

Around the State: Cook and Wade Texas Baptist Legacy awardees

June 4, 2025

Gary Cook and **Charles Wade** received the Texas Baptist Legacy Award during the annual Texas Baptists Legacy Day event at Independence Baptist Church near Brenham. Cook was president of Dallas Baptist University for 28 years, from 1988 to 2016, and has been chancellor of the university since then. While president of DBU, the university grew from 1,859 students in 1987 to 5,319 in 2015; net assets grew from \$19.9 million to \$171.5 million; and several new buildings were completed. Cook founded his DBU presidency on prayer and credits prayer for the growth of the university. In 2004, DBU trustees named a new academic division the Gary Cook Graduate School of Leadership. Before coming to DBU, Cook served 10 years in Baylor University's administration, served on the Waco City Council and as Mayor Pro Tem, was pastor of First Baptist Church in McGregor and before that was senior adult minister at University Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Four current presidents of universities affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas served under and were mentored by Cook: Blair Blackburn at East Texas Baptist University, Eric Bruntmyer at Hardin-Simmons University, Cory Hines at Howard Payne University and Adam Wright at Dallas Baptist University. Wade was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Arlington from 1976 to 2000 and then served as executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 2000 to 2008. A key feature of his leadership was calling Texas Baptists to be the presence of Jesus in their communities. Wade was named pastor emeritus of First Baptist in Arlington in 2009, a title he still holds. Prior to 1976, Wade served churches in Oklahoma, West Germany and Texas.

Independence Baptist Church is the oldest continuously serving Baptist church in Texas and a foundational part of Texas Baptist history.



Pictured left-to-right: The 2025 inductees into the HPU Athletics Hall of Fame were Larry Nickell, administrator; James Hall, basketball; and Lowell Bishop, track. (HPU Photo)

Howard Payne University unveiled the new HPU Athletics Hall of Fame at the Brownwood Coliseum on May 17. HPU alumnus James Williamson, a member of the Hall of Fame inducted in 2018, gave the lead gift for the new wall of honor in the coliseum. Additional donors contributed to the project, which includes new zinc plates for each of the 143 Hall of Fame members, as well as a digital interactive display with photos and biographies for the athletes. The Brownwood Coliseum is the primary facility for HPU basketball and volleyball games. Additional events included a Hall of Fame brunch for current members and a banquet at the Brownwood Coliseum to induct three new members into the Athletics Hall of Fame: **Lowell Bishop**, track; **James Hall**, basketball; and **Larry Nickell**, administrator. The new Yellow Jacket Club was introduced, as a board to support athletics at HPU.

Baylor University, along with The Congregational Collective of San Antonio and Harvard Medical School, have received a three-year \$1.76 million grant from the [John Templeton Foundation](#) for a public-private partnership called "Tapestry of Care: Strengthening Mental Health Provider and Faith Community Partnerships to Bridge Scientific Research and Practice." A 2024 survey of church members conducted by The Congregational

Collective revealed 77 percent of churchgoers are very likely to turn to their faith leaders during times of trouble, and 60 percent said they were very likely to look first to their faith leaders when experiencing depression, anxiety or other mental health issues. The Tapestry of Care will seek to equip congregations to become community hubs for mental health engagement, generate new knowledge that can equip churches to support their congregations, and reimagine upstream support services that can be delivered and sustained in community-based settings. Over the next three years, the initiative will engage with 18 pilot congregations in the greater San Antonio region to build their capacity to deliver psychosocial interventions and evidence-based treatments, establish bi-directional referral and cross-sector supports to assure efficacy and sustainability of care, and develop a framework to bridge the divide and build trust between mental health providers and faith communities.

Wayland Baptist University celebrated the success of 635 students achieving placement on academic honor rolls for the spring 2025 term. A total of 298 students were named to the President's List, with 337 students making the Dean's List. The President's List recognizes students who completed at least 12 hours in a 16-week semester with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. The Dean's List recognizes students who completed at least 12 hours in a single semester with a GPA of 3.5 or higher. View the full roster of students receiving honors listed by campus and honor achieved [here](#).



