

Baptist Briefs: Baptist colleges lose Obamacare challenge

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A federal appeals court ruled June 22 the religious exercise of two Texas Baptist colleges isn't substantially burdened by a requirement they opt out of contraceptive coverage required under Obamacare. The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans overturned a lower court's decision in 2013 barring the federal government from enforcing regulations requiring [East Texas Baptist University](#) and [Houston Baptist University](#) to provide or execute "self-certification" forms requiring a third-party administrator for FDA-approved emergency contraceptives. In a case combined with similar complaints by Catholic Charities in Fort Worth and Southeast Texas and Westminster Theological Seminary, the two Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated schools argued the self-certification process makes them a party to allowing their employees to receive cost-free particular forms of birth control they believe are morally equivalent to abortion. The appellate court said self-certification does not burden the universities but instead shifts the burden to a third-party administrator who, in turn, is reimbursed by the government.

SACS extends Louisiana College probation. [Louisiana College's](#) accrediting agency is keeping the private Christian school in Pineville, La., on probation, giving officials more time to address concerns about undue external influence by the Louisiana Baptist Convention. The accrediting commission for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools announced it was extending probation as "an indication of the gravity of non-compliance" with member-approved standards expected from an institution of higher learning. The next review by the SACS Commission on Colleges is due Dec. 15. At that point, Louisiana College will have been on probation 18 months stemming from "unsolicited information alleging

noncompliance with the principle of integrity, governance, personnel and finances.” Once placed on probation, the most serious sanction short of loss of membership, a school has a maximum two years to comply with or demonstrate progress toward meeting standards for accreditation.

Rob Nash named interim dean at McAfee. Mercer University Provost Scott Davis appointed missions professor Rob Nash as interim dean of the [James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology](#), effective July 1. Nash, a professor of missions and world religions and former global missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, will assume the reins from Alan Culpepper, who accepted the dean position in 1995 and hired the first three faculty members before the school opened in 1996. Nash, who holds a Ph.D. in church history from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., joined the faculty at McAfee in 2012. Before that, he worked six years for the CBF and taught at Shorter College in Rome, Ga., and Judson College in Marion, Ala.