

# **CBF considering cap on funding to some ministry partners\_22105**

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## **CBF considering cap on funding to some ministry partners**

**By Greg Warner**

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ATLANTA (ABP) — A plan under consideration by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship would cap CBF funding of outside organizations, which could reduce CBF support for some traditional ministry partners by as much as 31 percent.

The long-awaited proposal from the Partner Study Committee would limit Fellowship funding to 20 percent of any partner's revenues. Based on recent revenue figures, that would cut CBF funding for Associated Baptist Press from \$132,119 to \$91,784 (a 31 percent cut) and for the Baptist Center for Ethics from \$81,555 to \$61,380 (25 percent).

Other partners would be less affected. Funding for the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Liberty would drop slightly, from \$203,888 to \$201,680, while the Baptist World Alliance and Baptists Today newsjournal would be eligible to receive more money.

None of the theological schools funded by CBF is close to the planned 20 percent ceiling. The only school that depends on Fellowship funding for more than 10 percent of its budget is Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

The Partner Study Committee was initiated last year by the CBF Coordinating Council with the objective of diverting more money from CBF-supported organizations into the Fellowship's own ministries.

Charles Cantrell, chair of the Partner Study Committee, confirmed the proposed cap but emphasized it would be phased in over a couple of years and must yet be approved by the Coordinating Council.

"The report will be presented at the February [17-18] council meeting for discussion and review only, with revisions taking place after the February council meeting as needed in response to council and staff discussions," Cantrell, an attorney from Mountain Home, Mo., told ABP. "The proposed report, including guidelines and implementation dates and processes, would then be discussed with current partners. At the June Coordinating Council meeting, the final report will be presented for a vote by the coordinating council."

The cap would apply to "institutional" funding — or undesignated funding of the partners' core programs — according to Cantrell and others, and would not apply to short-term or scholarship funding, which goes to some partners but not others. Additionally, a "safety valve" is provided to allow institutional funding to exceed 20 percent of a partner's revenues if approved by the Coordinating Council, Cantrell said.

The report also proposes new policies for managing CBF's relationships with partners, including methods of reporting activities and requirements for acknowledging CBF ties, according to council members who have studied the plan. A "covenant agreement" would be developed with each

partner, spelling out expectations and mutual benefits. More authority over partner funding would be given to CBF staffers, some observers said.

But the report's key element affecting partners is the 20 percent cap, council members told ABP. Those partners have not seen the report, except for a handful of organizations that have employees serving on the council. The council's conflict-of-interest policy could prevent those council members from voting on the plan, but that policy has not been invoked in the past.

Cantrell declined to provide ABP with a copy of the draft report, saying the Coordinating Council — which received the report this week — should discuss it first. Bob Setzer of Macon, Ga., moderator of CBF and the council, did not respond to a request for an interview.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, created in 1991 as an alternative to the more conservative Southern Baptist Convention, served initially as a conduit for funding moderate-favored ministries, such as CBF's current list of 18 primary partners. Since revamping its mission statement, however, CBF has redirected its funding in recent years to its own ministries and to providing services to churches.

The Fellowship's funding of its primary ministry partners has been declining since 1996, dropping 16 percent during the nine-year period. The most recent cut came in 2002-03.

Meanwhile, overall CBF revenue has grown from \$13 million in 1996 to \$24 million last year, primarily from designated gifts for missions. Undesignated contributions — the pool of funds that supports partners — grew 19 percent, to \$8.9 million in the 2003-04 fiscal year.

During the same nine-year period, the Fellowship's administrative costs — including ministry staff — have more than doubled, from \$1.9 million to \$4.4 million, and the Atlanta-based staff has grown from 33 people to 59.

The Fellowship has budgeted \$2,592,468 for partners in 2004-05, about 30 percent of anticipated undesignated funds. A 2003 task force that created the Partner Study Committee recommended reducing the partner-funding pool to 20 percent of the CBF's undesignated budget. Instead, the committee is proposing a cap based on each partner's revenues.

The CBF's five primary non-educational partners (along with their most-recent available annual revenues, current CBF-reported institutional funding, and CBF's percentage of revenues) are:

Baptist World Alliance, revenue \$2,630,277 (unrestricted, not including relief), CBF \$40,000, 1.5%; Baptist Joint Committee, revenue \$1,008,400, CBF \$203,888, 20.2%; Associated Baptist Press, \$458,921, CBF \$132,119, 28.8%; Baptists Today, approximate revenue \$450,000, CBF \$40,778, 9.1%; Baptist Center for Ethics, revenue \$306,898 (2003), CBF \$81,555, 26.6%.

The Fellowship provides institutional and/or scholarship funding to 10 seminaries or divinity schools. Their most-recent available annual revenues, current CBF-reported institutional support, CBF's percentage of institutional support, CBF-reported scholarship funding, and number of students, are:

Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, revenue \$5,354,027, CBF institutional \$142,722 (2.7%), CBF scholarship \$66,612, students 363; Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, revenue \$2,191,262, CBF institutional \$228,355 (10.4%), CBF scholarship \$69,467, students 325; Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kan., revenue \$2,490,000, CBF institutional \$163,110 (2.7%), CBF scholarship \$25,000 (6.6%), students 120 (est.); Christopher White Divinity School, Gardner-Webb University, revenue \$2,626,500, CBF institutional \$97,866 (3.7%), CBF scholarship \$54,787, students 200; Campbell University Divinity School, revenue \$1,200,000, CBF institutional \$73,400 (6.1%), CBF scholarship \$53,156, students 206; Logsdon School of Theology, Hardin-

Simmons University, revenue not disclosed, CBF institutional \$16,310 (% not disclosed), CBF scholarship \$33,156, students not disclosed; Wake Forest Divinity School, revenue \$1,000,000 (est.), CBF institutional none, CBF scholarship \$33,156, students 97; McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, revenue not disclosed, CBF institutional \$185,946 (% not disclosed), CBF scholarship \$46,630, students not disclosed; International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, revenue \$1,399,000, CBF institutional \$88,080, CBF scholarship none, students 138; and Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, revenue \$486,000, CBF institutional none, CBF scholarship \$15,000, students 51.

Four of those schools are free-standing, not attached to a university — Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Baptist Seminary of Kentucky and International Baptist Theological Seminary — a fact supporters say warrants more funding.

The Fellowship also funds Baptist-studies programs, which support Baptist students at three non-Baptist theological schools — Candler School of Theology at Emory University, program revenue \$250,080, CBF institutional \$24,467, CBF scholarship \$21,630, 71 Baptist students out of 610 total; Duke Divinity School, program revenue \$115,000, CBF institutional \$20,389, CBF scholarship \$25,000, 101 Baptist students out of 500 total; and Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, revenue not disclosed, CBF institutional none, CBF scholarship \$45,389, students not disclosed.

— *Greg Warner is executive editor of Associated Baptist Press, which receives funding from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.*

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