

Around the State: HPU names five Currie-Strickland scholars

February 24, 2026

Howard Payne University named five students as Currie-Strickland scholars during the 18th annual Currie-Strickland Distinguished Lectures in Christian Ethics in February. The event featured guest lecturer John Litzler, director for public policy at the Christian Life Commission and general counsel for Texas Baptists. Students recognized were: **Cate Gramling**, a senior double majoring in practical theology and elementary education from Rowlett; **David Newman**, a junior Christian education major with an emphasis in cross-cultural ministry from Brownwood; **Elsa Leake**, a senior business administration major with a minor in youth ministry from Georgetown; **Tori Petersheim**, a graduate student in the youth and family ministry program from Flower Mound; and **Biak Sang**, a junior Christian education major with an emphasis in ministry leadership from Garland.

Hardin-Simmons University celebrated its 135th anniversary on Feb. 18, marking more than a century of Christ-centered higher education. As part of the celebration, the Student Government Association's sophomore class hosted a birthday event in Moody Lobby, distributing free cake to members of the campus community. Founded in 1891 as Abilene Baptist College by the Sweetwater Baptist Association, the university was created to prepare students for lives of faith, leadership, and service.

Houston Christian University's Society for Human Resource Management student chapter hosted the Energy Summit on Thursday, Feb. 18, with the theme of "Empowering Business Excellence." **Elizabeth Killinger**, former executive vice president of NRG Home and former president of Reliant Energy, was the keynote speaker. Breakout sessions focused on people

analytics and AI, human energy, international business, global strategy, and HR digital strategy. The summit offered Christ-centered professional development and strengthened connections among business professionals from the energy sector, human resources, business leadership, and the HCU campus.

Dallas Baptist University announced the groundbreaking of the Don and Linda Carter School of Business building. University leadership, faculty, students, alumni, and supporters gathered on campus Feb. 18 for a day of worship, celebration, and fellowship. The building is 55,000 square feet across five levels and will be state-of-the-art, featuring modern classrooms, faculty and administrative offices, student study and collaboration rooms, conference and meeting rooms, auditoriums, a simulated stock exchange trading floor, and other innovative learning environments.

Wayland Baptist University held a student panel event, “Black History Month Talks: More than a Month,” inviting students, employees, and community members to hear conversations featuring diverse experiences and reflections on history. **Bashir Easter**, associate dean of the School of Business and assistant professor of business administration, moderated the event. After the panel discussion, the audience was encouraged to participate in dialogue. The event was livestreamed on [Wayland’s YouTube channel](#).