

Seminary board accuses trustee of violating trust

June 5, 2023

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's board of trustees accused trustee Aaron Sligar of violating the confidentiality of an executive session of the board and withholding from the full board "substantiated facts about the former president's spending."

The board [issued a statement](#) Friday afternoon, June 2, saying Sligar emailed a written report on March 30 to members of a task force appointed to investigate expenditures of former President Adam Greenway. However, the oral report he delivered to trustees in April was substantially different.

"In the report he gave during the April 18 trustee work session, most of the references that portrayed Dr. Greenway in a negative light were missing," the board statement said.

The June 2 board statement also asserted Sligar provided versions of his report "before and during the April 18 [board] meeting to a staff member who was known to have a close relationship to Dr. Greenway."

Sligar allegedly told the unnamed staff member: "I will explain what I am doing. Don't lose hope."

The *Baptist Standard* offered Sligar an opportunity to respond to the allegations made in the board statement. Sligar did not reply to a June 2 email or a June 5 voice mail message by 11 a.m. Central requesting comment.

Sequence of events outlined

The board statement said John Rayburn, chair of the board's business administration committee, reported to trustees in their fall 2022 meeting concerns about financial stewardship under the previous administration.

"Trustees discussed a range of options and eventually agreed to hire a firm to audit the spending on the President's home and office, as well as personal expenditures by Adam Greenway that were perceived to be inappropriate, such as first-class airfare by Dr. Greenway and his family and other spending on personal items for the former president."

The original task force authorized by the board to investigate Greenway's expenditures consisted of Rayburn as chairman, along with other members of the business administration committee—George West, Mike Bussey and Josh Grega.

Sligar—pastor of Living River Chapel in Sutton, W. Va., and a former federal investigator—was added to the task force in March.

"In good faith, Rayburn invited Sligar to evaluate the relevant financial records because of his belief that a forensic audit may be required, and he was given access to the spending reports 42 days before the Spring 2023 trustee meeting," the June 2 board statement said, adding Sligar asked to be added to the business administration committee, and the chair granted his request.

"As part of the expanded task force, Sligar began to evaluate all the documents provided to him and was asked to generate a report to present to the full Board of Trustees," the board statement said.

"As he conducted his review, he expanded the scope of his efforts and claimed that he was receiving information from various sources, none of

whom were named. He reported to members of the task force that he was working on a process to verify claims to separate facts from rumors, assuring members that he would not report any information he could not verify, especially any unsubstantiated allegations that could cause reputational damage. The task force did not limit what he could report if the claims were verified.”

The report Sligar emailed to members of the task force March 30 did not include items “he admitted were unsubstantiated claims and rumors,” the board statement said. However, it described Greenway’s expenditures as “financial abuse,” “unnecessary and excessive,” “extravagant” and “out-of-control,” and asserted Greenway “demonstrated an extreme freedom in the finances of the Seminary.”

The June 2 board statement said the May 20 email from Sligar and Bunnell casted doubt over “the trustworthiness of the Executive Committee” and suggested the committee withheld important information from the full board.

“That was false,” the board statement asserted. “First, Sligar did not provide a copy of the written report he wanted to submit to the full Board of Trustees. He simply verbalized his desire to share unsubstantiated information. There were also good reasons for the Executive Committee to doubt some of his claims.

“Second, it was the right decision for the Executive Committee members to ask Sligar not to share those rumors with the full Board until the claims could be investigated and verified. If, in fact, the claims turned out to be true, they would have been shared with the full Board in cooperation with Sligar as a member of the task force and Business Administration Committee.

“The information Sligar was asked not to disclose was unverified and

required further investigation to confirm. They were still just rumors and unsubstantiated claims.”

The board statement included an example of information Sligar provided to the task force but not the full board.

It asserted Sligar’s March 30 report said “the culture” of the seminary’s administration did not allow Greenway’s closest staff to approach him regarding concerns about finances.

