

Updated: Baylor student and two faculty test positive for COVID-19

March 20, 2020

A Baylor University student and two Baylor faculty—each who had traveled to another state—tested positive for COVID-19 and are in self-isolation.

The Waco McLennan County Public Health District announced March 18 that two Baylor faculty members were among local residents who had tested positive for the novel coronavirus, and the next day the university learned about the student from public health officials.

The two faculty had been to New York City on non-university travel over spring break, but had not been on the Baylor campus since their return, the university noted.

“The student returned to Waco after traveling out of state to an area with high community transmission but self-isolated away from the Baylor campus. Our faculty members also did not return to the Baylor campus and have been in self-isolation since traveling home,” Baylor President Linda Livingstone wrote in a March 19 statement posted on the university’s [website](#) and on social media.

“Let us all join together and continue to pray for the current health and recovery of these members of our Baylor Family, as well as thousands of others around the country and world who have been impacted by this terrible crisis.”

Livingstone reminded students and their families to practice personal health protection and observe social distancing.

“Note that COVID-19 affects all age groups—even college-aged students—and the social distancing guidelines are for the health and welfare of everyone,” she wrote.

On March 16, Baylor had announced it was extending online instruction for the remainder of the spring semester and postponing May commencement exercises. Baylor will confer degrees in May on all students who satisfy their academic requirements, and spring graduates will be invited to participate in commencement ceremonies at an August ceremony.

On March 24, Baylor [announced](#) both McLennan County and the City of Waco had issued a shelter-in-place order until April 7, and Dallas County—home to Baylor’s Louise Herrington School of Nursing—is under a similar order. At that point, McLennan County reported 23 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Other Texas Baptist universities adapt

Other universities related to Texas Baptists also have continued to move to online-only instruction, change schedules and make additional adjustments related to COVID-19:

▪ Hardin-Simmons University

In a video distributed to students and others on March 19 and posted on the Hardin-Simmons University [website](#), President Eric Bruntmyer announced HSU would “extend online learning indefinitely.”

Bruntmyer also announced the university would make diplomas available to spring semester graduates as soon as they complete all of the graduation requirements, graduates would be invited to participate in public commencement exercises either in December 2020 or May 2021.

“Please know we are praying for you, and we are here for you. Our campus is not the same without you,” he said.

▪ **Houston Baptist University**

On March 19, Houston Baptist University posted notice on its [website](#) it was postponing commencement ceremonies for May graduates.

“Be assured that, for students who are graduating this semester, degrees will still be officially conferred in May. Graduates are invited to participate in a commencement ceremony in August,” the university announced.

The ring ceremony hosted by the HBU Alumni Association will be held Aug. 6 and will recognize both May and August graduates.

Previously, HBU had informed students “remote delivery of residential courses” was extended through the end of the spring semester, and final exams also would be delivered remotely.

▪ **Wayland Baptist University**

Wayland Baptist University announced March 19 on its [website](#) all classes would be offered online-only through the end of the spring semester and residential students at the Plainview campus would be required to move out of the dorms.

Two days earlier, Wayland announced graduation ceremonies would be canceled through May 9. Those included commencement exercises in Plainview, Wichita Falls, Arizona, Alaska and Hawaii and in Altus, Okla. Students affected by the cancellations will be eligible to participate in the next available Wayland graduation ceremony.

“Future graduation ceremonies scheduled beyond May 9 continue to be

evaluated, and a decision for those ceremonies will be made in the near future as the situation develops,” the announcement stated.

▪ **Baptist University of the Américas**

Baptist University of the Américas began March 23 offering students instruction exclusively online or through a virtual platform on their Blackbaud portal account until notified otherwise. Faculty and staff began working remotely two days later.

The school announced it was cancelling the BUA Student Formal, originally scheduled April 17.

On March 24, President Abe Jaquez announced on the school’s [website](#) that BUA was postponing its scheduled May 16 commencement ceremony. Degrees will be awarded when students complete the necessary requirements, and the school plans to “look for ways to have our commencement ceremony later in the year for any graduate that wishes to participate,” he stated.

▪ **Dallas Baptist University**

At Dallas Baptist University, online-only instruction began March 23. That same day, President Adam Wright [announced](#) classes would be conducted exclusively online for the remainder of the semester, and nonessential employees were directed to work from home in compliance with City of Dallas and Dallas County shelter-in-place mandates.

DBU has canceled its May commencement exercises “based upon the guidance we have received from federal, state, and local health officials,” Wright stated. “DBU will still confer degrees in May for those who satisfy academic requirements and will invite our spring graduates to participate

in our August commencement ceremony,” he continued.

▪ **East Texas Baptist University**

At East Texas Baptist University, online-only classes began March 15.

On March 25, the university announced it would continue online-only courses for the remainder of the spring semester

“Please understand that, at this time, there are still no confirmed cases of COVID-19 among ETBU students, faculty, staff or university community members, and there have been no cases reported in Harrison County. However, we are following the recommendations of the federal, state and county government authorities, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and we are hopeful that by taking every precaution necessary, we can help minimize the impact of the coronavirus on our nation and around the world.” according to a statement on the school’s [website](#).

▪ **Howard Payne University**

At Howard Payne University, online-only instruction began March 23, with in-person classes tentatively scheduled to resume April 13. Large events—including all Holy Week activities—were cancelled through April 12, the HPU [website](#) stated.

▪ **University of Mary Hardin-Baylor**

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor began offering online-only instruction March 23. The next day, [UMHB announced](#) in light of Bell County’s “Stay Home Stay Safe” directive, online-only instruction would

continue through the end of the semester. No official decision regarding spring commencement ceremonies had been announced as of noon on March 25.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article, originally posted on March 20, was updated on March 25 to reflect the latest available information.