has eroded to a point where only a personnel change at the top can begin to restore the trust, common purpose and faithful cooperation within and among Baylor's constituencies," the resolution declares.

The internal survey found deep differences of opinion about the administration and the university's direction between older, tenured faculty and newer faculty in tenure-track positions. Less than one third of tenured faculty expressed confidence in the university's direction, while more than two thirds of tenure-track faculty expressed confidence in the university's direction.

Under Sloan's 10-year vision for the university, called Baylor 2012, new faculty hires are brought on with mandates to engage in research as much as in classroom teaching. Older faculty members have been given a choice of participating in the new standards or continuing under the terms of their initial employment on a different track.

Older faculty members have complained that the new hires are receiving significantly larger salaries and faster promotions than faculty on the teaching-emphasis track. Sloan said in an interview with the Baptist Standard this summer that promotions and raises are evenly distributed and are not preferential to the research-track faculty. Some faculty members and alumni continue to dispute Sloan's assertions, however.

Both pro-Sloan and anti-Sloan forces have claimed to have the backing of a majority of the faculty, which numbers more than 560. In reality, no conclusive data exists to prove either side's point. The university currently has no mechanism to poll the entire faculty on a vote of confidence in the president, other than through the faculty senate, whose members are elected by their peers.

Six representatives of the faculty senate met with reporters after their nearly four-hour meeting Sept. 9.

About an hour later, Sloan met with reporters in an impromptu news conference. He expressed appreciation for the seriousness of the faculty senate deliberations but declared the senate is "only one important venue for faculty to express themselves."

He recalled receiving a standing ovation and other shows of support from faculty at larger meetings within the last month. "It was very clear there was strong support for the provost and myself," he said.

Sloan reiterated his previous statements that he serves as the pleasure of the board of regents and that he believes he has strong support from the board.

Despite the vote of the Faculty Senate and the announced intention of five regents to seek Sloan's firing later this week, the president said he anticipates remaining in his post.

"You don't solve problems by running from them. I am committed to being Baylor's president."

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**Five Baylor regents issue
call for Sloan's termination**

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- By Mark Wingfield

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Five regents of Baylor University have called on the board to terminate the service of President Robert Sloan.

The request was issued in a letter made public Sept. 8. The five regents reportedly informed Sloan of their plan earlier in the day. The 36-member board of regents meets Sept. 11-12.

As he has throughout a summer of controversy, Sloan showed no sign of bowing to his critics. Baylor spokesman Larry Brumley told the Waco Tribune-Herald Sloan has no plans to step down.

The letter is signed by former board chairman John Wilkerson, chairman of the board of Wilkerson Storage in Lubbock; Carl Bell, a financial adviser from Dallas; Mary Chavanne-Martin, a businesswoman from Houston; Toby Druin, editor emeritus of the Baptist Standard who now lives in Waxahachie; and Jaclanel McFarland, an attorney from Houston.

All five are Baylor alumni.

Regents chairman Drayton McLane, owner of the Houston Astros, released a brief statement in response to the letter: "The right way to handle this issue is through regular board meetings. So I'm extremely disappointed that this letter was delivered first to the news media and then to the Baylor board of regents. All of this will be reviewed and debated carefully later this week at the board meeting. Board members will be able to convey their concerns, then look at the true facts and make a decision. This is the correct and right process as opposed to trying to spin stories in the media. I look forward to our board meeting on Friday."

The letter was released one day before Baylor's faculty senate was considered likely to entertain a motion to vote no confidence in Sloan's leadership. A news conference is scheduled at the conclusion of the senate meeting Tuesday, Sept. 9.

Druin said the five regents announced their intentions publicly prior to the regents' meeting "to get it out so that it's not kept under the cloak of an executive session."

Some regents, particularly those opposed to Sloan's leadership, have complained in the past that the board does too much of its work in executive session and that too much control is exerted over what regents can talk about publicly.

"All of us are concerned about the inviolability of the executive session, and we want to honor that," Druin said. "But we want the regents and the public to know that we are trying to address this issue. We think it's the Baylor family's business."

The five expressed "sincere regret" in asking for Sloan's immediate termination and noted, "We have not come to this decision lightly."

The two-page letter references the summer scandal involving the murder of Baylor basketball player Patrick Dennehy and alleged cover-up of NCAA violations by former coach Dave Bliss. But it points to other issues as more fundamental concerns about Sloan's leadership.

