

Shorter College to stay with Georgia convention after losing court appeal_71105

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ROME, Ga. (ABP)—The Georgia Supreme Court decided July 1 not to reconsider a ruling that Shorter College improperly severed ties with the Georgia Baptist Convention. The decision brings an end to the long battle over control of the 132-year-old Baptist school in northwest Georgia.

Outgoing trustee chairman Gary Eubanks, an attorney whose family has provided significant financial support to the college for many years, acknowledged that “complete, absolute control of Shorter College” soon will be in the hands of new trustees elected by the convention.

In 2003 Shorter trustees dissolved the corporation and reorganized with a self-perpetuating board, warning interference by the Georgia Baptist Convention was threatening the school’s accreditation.. That dissolution was ruled improper by the Supreme Court June 7, deciding only trustees approved by the convention can serve.

“We must now face the fact that we have lost the court struggle,” Eubanks said in a statement released to the press. “The leadership of the GBC has on numerous occasions in the courts taken the position that Shorter did not really have an accreditation problem with (the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). We will soon see whose position is valid.”

Eubanks identified Nelson Price, retired pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., as the “likely new president” of the college. Price has advocated for Shorter trustees who are supportive of the fundamentalist-controlled Georgia Baptist Convention.

Eubanks said the college is “at a crossroads and its faculty, staff and students are standing in the intersection.” He urged the Shorter family to “keep its perspective” but anticipated significant changes.

“I must also be candid with present and past Shorter trustees,” said Eubanks. “After the change in control, there will not be opportunities of effective service for many who have dedicated much of their lives to this small college.”

Eubanks said his family’s involvement with Shorter would likely end as well. The Eubanks name is prominent on Shorter buildings, reflecting the support his late parents, Robert and Hazel Eubanks, gave to the college.

Harold Newman has filled the presidency of Shorter since Ed Schrader left Jan. 1 to become president of Brenau College in Gainesville, Ga. Schrader was Shorter’s president during the 2003 reorganization.

In a statement following the June court ruling, Georgia Baptist executive Robert White downplayed any significant changes coming to the college. “We intend to continue our historical and long-standing relationship and friendship with the college,” said White. “Our desire is to see Shorter as a fully accredited, growing and financially stable educational institution of the Georgia Baptist Convention.”

College and convention officials await any response from SACS which, during its most recent accreditation review, questioned the GBC's influence on the trustees' management of the school.

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