

# Alumni, Texas Baptists react to Logsdon Seminary closing

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ABILENE—Alumni of Logsdon Seminary at Hardin-Simmons University and many other Texas Baptists expressed shock, sorrow, disappointment and—in some cases—anger about the university trustees' decision to close the seminary graduate programs.

Steve Bezner, senior pastor at Houston Northwest Church, noted the “rigorous education” he received as an undergraduate and graduate student in the Logsdon School of Theology and Seminary prepared him well for later doctoral studies at Baylor University.

“My Logsdon degrees prepared me at a level where I never felt inadequate or incapable. I had loving, knowledgeable professors and made life-long friends during my studies,” Bezner said.

“I was shocked and saddened to hear the news about Logsdon Seminary, not only because of my deep love for Hardin-Simmons, but also because of my overwhelmingly positive experience,” Bezner said.

“Although I have not been privy to any of the discussions, I must believe that the trustees agonized over such a decision and ultimately felt that the financial weight of operation was too great for the overall institution to bear. I pray that men and women will continue to be trained ‘for Christ’ at Hardin-Simmons and that, Lord willing, one day, the graduate programs will return.”

## **‘Very difficult’ but ‘necessary’**

Some West Texas pastors characterized the action as difficult but necessary.

“I’m sure this was a very difficult decision for the Hardin-Simmons board of trustees. Having served before on institutional boards of higher education, I do not envy the task of those entrusted with the stewardship of sustainable financial models that proactively fulfill their faith-based initiatives in the 21st century,” said Bobby Dagnel, pastor of First Baptist Church in Lubbock. “I’m confident that the mission of Hardin-Simmons University will continue to have a lasting impact upon West Texas and beyond.”

Howie Batson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Amarillo, offered a similar perspective.

“President (Eric) Bruntmyer inherited some challenges and has provided bold leadership with grace,” Batson said. “Academic programs must be affordable to be sustainable, and, unfortunately, residential seminary programs are facing declining enrollment across the nation as online substitutes provide an alternative.

“Fortunately, HSU plans to strengthen its commitment to undergraduate theological education and partnering with Texas churches. Transition is always tough, but, nonetheless, necessary.

## **‘Kingdom of God is better because of Logsdon’**

Other Texas Baptist ministers expressed their views on social media.

“My heart is broken and angry tonight,” Matthew Broyles posted on [Facebook](#). Broyles, minister to emerging adults at First Baptist Church in Abilene, included the text of a letter he sent to the HSU president and board of trustees.

Although he grew up as a pastor’s son and received “meaningful and thoughtful teaching as a child and teenager,” Broyles said in his letter that Logsdon helped him wrestle with difficult questions that arose as a young adult.

“I was listened to, encouraged, and given hope from professors who had been on this journey themselves. Logsdon Seminary comforted and nurtured me into a person who possessed a faith that could hold up to the questions existing within it,” he wrote.

“Logsdon taught me how to think, not what to think. In our polarized world today, teaching people what to think only furthers division and hostility. Helping people learn how to think removes fear toward different beliefs and allows for other valid opinions to exist. It helps create unity in diversity centered on Christ rather than uniformity centered on ‘me’ being right and ‘you’ being wrong.

“The greatest gift I received from Logsdon was a deeper concern and compassion for people and an example of discipleship to follow. I have been able to model this method of disciple-making with students and adults in both my ministry and those I encounter in everyday life who have no faith. Logsdon helped me know how to minister to people where they are on their faith journey not where I think they ought to be. I became a minister who was more humble, empathetic, and a better listener because of my role models at Logsdon.

“The kingdom of God is better because of Logsdon Seminary. ... Because of Logsdon, there are many more people in the world who are doing what the

Lord requires, 'to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.'"

## **'Bright light in Texas Baptist life'**

Texas Baptist Women in Ministry leaders posted a statement on their [Facebook](#) page saying they were "saddened to hear of the decision" to close Logsdon Seminary and offering prayers for "the students, faculty, staff, administration and friends of Logsdon impacted by this decision."

"Logsdon Seminary has been a bright light in Texas Baptist life," the post said, adding that Texas Baptist Women in Ministry "exists in large part because of the prayerful collaboration of many associated with Logsdon."

"Logsdon Seminary's Christ-centered theological education guided by the authority of Scripture, focus on the global mission of the church, and commitment to diversity has provided its students an educational experience that prepares them for ministry in the 21st century. The loss of Logsdon will be felt across Texas Baptist life and beyond," the group's post said.

"We greatly appreciate Logsdon's deep commitment to the calling of God on women and men in all aspects of the church, academia and institutional leadership. We are grateful for the innumerable contributions of Hardin-Simmons and Logsdon students, alumni and faculty to the kingdom of God and Texas Baptist Women in Ministry. We will cherish those contributions and look forward to many more years of fruitful partnership with HSU and with the Logsdon network in whatever form it exists in the future."

## **'Devastated' by the news**

Kyle Tubbs, president of the Logsdon Alumni Council, said he was "devastated" by the decision to close Logsdon Seminary. He noted many

current and former students had expressed their grief to him following the Feb. 7 announcement, saying, “It is hard to articulate the collective pain we feel.”

“Logsdon has brilliant professors and staff, incredibly bright students, and alumni serving the kingdom of God throughout the globe. Logsdon has a 90 percent placement rate, meaning 90 percent of Logsdon graduates serve in a field related to their education. The sad reality that Logsdon will no longer train students for kingdom ministry is tragically sad,” said Tubbs, new church starts manager for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

“I am deeply thankful for the Christ-centered education Logsdon graced me with during my Master of Divinity degree. I am grateful for the women and men who served on faculty and staff of Logsdon Seminary. My hope and prayer is that I will continue to carry the education given to me at Logsdon forward into my ministry for the rest of my life.”

On social media, Tubbs offered a more pointed response, asserting the closure of Logsdon Seminary echoed what occurred in the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s.

In a Feb. 8 Facebook post—widely shared over the weekend—Tubbs cited an unnamed trustee at HSU as describing a “slow poisoning against Logsdon.” Tubbs alleged the existence of “a small, but very influential, fundamentalist group” that worked to undermine support for Logsdon.

“For the last couple of years, they have smeared Logsdon’s professors,” he wrote. “They lied about Logsdon’s theology. At first they tried to use LGBTQ the same way fundamentalists used inerrancy decades ago. That didn’t stick. Then they tried to use the Bible itself again, which also didn’t have merit.

“The playbook was the same: Use a certain issue to try to create division and trap Logsdon. Time and time again, it didn’t stick. Then, the broad

label of 'liberal' was thrown around to accuse Logsdon, which is where we are today."