

Southwestern Seminary trustees approve reduced budget

July 15, 2020

FORT WORTH (BP)—During a called meeting July 14, trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary unanimously approved a \$29.7 million budget for the 2020-21 academic year—6 percent lower than in 2019-20—while hearing about “encouraging signs” for student enrollment.

The meeting, held in executive session, was conducted via video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Trustees had decided in their April meeting to delay adoption of the 2020-21 budget until mid-July in order to provide more time to evaluate the ramifications of the pandemic.

Last spring, Southwestern had instituted spending reductions of about 25 percent—including some faculty and staff layoffs and furloughs—for the remainder of the fiscal year. With an improved outlook on both Cooperative Program funding and enrollment revenue, trustees approved a budget representing more modest cuts for 2020-21.



Adam Greenway, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. (Photo / Eric Black)

"This budget represents a conservative approach in projecting revenue, a commitment to holding the line on institutional expenses, but yet is bathed in prayerful optimism that the Lord will help us to overachieve and see positive results in stewardship of the institution and its resources," said President Adam W. Greenway, reflecting on the trustee action.

"We want to be in the position to navigate throughout this academic and fiscal year in a way that continues to keep students and faculty at the heart of all that we do at Southwestern Seminary. And the commitment of our trustees and our administration is to continue to provide essential funding for us to carry out our assignment and our responsibilities."

'Uptick in new student enrollment'

Although the pandemic prevented an in-person preview for prospective students, the seminary hosted a series of online "virtual previews," resulting in a 165-percent increase in participation over spring 2019. Additionally, the seminary has received 63 percent more applications resulting from the virtual previews than the 2019 and 2018 spring previews combined.

"Especially in the midst of a pandemic, we are greatly encouraged by seeing a significant uptick in new student enrollment, particularly new student on-campus enrollment for this fall," Greenway said.

"Further, at this point, it appears we will have a record summer enrollment in terms of total hours taken by students, a 24.9 percent increase compared to last summer, despite the fact that we were only able to offer online courses."

After transitioning to an entirely online instruction model in March, Southwestern was the first Southern Baptist seminary to announce plans for resuming on campus, in-person instruction for the fall semester. The

seminary is finalizing plans for returning students to campus following a “deep cleaning” of dorms and classrooms.

“We are implementing various procedures by which social distancing can be observed while still receiving the highest quality educational experience in the classroom,” Greenway said of the plans. “In some cases, this will include limiting the size of classes; in others this may include having a single course meet in multiple locations.”

Trustee Chairman Philip Levant, pastor of Iglesia Bautista La Vid in Hurst, said the board and administration are united in the seminary’s mission.

“There’s a lot of uncertainty because of COVID-19, but our mission has not changed,” Levant said. “The will of the president and his cabinet and the will of the board is to continue to fulfill the mission God has given us as an institution. As long as God allows us to do that, we’re going to continue training men and women for the gospel ministry.”