“Fear of retaliation, removal, or even possibility of being black-balled from SBC leadership was a reality that some individuals had to deal with. This prevented the protection that the seminary needed to control the out-of-control spending,” the board statement said Sligar originally reported.

However, in his report to the trustees April 18, he reportedly said Greenway’s staff failed to approach him about finances “for undetermined reasons.”

“That statement is untrue,” the June 2 board statement said. “Dr. Greenway’s staff did approach him to make him aware that financial conditions at the seminary were deteriorating and that changes needed to be made. Those warnings to Dr. Greenway exist in written form and have been reviewed by members of the task force and the Executive Committee.”

The *Baptist Standard* offered Greenway an opportunity to respond. He declined comment at this time.

The board statement outlined three

complaints against Sligar:

- “Sligar was entrusted to work collaboratively with task force members to evaluate the relevant data within the scope of work outlined for him. However, he did not extend that same trust back to the Chairman, Executive Committee, the Chairman of the Business Administration Committee, or his fellow task force members.”
- “Sligar broke privilege by sharing a report given in executive session with those not in the executive session.
- “Sligar has accused the Executive Committee of a lack of transparency and withholding information from trustees, although he removed from his report substantiated facts about the former president’s spending, which was within the scope of the report.”

The board statement said the May 20 email by Sligar and trustee Andrew Bunnell, requesting a called meeting of the trustees, “raised allegations, some of which had previously been raised by the former president and found to be without merit.”

“During the May 30 meeting, detailed and lengthy presentations responding to the allegations were given by members of the task force with opportunities afforded to Sligar and Bunnell to defend their allegations,” the June 2 board statement said.

“Task force members interviewed multiple faculty and staff members, independently verifying data and information in each case, and consulting outside parties independent of staff relevant to each allegation. Each allegation was found to be without merit and in some cases demonstrably false.”

The specific allegations concerned credit cards, using designated funds for operational expenses, perceived conflict of interest with regard to a vice

president's role in the formation of the Future Fort Worth nonprofit corporation and unspecified "personal moral misconduct" by unnamed individuals.

The first item focused on a contract signed with American Express that allegedly contained a personal guarantee from an employee and negatively impacted the employee's credit scores.

"The investigation into this allegation found that corporate credit cards issued to employees do not require a personal guarantee from the employee and do not result in any reports being made to credit bureaus," the board statement said.

"There is no evidence of any negative impact on the credit scores of employees. It has also been confirmed by American Express that nothing is reported to credit bureaus that would impact the personal credit scores of corporate cardholders."

In the second matter, endowment fund distributions for Revive the Nation were changed from designated funds to operational funds and were not spent in a way consistent with donor intent.

"The allegation of donor designation changes is false," the board statement said. "Funds establishing the endowment for what is now called Revive The Nation have been used for this purpose and other instruction consistent with the donor's intent. Further, the disclosure of the donor's name by Sligar and Bunnell is a violation of the donor's intent to remain anonymous."

The third allegation focused on Colby Adams, vice president for institutional administration, who formerly served as Greenway's chief of staff.

Adams is the registered agent for Future Fort Worth. Other directors are

Fort Worth real estate developers David Motheral Jr. and John Freese.

The board statement notes Future Fort Worth is a nonprofit corporation that “has not engaged in any business activity, including any business with Southwestern Seminary.”

“Colby Adams has not realized financial gain, either directly or through Future Fort Worth, from the sale of any seminary real estate. Adams’ involvement in Future Fort Worth is personal in nature and has been fully disclosed to Board and administrative leadership,” the statement said.

Regarding the fourth allegation, the board simply stated, “Rumors of other personal moral misconduct against seminary staff are baseless, egregious, and harmful to the individuals.”

The board statement also noted that “in a few days, the officers will share findings” in response to a trustee-approved motion to publish the audited financials for fiscal years 2003 to 2022 “as one comprehensive report.”

“Finally,” the statement concluded, “in fulfillment of the instruction of the Board, the officers have begun their investigation into possible misconduct by Sligar and Bunnell, and will report back to the Board within 60 days.”