"There is a great and unrelenting unrest among the Baylor family over the implementation of

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Vision 2012," they stated. "As regents, we voted for and have continued to support Vision 2012, including its goal that Baylor achieve tier one status as a patently obvious Christian institution."

The problem, the letter explains, is in the implementation of the vision. Specific concerns cited include:

-- Creating a two-track system for faculty, distinguishing those who will pursue the new imperative of research from those who will focus on classroom teaching. They report some people have perceived this to emphasize "research to the detriment of teaching."

-- "Heavy- and uneven-handed methods in seeking a particular kind of Christian professor." Critics among regents, alumni and faculty have complained that a narrow, unwritten litmus test is being applied to faculty hiring and promotions and that Baylor is increasingly hiring professors with ultra-conservative ideologies.

-- "A shift to bonded indebtedness rather than a pay-as-we-go plan of campus construction." Vision 2012 calls for more than \$200 million in new construction, much of which already is underway on the Waco campus.

-- "Exorbitant tuition increases." To implement Vision 2012, the university moved to a flat-rate tuition that started off with a 29 percent jump and is projected to increase about 8 percent per year until 2012.

These issues "have alienated a broad spectrum of Baylor alumni, who were already reeling from a lack of support of an independent Baylor Alumni Association," the five regents declared. The Sloan administration angered loyal supporters of the independent alumni association last year by creating its own internal alumni service unit.

The five also cite "many other questions about President Sloan's leadership style, which we discussed at the previous meeting in July."

Any part of that meeting that involved discussions of Sloan's leadership was held in executive session. At that meeting, regents declined to proceed further with an investigation of McFarland, on allegations reportedly brought by Sloan that she had interfered with an on-campus drug sting. After the July meeting, regents issued a brief statement saying the initial inquiry had been warranted but that insufficient evidence existed for formal charges to be filed.

McFarland contended at the time that the charges against her were trumped up because she had become a vocal critic of Sloan's leadership.

In this week's letter, the five regents said Baylor "has been given a black eye that will require a long time to heal. We feel a major step in the process of healing would be a change of leadership at the top."

In recent weeks, other groups publicly have expressed both support and criticism for Sloan. One pro-Sloan group pledged \$1 million as a show of support. Three former board chairmen called for Sloan's resignation.

Supporters say Sloan has the backing of a majority of the faculty and alumni, while critics say

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the opposite is true. No reliable data exists to prove either point.

One fourth of the 36 regents are elected by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and three fourths are elected by the board itself. How many of those board members would vote for Sloan's dismissal could not be ascertained. However, in the past Sloan has enjoyed strong support from a majority of the board.

Nor is it clear what kind of majority would be required to remove the president, since Baylor officials have refused requests to provide copies of their governing documents.

"The 31 other regents are extremely capable people who have heard the same things we have heard, and we just want them to examine their consciences and feelings and their love for Baylor and act accordingly," Druin said.

A vote against Sloan should not be construed as a vote against Vision 2012, he emphasized. "Each of the signees of this motion is for 2012. We are also firmly behind Baylor's designation as a Christian institution."

Despite current challenges, Baylor will survive, Druin predicted. "I believe firmly in the resiliency of the university. It's endured a lot in the past -- I'm not sure anything quite of this nature. But Baylor will go on."

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Baseball chaplain sees nothing minor-league about ministry

- By Ken Camp

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Some might say that life threw Jim Hollars a curve ball when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. But the church planter-turned-baseball chaplain just saw it as a change-up and adjusted his swing.

Hollars served 30 years as a minister of music and youth before he was called on to fill in temporarily as pastor of a storefront church in Ohio. "I started preaching and never looked back," he said.

In 1994, Hollars started a church in Toledo, and before long also started working part-time as a chaplain with the local minor-league baseball team, the Toledo Mudhens. But after a couple of years, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's.

Eventually, the degenerative neurological ailment left his voice weak and raspy, and he was no longer physically able to stand in the pulpit and preach for half-hours at a time.

Hollars and his wife, Shirley, retired and moved to Fort Worth to be near their grandchildren. But they were convinced that God still had a place of ministry for them.

Today they serve as ministers of missions at Point of Hope Church, a mission of a suburban

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Fort Worth congregation. And Hollars expands his ministry beyond Point of Hope by working as a chaplain with the Fort Worth Cats, a minor-league team in the independent Central Baseball League.

