

Baylor launches \$1.1 billion fund-raising campaign

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WACO—Baylor University launched a \$1.1 billion fund-raising campaign in conjunction with its board of regents meeting immediately prior to the school's homecoming weekend.

Regents also heard a report on a long-term research project to evaluate the impact of a Baylor education on faith formation and spiritual development and approved \$2.5 million to renovate the Waco Hall complex to make it more accessible to students with physical disabilities.

The university announced a lead gift from Mark and Paula Hurd of the San Francisco area, co-chairs of the Give Light campaign, to build a new welcome center for Baylor. Mark Hurd, chief executive officer of Oracle, serves on the Baylor board of regents.

The university did not disclose the amount of the gift, but Baylor President Linda Livingstone characterized it as "one of the largest" in the school's history.



Linda Livingstone, president of Baylor University, responds to reporters' questions after Baylor's board of regents meeting. (Photo / Ken Camp)

The Mark and Paula Hurd Welcome Center—slated to be a 50,000- to 60,000-square-foot complex—will be built at the entrance to Baylor's campus on University Parks Drive alongside Interstate 35.

The welcome center will serve as a “front door” and “window” to Baylor, providing “a dramatic and interactive experience” for guests, Livingstone said. More than 50,000 prospective students and their families visit the Baylor campus annually.

Livingstone told reporters after the board meeting she expects Baylor to reach or surpass the Give Light campaign's \$1.1 billion goal within four years and then launch additional fund-raising initiatives to enable Baylor to achieve status as a Tier-One research university.

In launching the public phase of the Give Light campaign, Baylor announced it already had received more than \$540 million during the

campaign's silent phase.

"Give Light undergirds our academic strategic plan Illuminate and will impact every aspect of campus life—from academics and athletics to student life and service learning—while also bolstering financial support for students, faculty and the campus community," Livingstone said.

Continued fundraising during the Give Light campaign will focus on support of endowed funds for faculty research and student scholarships; expendable funds to support immediate needs, bolster athletics and provide global learning experiences; and capital projects for academic and athletic growth, including a new basketball arena to replace the 30-year-old Ferrell Center.

"This is an extraordinary moment for our university, and I am grateful for a Baylor Family that cares deeply for our students and gives light to the mission we pursue every day," Livingstone said.

Studying faith formation and character development

During the regents meeting, the board heard from four Baylor students—three from varied Christian traditions and one Muslim—who discussed spiritual formation and character development.

Baylor researchers have launched a longitudinal study to gauge the long-term impact of their experiences at the university on their faith and character. This semester, first-year students took part in three surveys related to faith and character. Researchers also are asking similar questions of alumni who graduated 10 years ago, and they will survey senior Baylor students at the end of the spring semester.

The study will enable Baylor to determine the long-term impact education

at a distinctively Christian university makes on faith and character formation, Livingstone said, adding, "There's really no other university in the country doing something quite like that."

"It is going to help us understand better what our students are like when they come to us. It will help us understand better the experiences they have on our campus before they graduate and how that impacts their faith formation and their character development. And then it will also help us understand to what extent the experiences they had while in college continue to influence their faith and character as they leave us and go out," she said.

"We view this not only as something that will be extremely helpful to us, as we think about academic and student life experiences we provide our students, but we also think it is something that could eventually be helpful to other Christian colleges and universities."

The board of regents also approved \$2.5 million for the first phase of planned renovation to address accessibility issues in Waco Hall, Waco Hall East and Roxy Grove Hall. The project will include construction of Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant exterior ramps and courtyard, the addition of an elevator inside the building, and design planning for future interior improvements related to accessibility.