

Baylor provost named president at Carson-Newman

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WACO—Veteran Baylor University professor and administrator [Randall O'Brien](#) has been named as the 22nd president of Carson-Newman College, a Baptist school in Jefferson City, Tenn.

O'Brien has served at Baylor 17 years, including the last three as executive vice president and provost, posts he will leave effective Aug. 1. He will assume a transitional role at the Tennessee college in August and formally begin his service as president Jan. 1, 2009.

Randall O'Brien

In his capacity as Baylor's chief academic officer, O'Brien has worked closely with Baylor President John Lilley.

"Randall has served Baylor admirably in a variety of positions over a period of nearly two decades," Lilley said.

"I have deeply appreciated the important role he has played as executive vice president and provost, overseeing our academic programs and helping to lead the university as we've confronted a variety of opportunities and challenges. Baylor has benefited enormously from Randall's talent and dedication over a number of years, and the university has prospered as a result of his efforts."

Lilley is consulting with officers of the board of regents, his executive council, the dean's council and the executive committee of the Baylor Faculty Senate regarding an interim appointment to succeed O'Brien. He is

expected to make an announcement within the week, according to a Baylor University news release.

Lilley also will be name a search committee to help with the selection of a new executive vice president and provost, and he will launch a national search immediately.

A popular choice of students, O'Brien's courses often were oversubscribed, and students have honored him with numerous teaching awards. He also has written four books and more than 70 scholarly articles.

He also has filled the pulpit in many Texas Baptist churches, and he currently serves as interim pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio.

"Baylor University has been good to us," O'Brien said. "For 17 wonderful years, Baylor has been home. Our children have grown up here. We have loved Baylor and Baylor has loved us. We have been a part of each other—family you might say, and in a very real sense we always will be.

"Furthermore, Texas has been home. We have served 15 Texas Baptist churches as interim pastor. Some of our dearest friends are in those churches and in the Baylor family."

O'Brien expressed appreciation to the administrators and colleagues with whom he served at Baylor, and he pointed to the move to Carson-Newman as the next step in God's calling on his life.

"The only thing harder than saying goodbye to family and friends is saying 'no' to God, a sure recipe for misery," he said. "Thirty-two years ago, as Kay and I stood at our marriage altar, we clearly understood ours to be an 'Abrahamic Call,' wherein like Abraham and Sarah in Scripture, we were called to serve God wherever that call might lead us. Over these 32 years ... we have followed God's leading to six cities in five states, for service in

missions, in churches and in universities. The journey has been rich, deeply fulfilling and meaningful.

“Someone has said that God’s other name is ‘Surprise!’ Well, God has, indeed, surprised us once again, this time with a call to become the 22nd president of Carson-Newman College. ... We have prayerfully accepted God’s call upon our lives and Carson-Newman’s call to become president of the college.”