

NAMB a finalist for free campus

June 8, 2012

NORTHFIELD, Mass.—After four months of hosting tours, soliciting proposals and fending off controversy, the billionaire Oklahoma family that owns the Hobby Lobby craft store chain announced two finalists in the competition to receive—free of charge—a picturesque campus in western Massachusetts.



The 217-acre Northfield, Mass., campus founded by 19th-century evangelist D.L. Moody.

Finalists to receive the 217-acre Northfield, Mass., campus founded by 19th-century evangelist D.L. Moody are the Southern Baptist Convention's [North American Mission Board](#) and Grand Canyon University Foundation of Phoenix.

Naming finalists marks the latest stage in a two-year process by the Steve Green family to give away the Northfield campus formerly owned by Northfield Mount Hermon School.

Their initial plans were dashed in December when the C.S. Lewis Foundation missed a key fundraising deadline to launch a C.S. Lewis College. Since then, dozens of institutions have made proposals that show both a Christian vision and the financial means to pull it off.

Grand Canyon University, a for-profit Christian school in Phoenix, proposes to establish a second campus in Northfield. As many as 4,800 undergraduates would live on-site. After three or four years, it likely would become a stand-alone university with both traditional and online students, according to Grand Canyon University CEO Brian Mueller.

The North American Mission Board would use the 43-building campus for training missionaries and church planters, as well as hosting retreats for pastors. The Southern Baptist Convention has been targeting the Northeast for church planting in recent years, but the denomination has lacked supportive infrastructure in the region, according to Aaron Coe, vice president for mobilization at NAMB.

A final decision about who gets the campus is expected within the next month.