

Logsdon supporters plan seminary in San Antonio

February 16, 2021

A group of alumni and supporters of Logsdon Theological Seminary announced plans to open a freestanding seminary at Baptist Temple in San Antonio—which may or may not bear the Logsdon name.

One year ago, Hardin-Simmons University trustees approved a recommendation from university administration to begin the process of [closing Logsdon Seminary](#). HSU leaders cited a [\\$4 million deficit](#) and asserted the graduate program in theology was low-performing and not sustainable.

At that time, HSU President Eric Bruntmyer said a group of individuals were considering a freestanding seminary in San Antonio, where Logsdon had an extension campus. Bruntmyer said HSU was “ready to assist with any consultation and assistance” in that effort.

Seeking resolution of support

Don Williford, dean at Logsdon from 2011 to 2017, said he wasn’t part of the group Bruntmyer referred to at that time. But as acting president of the seminary that is proposed now, he sent a letter to the HSU trustees to remind them of Bruntmyer’s pledge and to request a resolution of support for a San Antonio seminary.

The letter also included a request “to purchase [from HSU] the classroom furnishings, white boards, and flat screen televisions for use in hybrid distance education courses at a reasonable price based on the original purchase price and standard depreciation rates.”

Jonathan Davis, vice president of the Logsdon Alumni Council, likewise urged the HSU trustees to approve a resolution of support for the San Antonio seminary, saying, “Such a resolution would not cost the university anything, but would carry great symbolic weight in building bridges among HSU and her many diverse constituents.”

The trustees met on Feb. 12, but the university did not announce any actions taken at the meeting regarding the seminary.

Using the Logsdon name

Regarding the HSU board and administration, Williford said in a Feb. 15 phone interview, “We’d like to see them give us their blessing to use the Logsdon name.”

Williford added “some of the heirs” of Charles and Koreen Logsdon—whose original gifts made Logsdon Seminary possible—granted oral permission to use the family name, but no documents had been signed to that effect.

HSU continues to use the Logsdon name for its “teach-out” program for students who were enrolled in Logsdon Seminary last year, as well as for the undergraduate Logsdon School of Theology as part of HSU’s Cynthia Ann Parker College of Liberal Arts.

If the proposed seminary in San Antonio is not able to call itself “Logsdon Theological Seminary,” Williford expressed confidence it would be able to “continue the Logsdon legacy” through an endowed scholarship and possibly an endowed chair bearing the Logsdon name.

Davis added it will benefit from the strong relationships Logsdon already established in the San Antonio area—regardless whether the new seminary bears its name.

Making plans

In his letter to trustees and on social media, Williford mentioned plans to launch the San Antonio seminary in the fall. On Feb. 15, he said his group still hopes to launch classes in the fall, but that could be delayed until January 2022.

Williford reported the seminary in San Antonio anticipates a \$250,000 to \$300,000 budget in its first year and a \$350,000 budget in its second year. He also expects the seminary to have between \$2 million and \$4 million in endowments by its third year.

The group forming the seminary still awaits approval of its legal status as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, he said. They already have received significant pledges from donors, and he anticipates those pledges will be honored soon after the nonprofit status is granted.

The proposed seminary will offer on-site instruction and hybrid courses that combine online distance learning with in-person instruction for limited periods each semester.

“We will not have any full-time faculty for the first year,” Williford said.

Some former Logsdon Seminary faculty—as well as potentially some faculty formerly associated with the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond—will teach on a part-time basis, he said.

Some San Antonio pastors with terminal degrees who previously taught at the Logsdon campus in San Antonio also likely will teach, he added.

Practical orientation

The seminary likely initially will seek accreditation through a “reputable

agency” that doesn’t require the length of time typically associated with accreditation through the Association of Theological Schools, Williford said.



Don Williford

As the new seminary plans its degree programs, it will rely heavily on ATS-conducted research regarding perceived gaps in traditional seminary programs, he said. The San Antonio seminary will seek to provide practical instruction for congregational ministry.

“It will have a practical orientation,” Williford said. “We will not lessen the rigor of instruction of the traditional disciplines, but we will offer the value-added benefit of the practical elements.”

Davis noted the seminary will be distinctive in offering a practicum for students beginning with their first semester, and in providing an integrated approach to teaching that bridges academic disciplines that sometimes operate in silos.

Growing number of San Antonio seminaries

If successful, the new seminary will be launched in a city with a growing number of options for Baptists and other evangelical Protestants seeking graduate degrees to prepare for ministry.

- Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary will begin offering classes in the fall at Trinity Baptist Church, the former home of a Logsdon extension campus.
- Wayland Baptist University offers several master's level degrees in Christian ministry at its San Antonio campus.
- Northern Seminary—an Illinois-based American Baptist school—opened an extension center last fall in San Antonio's Midtown area.
- Dallas Theological Seminary—an independent evangelical school—also has an extension campus in the Castle Hills area of northwestern San Antonio.

Last May, Truett Seminary—which already has an extension in Houston—announced its plans to launch its extension campus in San Antonio. The extension campus will offer Master of Arts in Christian Ministry and Master of Theological Studies degrees.

Truett already has obtained ATS accreditation for its San Antonio program and anticipates accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Todd Still, dean of Truett Seminary, said the seminary in San Antonio will “launch lean” with instruction provided by some faculty from the Waco campus, along with some “friends of Truett and Baylor” in the San Antonio region who have doctoral degrees and practical pastoral experience.

He noted San Antonio is the nation's eighth largest city, and “the need remains” for theological education in the greater South Central Texas area.

Still pointed to Truett's status as a “seminary embedded in a major research university” as a strength it offers—not only to students at its Waco campus, but also to those at its Houston extension now and San Antonio extension in the future.

Davis noted the new seminary Logsdon alumni and supporters plan to launch in San Antonio, will seek to “create ecumenical partnerships,” and he anticipates broad-based support for the freestanding seminary.

“If there’s one thing the last year taught us, it’s that the future of a seminary within a university can be just as fragile as one that’s not embedded in another institution,” he said.