

No name change considered for Baylor University

July 17, 2020

WACO—Baylor University wants to do a better job telling its “complete history,” but the university has no intention of changing its name, the chairman of the Baylor’s board of regents announced.



A large bronze statue of Judge R.E.B. Baylor is located on Founders Mall on the Baylor University campus between Waco Hall and Pat Neff Hall. It was dedicated Feb. 1, 1939. (Baylor University Photo)

At the regents’ July 16-17 teleconference, Chair Mark Rountree presented an update on the 26-member [commission on historic campus representations](#). Baylor created the commission in response to a June 26 [board resolution](#) acknowledging the university’s historic connections to slavery and slaveholders.

“The charge of the commission’s work is not to change Baylor’s history or the name of our great university. Let me reiterate that changing Baylor University’s name is not under consideration by the commission, the board or the administration,” Rountree stated following the board meeting.

“Our focus is to better tell the complete history of Baylor and to continue to elevate what the Baylor name stands for—a place that integrates academic excellence and an unambiguous Christian commitment to expand minds,

transform hearts and equip men and women to be difference makers in our ever-changing world.”

Judge R.E.B. Baylor—a founder of the university that bears his name—owned at least 20 slaves in 1860, and more than two-thirds of Baylor’s first 15 trustees were slaveholders, according to a February 2017 [article](#). A large bronze statue of Judge Baylor is located on Founders Mall on the university campus.

Exploring ways to foster mutual respect

In response to a question raised during teleconference with reporters following the board meeting, Rountree explained the regents are encouraging the commission to learn from “best practices” of other universities that have conducted similar historical self-examinations.

Among other guiding principles, the board will urge the commission to focus on “addition as much as subtraction,” looking for ways to provide a more complete picture of Baylor’s history, and to practice “including without alienating” as much as possible, Rountree said.



Linda Livingstone

As part of Baylor’s ongoing efforts to foster diversity and mutual respect, President Linda Livingstone announced the university has committed an initial \$5 million to launch the [Trailblazer Scholars Program](#).

The program will focus on students from underserved communities who have a particular interest in multi-ethnic issues and a desire to take a leadership role in addressing issues of racial justice and healing,

Livingstone explained.

A cohort of 20 students per academic year will be designated as Trailblazer Scholars, with the goal of having 80 on campus in four years.

Health protocols in place for fall semester

Both Rountree and Livingstone reported the regents heard extensive reports on plans Baylor is implementing to prepare for the fall semester in light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.



Baylor University President Linda Livingstone and Mark Rountree, chair of the university's board of regents, respond to questions from reporters during a teleconference following the quarterly regents meeting. (Screen Capture)

Livingstone announced the university will implement a major public health educational campaign, "Family First," as well as COVID-19 screening, testing and contact tracing.

Face coverings and social distancing will be required in public areas, enhanced cleaning protocols are in place, and university leaders are looking at the best ways to use facilities, she noted.

At this point, more than three-quarters of Baylor's classes will have some in-person component—either entirely face-to-face or hybrid delivery of instruction—while the remaining 24 percent of classes will be delivered

online.

A “dashboard” of COVID-19 metrics will guide decision-making, she noted. Key factors that will be tracked include total student COVID-19 cases and positive test results; quarantine and self-isolation rates; faculty illness rates; antigen presence in sewage from residence halls; regional hospital capacities; contact tracing data; and the operating status of local schools and daycare centers.

“We continue to plan for an on-campus start of the fall semester on Aug. 24 with the appropriate safety and social distancing protocols in place, but we are certainly prepared to shift our focus should COVID-19 conditions worsen,” Livingstone said.

In other business, the board:

- Approved two appointees to the Baylor College of Medicine board of trustees—Brooks McGee, managing partner in Icon Wealth Partners investment company in Houston; and Gail Stewart, partner in Baker Botts international law firm in Houston.
- Considered and approved modifications to Baylor’s sexual and interpersonal misconduct policy in response to new Title IX guidelines from the federal government.