

# Accrediting association reprimands Criswell College due to finances

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**By Robert Marus**

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DALLAS (ABP)—A Bible college with close ties to the Southern Baptist fundamentalist movement is in danger of losing its accreditation due to financial problems.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools announced June 28 on its website that it had placed Criswell College on a one-year probation period. The news was publicized July 5 by the *Dallas Morning News* and [SBC Outpost](#), a blog run by several Southern Baptist pastors disgruntled with the denomination's leadership.

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The  
Criswell  
College  
campus is  
located  
near  
downtown  
Dallas.

“Criswell College was continued in accreditation for good cause and placed on probation because the commission determined that it failed to demonstrate compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.10.1 (Financial Stability) and Comprehensive Standard 3.10.4 (Control of Finances) of the [SACS] Principles of Accreditation, ” the statement from the association read. “These standards expect an accredited institution to provide evidence that it has (1) a recent financial history that demonstrates financial stability and (2) appropriate control over all its financial resources.”

The Dallas-based school’s finances have been under SACS scrutiny for two years. While the association’s statement indicates Criswell displayed enough progress on “non-compliance” with SACS financial standards to prevent a complete withdrawal of accreditation, those advances apparently were not enough to return it to good standing with the association.

SACS rules require it either to regain good standing after the two-year study period, continue accreditation but in a probationary period, or have its accreditation revoked entirely.

The statement said SACS officials would continue studying the school’s finances and make another determination on Criswell’s status in June 2008.

Criswell President Jerry Johnson did not return telephone calls requesting comment . However, according to the *Dallas Morning News*, he released a

statement expressing surprise at the sanction.

"Criswell College is surprised that the commission would place the institution on probation, given some recent positive developments," he said. Among those developments are new gifts to the school's endowment of more than \$6 million.

The SACS statement said its officials could not comment further on the reasons for suspending Criswell's accreditation.

Criswell has about 300 students. It was founded in 1970 by Southern Baptists who wanted a reliably conservative school to train pastors and other ministers.

Throughout its history, the school has been closely associated with First Baptist Church of Dallas and is named for one of its former pastors, the late W.A. Criswell. The church founded the school, and many Criswell trustees are members of the congregation.

However, the school and the church have had an adversarial relationship in recent months, with Criswell trustees and First Baptist leaders disagreeing over the school's decision to sell its radio station, KCBI.

Criswell has also been closely associated with the leaders of the fundamentalist movement that took control of the Southern Baptist Convention's governing bodies during the 1980s. One of the architects of that movement, Paige Patterson, served as Criswell's president during the takeover period. Patterson is now president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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