

Convención and Criswell College enter partnership

March 7, 2023

The Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas and Criswell College have agreed to collaborate on an initiative to provide resources and services for Hispanic church leaders.

Jesse Rincones, executive director of Convención, and Luis Juárez, vice president and dean of students at Criswell College, signed a memorandum of understanding Feb. 28 regarding the new Centro Pastoral Hispano, a resource space for Hispanic ministers.

“This partnership is both historic and intentional. Criswell College is committed to serving Hispanic communities in Texas by making education accessible to those called to ministry and supporting those already doing ministry,” Juárez said.

Convención and Criswell College leaders hope to launch the center at Texas Baptists’ Family Gathering, July 16-18 in McAllen.

“Centro Pastoral Hispano—the Center for Hispanic Pastors—is a natural progression of Convención’s existing Conexión Pastors Initiative,” Rincones said.

“Conexión serves to connect Hispanic pastors in healthy, thriving peer groups. Centro Pastoral Hispano will connect pastors with resources that will help them thrive. ... Additionally, Conexión will expand its ministry to Hispanic pastors’ wives through Conexión Esposas.”

Varied resources for Hispanic ministers

The Centro Pastoral Hispano website will include resources related to ministerial well-being, financial health, professional and spiritual development, leadership and continuing education. It will be hosted both at the [Criswell College](#) and the [Convención](#) websites.

The center will aggregate research and studies regarding Hispanic churches, pastors and ministry, and it will maintain contact with pastors through social media and monthly emails.

“Criswell expects to serve Hispanic pastors and their wives on campus with retreats and conferences that support the holistic health of both,” Rincones said.

He praised Criswell College President Barry Creamer for his vision and desire to help Convención pastors.

“I am thankful for Dr. Creamer’s heart for Hispanic pastors and Criswell’s willingness to invest in the pastoral leadership of the largest demographic in Texas,” Rincones said.

Creamer likewise affirmed Rincones and the partnership between Criswell College and Convención.

“From the time Jesse Rincones began serving on our board of trustees, we have been blessed and encouraged by his commitment to Christ and his service to Hispanic pastors and Christian leaders throughout Texas in his work with Convención,” Creamer said.

“So, we were elated to create this partnership with Convención to join in the work of supporting and equipping leaders God has placed in Hispanic

congregations all over Texas.”

Terms of the agreement

The memorandum of understanding calls for Convención and Criswell College to offer each other reciprocal promotion.

Convención will provide Criswell College exhibit space at the Convención annual meeting, include the Criswell College logo and link on its website, and coordinate with regional *compañerimos* and Hispanic churches for Criswell representatives to make presentations.

Criswell College will provide staff support for the Centro Pastoral Hispano website and social media presence, designate a liaison for its Centro Pastoral Hispano collaborative work with Convención and commit \$10,000 annually to the collaboration.

First Baptist Church in Dallas founded what initially was called the Criswell Bible Institute and later the Criswell Institute for Biblical Studies in 1970. The institute—named for W.A. Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church—began offering classes in January 1971.

The school changed its name to Criswell College in 1985, when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredited both its undergraduate and master’s degree programs. Criswell College created its own governing board independent of First Baptist Church in Dallas in 2010.

Since 2001, Criswell College has affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, a group that broke away from the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas formed in 1910 as the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas. It entered into a unification agreement with the BGCT in 1963. In 2010, Convención became a freestanding ministry

partner of BGCT.

Convención's other ministry partners include Baptist University of the Américas, Dallas Baptist University, East Texas Baptist University, Wayland Baptist University and Buckner International—all affiliated with the BGCT.

The *Baptist Standard* also is a Convención partner, hosting Spanish-language news content and other resources for its *Noticias* online publication. Rincones serves on the *Standard* board of directors.