

Baylor University elects Linda Livingstone to return as 15th president

April 18, 2017

WACO—Baylor University has elected Linda Livingstone, a veteran dean and business professor, as its 15th president and the first woman to lead the school, founded by Texas Baptists in 1845.

✖ Linda Livingstone Livingstone received unanimous support from Baylor's board of regents after being recommended by a 12-member presidential search committee, the university announced April 18. She will assume the office June 1.

She succeeds Ken Starr, who lost his job almost 11 months ago in the sexual assault scandal that rocked Baylor, and particularly its football program, the past two years. David Garland, former dean of Baylor's Truett Theological Seminary, has been interim president since last summer.

Livingstone is dean and professor of management at George Washington University's School of Business. Previously, she was dean of the business school at Pepperdine University. Before that, she was an associate dean and associate professor in Baylor's Hankamer School of Business. She has specialized in studying and teaching organizational behavior, leadership and creativity.

During her earlier time at Baylor, she was a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco. Most recently, she and her family have been members of First Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Back where she started

“It is an honor to return to Baylor where I started my academic career,” Livingstone said. “I chose to begin ... at Baylor in significant part because of Baylor’s Christian mission.

“To return to Baylor to partner with the exceptional faculty, staff, students and administrators to fulfill the university’s vision to be a top-tier research institution, committed to excellence in all aspects of university life, while strengthening the Christian mission is an opportunity I look forward to with enthusiasm.”

“Dr. Livingstone brings an accomplished academic career to Baylor, combined with a strong appreciation and support of Baylor’s mission,” noted Ron Murff, chair of the Baylor board of regents. “A longtime Baptist and former Baylor faculty member, she has a passion for the distinctiveness of Baylor’s Christian mission in higher education.”

Although Livingstone broke the gender barrier by becoming Baylor’s first female president, that was neither the search committee’s nor the regents’ goal, Murff noted.

“We understand this is a significant moment in Baylor’s history. Our goal was to make history by hiring Baylor’s next great president. Our goal was not specifically to look for a female,” he said.

“We were looking for a leader who had impeccable credentials and the ability to bring the Baylor Family together—to reach Baylor’s potential, to build on its Christian foundation and to reach its Christian mission. We believe we found that person in Dr. Livingstone.”

Livingstone noted she appreciates Baylor’s history and the significance of being the university’s first woman president. “But it’s not the first time in

my career I've been 'the first woman,'" she said. "I think I can take that on."

She comes to Baylor as an ongoing controversy over sexual assault raises questions of student safety, particularly for female students.

"Regarding sexual assault and the vulnerability of women, obviously, I take those issues very seriously," she said. "They affect the entire community.

"At Baylor, we're going to do the right things. ... We're going to do everything we can to provide a safe and healthy environment for all our students. I'm committed to that, and I know the board is committed to that."

Affirmation and support

Drayton McLane, a Baylor regent emeritus and member of the presidential search committee, noted Livingstone's longstanding Baylor connection in citing her qualifications to lead the university.

"We began with Baylor's mission in mind and based our search on the Christian values that Baylor stands for. That set the criteria for the type of individual we were looking for," McLane said. "Dr. Livingstone met all our requirements. She, her husband and their family are outstanding, committed Christians.

"Dr. Livingstone has taught at Baylor and understands the Christian heritage, which is so important to the university. I am very pleased with the outcome of our search and the strong leadership Dr. Livingstone will provide Baylor University."

Livingstone came to Baylor out of a process that began last fall and generated 400 recommendations for the presidential search committee,

Murff said. The committee and its consulting firm, Heidrick & Struggles, conducted about 150 screening conversations and 61 first-round candidate interviews.

“We had strong interest in the position from accomplished candidates both inside and outside of academia,” Murff said. “Candidates admired Baylor’s significant growth over the past decade and saw tremendous potential in elevating the university’s academic profile even further while staying true to our Christian mission.”

Livingstone topped a talented, crowded field, reported Bob Brewton, chair of the search committee.

“The presidential search committee had a very strong candidate pool coming from the traditional academic fields as well as nontraditional candidates from government, military and corporate life,” Brewton said. “In the end, Dr. Livingstone’s experience uniquely fit the profile of the dynamic faith and transformational leader which Baylor needs at this point in time in our history.”

“The range of Dr. Livingston’s experiences—including her expertise in the area of accreditation and commitment to preserving the timeless values of Baylor’s founders—will be critical to helping the Baylor Family navigate through these challenging times,” said Fred Norton, president of the Baylor Line Foundation, successor to the Baylor Alumni Association and publisher of *The Baylor Line*.

“We welcome her return to the Baylor Family—many of whom already know her and respect her—and we look forward to supporting her efforts to rebuild Baylor’s reputation and standing in a spirit of transparency and accountability.”

“Unique culture of care and compassion”

Livingstone taught at Baylor from 1991 to 2002. She began her Baylor career as an assistant professor in the Hankamer School’s management department and was promoted to associate professor in 1997. Beginning in 1998, she was the school’s associate dean for graduate programs.

“My time at Baylor as a faculty member and associate dean was formative in my academic career and in developing my passion for academic administration,” Livingstone said in the Baylor release. “Baylor’s unique culture of care and compassion—that I experienced personally from my colleagues and that I saw demonstrated among faculty, staff and students—continues to inspire and influence me as an administrator.

“Continuing to strengthen Baylor’s culture, where faculty, staff and students are encouraged, inspired and cared for by one another, is a priority.”

Pepperdine, GWU and OSU

Livingstone left Baylor for Pepperdine in 2002 and served there 12 years. She oversaw a \$200 million expansion of the Pepperdine business school’s graduate campus and construction of an executive conference center. The school’s full-time, executive and fully employed MBA programs grew on her watch.

Since 2014, Livingstone has guided George Washington University’s School of Business, which trains about 3,500 undergraduate, master’s and doctoral students. She led the school through a comprehensive strategic planning

process to capitalize on its commitment to service.

“Linda Livingstone has been a stellar dean and an excellent colleague,” said university President Steven Knapp. “I am sure that our entire GW community joins me in wishing Linda all success in her important new role and that Baylor University will benefit tremendously from her leadership.”

Livingstone is a native of Perkins, Okla., and a graduate of Oklahoma State University, where she earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees. She also lettered four years on the women’s basketball team, from 1978 through 1982.

She is a member of Oklahoma State’s Spears School of Business Hall of Fame. She was the first recipient of the Outstanding Ph.D. Alumnus Award, and she was recognized in 2015 with the OSU Distinguished Alumni Award.

Livingstone previously served as chair of the board of the international Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in 2014-15 and has expertise in accreditation issues. The association is the professional organization for business schools and accredits 786 business schools globally in 53 countries and territories. She chaired the association’s Committee on Accreditation Policy in 2015-16.

Her husband, Brad Livingstone, is dean of students and teaches history at Trinity Christian School in Fairfax, Va. He also played basketball at Oklahoma State.

Their daughter, Shelby, recently completed her junior season on the volleyball team at Rice University.

Appreciation for Garland

Murff expressed particular appreciation for David Garland, Baylor's interim president.

"I want to thank Dr. Garland for stepping in and serving Baylor this last year," Murff said. "He has led with tremendous grace, integrity and passion for Baylor.

"On behalf of the entire Baylor Family, I want to express our appreciation for the sacrifices he has made and the model of selfless character and leadership he has shown us all."

Editor's note: This article has been updated to include material from a media conference call conducted by newly elected Baylor University President Linda Livingstone and Ron Murff, chair of the Baylor board of regents.