

Texas Baptist universities respond to COVID-19

March 13, 2020

Several Texas Baptist universities extended spring break by one week—at least for students in on-campus classes—due to the COVID-19 pandemic and announced plans to provide online-only classes.

Schools also asked any faculty, staff and students who remain on campus to practice social distancing and good hygiene practices as recommended by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Within a few days, many universities began implementing plans to help as many students as possible move from on-campus housing.

Initially, [Baylor University](#), Baptist University of the Americas, [Dallas Baptist University](#), [East Texas Baptist University](#), [Hardin-Simmons University](#), [Houston Baptist University](#), [Howard Payne University](#) and the [University of Mary Hardin-Baylor](#) all cancelled face-to-face classes March 16-20.

On March 16, Baylor announced all instruction would be offered online through the end of the semester, and the university postponed May commencement exercises. Baylor will confer degrees in May, and spring graduates will be invited to participate in an August commencement ceremony.

Howard Payne University announced it would postpone all large events through April 12.

Spring break at Wayland Baptist University's Plainview campus already was scheduled March 16-20, but Wayland cancelled participation in spring break mission trips. Wayland Baptist also announced it would cancel

graduation ceremonies through May 9.

Transition to online instruction

Most schools instructed faculty to use the extended spring break to prepare for remote course delivery, although exact timeframes and strategies varied from one university to another.

ETBU moved all its courses online—initially through March 22 and later extended to April 5.

HBU initially advised students classes would be offered remotely, in an “online or alternative format,” beginning March 23 “until further notice.” On March 17, HBU announced it was continuing remote delivery of residential courses through the end of the semester.

Similarly, BUA will resume instruction March 23 through online and virtual platforms “indefinitely.”

UMHB announced March 19 it would shift all classes to an online format beginning March 23, with tentative plans for students to return to campus and resume face-to-face instruction April 6, if conditions allow.

DBU and Wayland announced classes would resume March 23 in an online-only environment at least through the first week in April, pending further developments.

Effective March 18, DBU began posting a chapel service on its [Facebook page](#). The university plans to make the chapel services available live at 10 a.m. on Monday and Wednesday.

Hardin-Simmons University and Howard Payne University announced online/remote learning would begin March 23 and continue through April 13.

Baylor noted its decision applied to all campuses and locations related to the university, including Truett Theological Seminary.

Baylor established a [COVID-19 Task Force](#) that will continue to “review events, conferences and other large gatherings through the end of the spring semester,” according to a statement from the university.

All Baylor student meetings and activities were suspended for three weeks, and Truett cancelled its scheduled chapel services.

“Meanwhile, would you please join me in praying for those who have been impacted by this serious disease and in asking the Lord to grant healing of body and peace of mind to those who are sick and distressed because of COVID-19?” Dean Todd Still wrote in a message to Truett Seminary students.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Originally posted at 6 p.m. on March 13, the article was edited at 6 a.m. on March 14, again at 1 p.m. on March 18 and finally at 11:30 a.m. on March 19 to reflect updated information.