"I don't belong with these professional athletes. I'm too old and too crippled. I tremble and can't speak plainly sometimes. But God uses my weaknesses," Hollars said.

During the 96-game regular minor-league season, Hollars typically holds three chapel services before each home game -- one for the Cats, one for their opponents and one for the umpires. Jim and Shirley Hollars hold a lunchtime Bible study for the Cats each week at their home. A typical study begins with not only prayer requests like health for ill family members and hope for spiritually lost friends, but also healing for injured players and jobs for the off-season.

In part, the players are drawn to the Bible study by the desire for Christian fellowship and a hunger to learn more about Scripture. But Jim Hollars acknowledges they're also drawn by a less spiritual kind of hunger -- for his wife's cooking. "These guys eat at McDonald's a lot," Hollars said.

Baseball Chapel is an international ministry recognized by Major League Baseball and the various minor-league systems.

"A lot of guys on the teams will tell you they got saved in Baseball Chapel," Hollars said.

Brian Moon, catcher with the Fort Worth Cats, came to faith in Christ through the ministry of Baseball Chapel in 1999 when he was playing in Wisconsin. "Every Sunday, [a baseball chaplain would] come into the locker room for chapel, so one day I went out to lunch with the chapel guy," Moon recalled. "I got saved that afternoon."

Jim Essian Jr., centerfielder for the Cats and a regular participant in Hollars' Bible studies, has a strong family connection to Baseball Chapel. "My dad got saved in Baseball Chapel back in 1978 when he was with the Oakland A's," he said.

Almost without exception, players express appreciation for the presence of a chaplain, Hollars said. But that doesn't mean every player attends services.

"A lot of guys are scared to try it," said Chris Cumberland, closing pitcher for the Cats, who has played baseball professionally for 11 years. "They know they're missing something, but they're afraid they would have to change their lifestyles. It's definitely not easy to walk the walk."

Cumberland understands the baseball lifestyle, having grown up around the game. His father, John Cumberland, was in the major leagues from 1968 to 1974, pitching for the New York Yankees, San Francisco Giants and California Angels. He is now the pitching coach for the Kansas City Royals.

"The baseball life is not like anything else. You're constantly going from city to city. You're out late at night. It makes you grow up fast," he said.

Ministering in that kind of environment has provided a sense of missionary fulfillment for Hollars, and it has given him the opportunity to minister not only to players and officials, but also groundskeepers, ushers and vendors.

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"I've been amazed at how well-received Baseball Chapel is, and how we're able to go into a totally secular environment and talk about Jesus so openly," Hollars said. "It's an opportunity to practice being the presence of Christ in a secular environment, every time I enter the ballpark."

- A photo to accompany this story is available from ABP.

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Atlanta missions group cuts staff in half

By ABP Staff

ATLANTA (ABP) -- HouseCalls International, a non-profit organization that promotes and manages mission trips, recently reduced its staff by more than half, from 17 to eight.

The Atlanta-based company, begun in 2000, was founded by Andy Morris and Mike Bailey, who formerly worked in volunteer mobilization for the North American Mission Board. In 2003, the group managed a number of projects outsourced by other entities, including NAMB and state conventions in North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

In 2003, HouseCalls managed scores of weeklong projects in the United States and Puerto Rico. HouseCalls funding comes from fees paid by mission participants. The number of participants in some programs fell well below projections for the year, however, leading to a financial downturn. Layoffs affected four contract workers and five salaried personnel, most of them located in Georgia.

Bailey, president of the group, said some incorrect decisions were made regarding the organization's growth.

"Like many startups, we simply grew too fast," he said. Bailey said his organization will learn and grow from the experience. "We remain dedicated and committed to our vision of helping to eliminate substandard housing and providing a meaningful missions experience for the participant," he said.

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Voucher opponents decry stalling tactics as House narrowly passes DC vouchers

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- School-voucher opponents are decrying procedural moves by Republican leaders in the House of Representatives that enabled a voucher plan to go forward.

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A bill that would impose a federally funded voucher program on the District of Columbia passed 210-206 late on the evening of Sept. 9. The GOP leadership, in an unusual move, had postponed the vote until after 8 p.m. that evening.

