

New Orleans seminary may restart some activities in January, Kelley says

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New Orleans Seminary hopes to restore campus by August 2006

By Gary Myers

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ATLANTA (BP)—Despite the devastation on the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary campus, President Chuck Kelley said he plans for the main campus to be fully operational in August 2006 and hopes some activities will be held on campus as early as January 2006.

Extension center classes will continue as scheduled.

“New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is here to stay, and we are getting back to work,” Kelley told a professors and staff meeting at the seminary's Atlanta-area North Georgia campus. “We will have a semester. We will have a December graduation.”

Kelley said the August 2006 date is contingent on a number of factors. Trustees must approve the target date during their fall meeting. The date also is contingent on the recovery efforts throughout the city; the surrounding infrastructure must be ready in order for the seminary to meet

the target date, he said.

All the members of the seminary family who weathered the storm are out of the city, seminary officials reported. The seminary property avoided major structural damage in the hurricane, said Chris Friedmann, associate vice president for operation, who stayed on campus during the storm. High winds leveled trees on the front of campus and tore shingles, but the buildings escaped structural damage.

However, after the levees broke, most of the campus was flooded. Mike Moskau, the seminary's building contractor, said repair work could begin as soon as waters recede. The repairs will be labor-intensive; apartments, houses and classrooms affected by floodwaters will be gutted, sanitized and repaired. An August 2006 launch date is achievable, Moskau insisted.

“Together as a seminary family and with Southern Baptists we can do this in a way that as much as possible minimizes disruption for student and faculty families,” Kelley said. “God has given us the opportunity to see the true measure of his greatness in helping us overcome the most difficult situation the seminary has ever faced.”

New Orleans needs the seminary more than ever and hopes it can play a role in helping the people of New Orleans heal and recover, Kelley said.

With the target date in sight and a bit of good news about campus buildings, administrators, professors and staff members worked on ways to continue the semester. Continuing the semester is very important to keep students on track for graduation, Kelley said.

An educational task force was formed to develop solutions. After hours of discussion, the team drafted a plan to provide students with flexible educational options while the campus goes through cleanup and repair. The main option is for students to continue classes which will be reformatted.□□Other options include Internet courses, October workshops

and open transfer to extension sites. The options will be available on the certificate, undergraduate and graduate levels.

“All of us on campus have experienced a tremendous loss. However, our students don't have to lose this semester,” Provost Steve Lemke said. “We are designing options so that every student can complete their scheduled load through this semester.”

The most extensive option will be a 10-week term of reformatted courses utilizing “threaded” Internet discussions. The goal is to provide every course offered on campus in the fall.

Some classes offered multiple times on the main campus may be unified into one section per course. Due to the style of instruction, students can study from anywhere in the country. Students who were enrolled in a course on the main campus can join the same courses in the independent study format without additional costs.

Students who were enrolled in the seminary's Internet courses also will be able to continue their courses. Additional course offerings may be offered, and students displaced by the hurricane can add Internet courses without paying the usual technology fees.

During the week of Oct. 17, workshop courses will be moved to the North Georgia campus. A few video extension sites in Florida also may be used. The developing plan calls for expanding the current workshop week to give students additional options.

Students also will be allowed to transfer to NOBTS extension sites without paying drop/add fees, Lemke said. The students would be allowed to join courses already in progress. Some housing is available for displaced students near extension centers. The seminary relief task force is working to match students interested in extension studies with these housing options.

Because the courses already are in session, students seeking to transfer to an extension site need to act quickly. Students would be allowed to make up their work and would not be penalized for the class meetings they already have missed, Lemke said.

The plans of the academic task force and relief information forms will be available online at www.nobts.edu and www.sbc.net. Students in the doctor of ministry, doctor of educational ministry, doctor of musical arts and doctor of philosophy programs should visit the website for information about continuing their study.

While seminary officials wait for the nobts.edu mail system to be rebuilt, e-mail accounts are being established. The addresses also will be posted on www.nobts.edu and www.sbc.net.

Plans for continuing music courses and December graduation plans still were under development at press time.

In the meantime, faculty, staff and administrators are settling in at the North Georgia campus. Every table in every corner of the building is being used as office space.

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