East Texas Baptist University students experienced British history, global cultures, and Christian service firsthand during a Global Study and

Serve trip to London,
England. (ETBU Photo)

East Texas Baptist University students experienced British history, global cultures and Christian service firsthand during a Global Study and Serve trip to London, England. Led by Associate Professor of History Jenny Hoover and Dean of the School of Christian Studies and Humanities Sandy Hoover, the weeklong trip combined educational exploration with ministry engagement. The group visited iconic landmarks, including Buckingham Palace and the British Museum. They also explored the World War II-era tunnels at Dover Castle and later visited Canterbury Cathedral, where they heard the choir sing during golden hour. Additionally, students participated in local ministry with Slough Baptist Church. After conversations with the pastor and a missionary, students joined in neighborhood cleanup efforts. “It wasn’t just about seeing London,” said junior **Macy Holcomb**. “It was about stepping into the lives of people here and serving.”

The Hardin-Simmons University College of Health Professions has earned national recognition in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2025 rankings, with its physician assistant graduate program ranked 93 out of 311 programs nationwide accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant. “This ranking is a testament to the community-based PA program offered at HSU,” said **Tina Butler**, program director and associate professor. “We’re a young program, having only graduated six cohorts, and this speaks volumes about the level of graduates entering the workforce from HSU.” The physician assistant program is designed to prepare graduates to step into clinical roles immediately upon passing the national board certification exam, the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam. Graduates are prepared to meet the increasing demand for primary care providers in Texas with an emphasis on a community-based approach in rural and underserved communities.



Houston Christian University's Center for Christianity in Business announces the launch of the CCB Scholars Scholarship. (HCU Photo / Carnegie)

Houston Christian University's [Center for Christianity in Business](#) announces the launch of the [CCB Scholars Scholarship](#). Spearheaded by Ernest Liang, director of the Center for Christianity in Business, this new scholarship program offers more than just financial aid. It delivers a unique spiritual and professional development experience. The CCB Scholars Scholarship provides tuition assistance exclusively for students pursuing business degrees at HCU. Scholars will join the Fellows and Scholars Society, a student-led organization committed to spiritual formation, peer fellowship and mentoring from Christian business professionals. The inaugural cohort intends to accommodate up to 20 academically outstanding and spiritually committed students. Target recipients include students who attend Christian high schools and those who demonstrate a strong, active faith. For more information about the scholarship or to learn how to support the program, visit the webpage or contact Liang at eliang@HC.edu or (281) 649-3235 or Emily Butler, assistant dean of the Archie W. Dunham College of Business at ebutler@HC.edu or at 281-649-3369.

The Hispanic Education initiative will host two upcoming events: The Higher Education Fair will offer leaders, parents and students from Texas Baptists churches opportunities to explore higher education opportunities. They can discover Texas Baptist universities in the exhibit hall and attend workshops focused on college admissions and financial aid. Lunch will be provided. This event will be at Churchill Baptist Church in San Antonio on Oct. 18 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and is for all Texas Baptists. Additionally, the Called to Ministry Retreat event is where high school

students and young adults who sense or have a call to ministry leadership can gather to receive encouragement, training and tools to grow in their calling and take the next steps in moving forward into their calling. Meals are provided during the event. The focus is on Hispanic students, but it is open to everyone. The retreat will be held at the Baptist University of the Américas in San Antonio, Dec. 5-6, beginning with dinner on Friday and ending Saturday afternoon. Additional information on the College Fair and Called to Ministry retreat is available [here](#).



Stark College & Seminary hosted Darin Griffiths of STCH Ministries on their podcast. (Screengrab)

Stark College & Seminary hosted Darin Griffiths of STCH Ministries on their podcast The Stark Difference to talk about how God called him from farming into Christian counseling. Watch the episode [here](#).

Retirement

David Williams, retiring after 25 years in ministry, the last five as pastor of First Baptist Church in San Augustine. He served nine years at First Baptist Church in Paducah, seven years at Seventh Street Baptist Church in Ballinger, and three years at Grace Baptist Church in Friona.