

# Around the State: Free tuition program announced at UMHB

February 2, 2026

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor announced a new free tuition program for eligible first-time freshmen and new transfer undergraduate students beginning with the fall 2026 class. The UMHB Promise is open to students with annual family incomes of \$65,000 or less who qualify for the federal Pell Grant. Participants must be first-time freshmen or new transfer students, reside on campus, and meet academic requirements: incoming freshmen must rank in the top 50 percent of their high school class or, if from a non-ranking school, have a minimum ACT score of 21, SAT score of 1070, or CLT score of 67, while transfer students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0.

Howard Payne University has created a waitlist for the **Chris Tomlin** concert scheduled April 15. HPU will host the public for an outdoor night of worship with the Grammy-award winning musician at the Brownwood Event Center's outdoor stage. Doors open at 6 p.m. with the event beginning at 7 p.m. Those who made group reservations but no longer need their full number of tickets are requested to revise their reservation orders by emailing [communications@hputx.edu](mailto:communications@hputx.edu).

Baylor University has named **Randall Bradley** its 2026 Cornelia Marschall Smith Professor of the Year. Bradley is the Ben H. Williams Professor of Music and director of the church music program and Dunn Center for Christian Music Studies at Baylor.

Wayland Baptist University has named alumna **Elexia Ruiz** head coach of its revived competitive dance program. The competitive dance program, paused following the COVID-19 pandemic, will take the floor in fall 2026.

East Texas Baptist University is celebrating record-breaking enrollment for spring 2026, marking the highest spring enrollment in the university's history. With a total enrollment of 1,709 students, ETBU experienced a 6 percent increase over spring 2025, surpassing the previous spring record of 1,657 students set in spring 2024.

Houston Christian University's Narrative Arts Conference will be held on Feb. 7 in HCU's Belin Chapel and Hinton Center. This year's conference, "Process & Purpose," will feature presentations by a wide array of guest speakers who will explore the craft of storytelling in fiction, film, and video games. [Click here](#) for details on the guest speakers, schedule, and registration.