

# **BGCT president: Wayland Baptist University and Howard Payne University**

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Most of my career has been in higher education administration at Baptist universities. It has been a blessing to serve and be a part of these wonderful institutions. Texas Baptists are so fortunate to have nine universities that train and prepare many students for life and ministry. Here are two of our wonderful schools with roots more than a century old. Each was started when local Baptist associations took the lead to establish a school.



René Maciel **Wayland Baptist University** was established in Plainview in 1909 as a junior college after Staked Plains Baptist Association accepted a donation of land from Dr. and Mrs. James Henry Wayland. Classes started the following year. In 1914, Wayland affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Located between Lubbock and Amarillo, it is considered the oldest university in continuous existence on the High Plains of Texas, drawing early students from New Mexico, which did not have a Baptist school of its own.

After the stock market crashed in 1929, the Great Depression had a

devastating impact on the college. Enrollment declined, and the bank that held all of the school's assets failed, leaving the college with no money for its expenses. To continue to educate students, the administration and faculty agreed to serve without pay, trusting God to meet their needs. Thanks to the providence of God and their willingness to make personal sacrifices, they enabled Wayland to remain open at a time when so many private schools failed.

Under the leadership of James W. "Bill" Marshall, Wayland became a four-year college in 1948, started an international student program, voluntarily admitted African-American students on an equal basis with Anglos, and banned smoking by any Wayland student, a controversial decision.



As the physical plant expanded to include dormitories, student apartments and a cafeteria, Mr. and Mrs. Shelby Flores of Tulia made the largest single gift any Baptist college ever had received prior to that point in the 1950s, when they donated more than 27 sections of farm, ranch and oil-bearing land to the school.



Gates Hall on the Wayland Baptist University campus in Plainview Roy C. McClung, pastor of First Baptist Church in Plainview, led Wayland as its eighth president from 1963 to 1980, a period that saw dramatic physical expansion to include athletics and arts facilities. Enrollment also reached 1,000 for the first time. Wayland moved to university status under David Jester as president and began offering graduate courses.

External campuses operate in such wide-ranging places as Lubbock, San Antonio, Arizona and Alaska, with enrollment there exceeding 5,000. As the university reached system status, Wayland became the fourth-largest university affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

With 14 campuses ranging from Texas to Alaska to Arizona to Hawaii to New Mexico to Oklahoma to Africa, [click here](#) to review the 40 undergraduate majors, more than a dozen pre-professional programs and nine graduate programs at Wayland Baptist University.

**Howard Payne University** in Brownwood traces its birth to Pecan Valley Baptist Association in 1889 as Howard Payne College.



The Old Main Tower and mall on the Howard Payne University campus in Brownwood. A South Carolina pastor, Noah Byars, moved to Texas and helped organize First Baptist Church of Brownwood in 1876. The church called John David Robnett of Missouri as pastor, who joined with Byars to establish Pecan Valley Baptist Association and captured the vision of a Baptist college in Central Texas.

Howard Payne was named in honor of its first major benefactor, Edward Howard Payne, brother-in-law of Robnett. The college held its first classes in 1890 and five years later granted its first degree to J.D. Robnett Jr. Howard Payne College became Howard Payne University in 1974.

In the fall of 2013, the university welcomed the largest number of new students in more than three decades. Located on the northern edge of the Texas Hill Country, enrollment for the fall of 2015 was 1,163 students at its three locations, including digital education and extended learning centers in El Paso and New Braunfels.

Today's students choose from more than 100 majors, minors and pre-professional programs in six schools—business, Christian studies, education, humanities, music and fine arts, and science and mathematics.

HPU was one of the first Baptist universities in Texas to have an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in youth ministry. Additionally, the university offers four other master's programs—a master of education in instructional leadership degree, which provides preparation for educators wishing to become certified principals in Texas; a master of business administration degree for students looking to improve their job skills or find new careers; a master of arts in theology and ministry degree, which serves as preparation for minister in churches and other related ministries; and a master of education in sport and wellness leadership degree, which prepares students for careers in athletics and wellness programs.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Howard Payne.

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