Voucher opponents said the timing was suspicious because it seemed designed to ensure the absence of some of the bill's opponents – including Democratic presidential candidates Richard Gephardt (Mo.) and Dennis Kucinich (Ohio) and African-American House members who were scheduled to be in Baltimore that evening for a presidential debate sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Institute.

An effort to kill the voucher program narrowly failed Sept. 5 on a tie vote. In seeking final approval Sept. 9, Republicans delayed the vote for about 40 minutes in order to round up the last votes needed to overcome another anti-voucher amendment. Finally Rep. Ernie Fletcher (R-Ky.), who voted against the plan last four days earlier, cast the "yes" vote needed to break a 208-208 tie.

Gephardt campaign spokesman Erik Smith told the Washington Post that Republican leaders "clearly" created the scheduling conflict in an effort to deplete the opponents' ranks. "Look, this is a tie vote," Smith told the Post. "They knew the [presidential] debate was tonight. They knew there would be a couple dozen [black caucus] members that wanted to attend. It's not rocket science. This is the way this Republican House leadership operates."

A spokesman for House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) dismissed the allegation as partisan spin. "We're not that smart," Jonathan Grella told the Post.

Tanya Clay, deputy director of public policy for the anti-voucher group People for the American Way, told Associated Baptist Press it is "outrageous" that House members would have to choose between a debate important to the black community and voting on an important issue such as vouchers, "which is crucial and critical to the funding of our public school system."

"This should not be an either/or," she said. "This vote should not occur today. There's no reason it should have to occur today."

The vote on the final bill – Congress' annual D.C. appropriations bill, which includes millions in funding for other causes – had already been postponed once. An amendment to add the voucher provision passed by the thinnest of margins – 205-203 – on Sept. 5.

The subsequent amendment to strip the voucher provision, which died on a 203-203 vote, was offered by Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), Washington's non-voting delegate to the House. Had Norton been allowed to vote, the measure would have been stripped from the bill.

After the even split on Norton's amendment, House leaders announced that they were postponing the final vote on the bill until Sept. 9.

The District of Columbia is unique in that Congress has oversight authority over much of the D.C. government, including schools. That gives Congress the opportunity to enact a voucher proposal that it could not impose on the states.

Opponents of vouchers have said the bill would force Washington residents to accept a plan they don't want and for which they haven't voted. "The people of the District of Columbia have

not turned around on a dime" on vouchers, said Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), the city's non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives, during floor debate on the measure Sept. 5. "This is one of the most anti-voucher jurisdictions in the country."

Norton noted that, despite the support for the plan by D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams (D) and D.C. school-board president Peggy Cooper Cafritz, a majority of the city's elected officials -- both city council and school board members -- remain strongly opposed to vouchers. Many anti-voucher D.C. officials and residents have accused Williams and Cafritz of bowing to pressure from President Bush and Republican leaders in Congress, who strongly support vouchers.

Voucher opponents often cite three primary fears: That voucher programs mean public money could be spent at private religious schools, that the exodus of good students and funding to private schools would hurt already-struggling public school systems, and that private schools are not accountable to the public for their performance, while public schools are.

If the D.C. bill becomes law with the voucher provision intact, it would be the first time federal funds would be used to pay for private-school vouchers. Two years ago, an attempt to create a nationwide federally funded voucher program failed 273-155 in the House, and ballot initiatives that would create voucher programs have lost by wide margins in several states and the District of Columbia since 1972. Voters in Florida and Colorado have approved statewide voucher programs.

Supporters argue that the poorest children in many big-city public school systems -- such as Washington's -- need to be offered every opportunity to "escape" low-performing schools.

"We, as local leaders, are simply imploring Congress to embrace our efforts to help our long-neglected student population with every available tool," wrote Williams, Cafritz and D.C. council member Kevin Chavous in a Sept. 3 Washington Post guest column. "Obviously, the issue of whether federal funds should be allocated to private schools is enormously difficult, but it is an issue that has been settled by the Supreme Court."

Grella, DeLay's spokesman, said opponents were accusing Republicans of "a vast pro-children conspiracy." He said it's important to note that Congressional Black Caucus members are "leaving their jobs for political activities," and therefore "they shouldn't be so self-righteous about it."

Asked why House leaders postponed the vote from Sept. 5 to Sept. 9, Grella referred questions to the office of House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-Mo.). Calls to Blunt's office for comment had not been returned by press time Sept. 10.

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