

Patterson mishandled rape claims at two seminary campuses, board chair says

June 2, 2018

FORT WORTH—Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary severed ties with Paige Patterson because the former seminary president not only lied to trustees about how he handled a rape allegation at another school in 2003, but also informed campus security at Southwestern Seminary he wanted to meet alone with a student who reported a sexual assault in 2015 to “break her down,” according to Kevin Ueckert, chair of the board of trustees.

Ueckert, pastor of First Baptist Church in Georgetown, posted [a statement](#) Friday evening, June 1, on the seminary website to explain why the trustee board’s executive committee believed its action in [terminating Patterson immediately](#) and rescinding all benefits was warranted.

“In this difficult situation, the executive committee based its decision on the current performance of the president and did not allow the legacy of Dr. Patterson or the #MeToo pressure to steer the outcome,” Ueckert wrote. “We did not react; rather, we decisively exercised our responsibility based on the seminary’s biblically informed core values and integrity.”

On May 30, the trustees’ executive committee unanimously resolved to terminate Patterson, effective immediately, “removing all the benefits, right and privileges” the full board had granted one week earlier when it [removed him as president](#) after a 13-hour closed-door session but named him president emeritus with compensation.

The committee also rescinded the board’s invitation for Patterson and his

wife, Dorothy, to continue to live on campus as “theologians-in-residence” at the Baptist Heritage Center.

Rape allegation at Southeastern Seminary confirmed

The board’s executive confirmed through a student record, made available with permission, “that an allegation of rape was indeed made by a female student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2003” when Patterson was president at the North Carolina school, Ueckert wrote.

“This information contradicts a statement previously provided by Dr. Patterson in response to a direct question by a board member regarding the incident referenced in our May 30 statement,” he wrote.

The 2003 incident never was reported to local law enforcement, he noted.

On May 28, Megan Lively [tweeted](#): “I am the woman you read about, #SEBTS 2003, not afraid, ashamed, or fearful. I am proud to be #SBC, bc of how many have responded with compassion & love. Our history isn’t our future. Ephesians 4:30-32, Romans 8. Please join us in praying tomorrow. #PaigePatterson #sbc18 #matthew5.”

2015 incident at Southwestern Seminary

In 2015, a female student at Southwestern Seminary reported to Patterson she had been raped, and police were notified, Ueckert said.

“But in connection with that allegation of rape, Dr. Patterson sent an email (the contents of which were shared with the board on May 22) to the chief of Campus Security in which Dr. Patterson discussed meeting with the

student alone so that he could ‘break her down,’ and that he preferred no officials be present,” Ueckert wrote.

“The attitude expressed by Dr. Patterson in that email is antithetical to the core values of our faith and to SWBTS. Moreover, the correlation between what has been reported and also revealed in the student record regarding the 2003 allegation at Southeastern and the contents of this email are undeniable.”

Failure to provide documents

In addition, Ueckert pointed to issues regarding Patterson’s failure to provide documents from his time as president at Southeastern Seminary.

The North Carolina school asked Southwestern Seminary to return any documents Patterson took from Southeastern Seminary upon his departure. Patterson’s lawyer informed Michael Anderson, counsel for Southwestern Seminary, his client only took documents that belonged to him.

“Yet, independent of that request, following the May 30 executive committee meeting, SWBTS located Southeastern documents on the SWBTS campus and began taking steps to preserve them,” Ueckert wrote.

On the morning the executive committee met, Patterson’s lawyer provided “a few documents he reportedly obtained from Dr. Patterson,” Ueckert continued. “The documents clearly dealt with Dr. Patterson’s tenure at Southeastern and should have been previously provided in response to Mr. Anderson’s May 25 request.”

Sharayah Colter, wife of Scott Colter, Patterson’s chief of staff, attached some of those documents to a May 31 [blog post](#) in which she defended Patterson.

Colter released the documents “without the permission of the students

referenced in the documents or appropriate leadership” from either Southwestern or Southeastern Seminary, Ueckert wrote.

“I believe this was inappropriate and unethical,” he wrote.

Still scheduled to preach at SBC

In his statement, Ueckert reiterated the seminary stand on abuse: “SWBTS denounces all abusive behavior, any behavior that enables abuse, any failure to protect the abused, and any failure to safeguard those whose are vulnerable to abuse.”

Patterson has been traveling in Germany, but he was expected to return to the United States June 2.

Patterson was one of the key figures in what supporters called the “conservative resurgence” within the Southern Baptist Convention and opponents considered its “fundamentalist takeover.”

He is scheduled to deliver the convention sermon at the SBC annual meeting at Dallas June 13. If he withdraws or if messengers to the convention demand a substitute, the alternate preacher is Kie Bowman, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin and a trustee of Southwestern Seminary.