

EDITORIAL: Baylor takes big step toward unity

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Baylor University took a leap toward unity by selecting David Garland as interim president. A couple of issues ago, we discussed how Baylor's regents must take responsibility for bringing peace to the conflict-riddled campus. If they continue to live up to the level of this decision, they can begin to reverse their reputation for divisiveness.

Garland has been an asset to Baylor since he joined the Editor Marv George W. Truett Theological Seminary faculty 11 years ago.^{Knox}

As professor of New Testament, associate dean for academic affairs and, most recently, dean, he has provided exemplary leadership. Garland embodies multiple characteristics that commend him to lead Baylor during the coming months:

- **Teaching & research**

Garland is one of the foremost scholars of the Gospel of Mark, and his books have been praised by academics and ministers for years. He's a world-class scholar whose research is respected by his peers. But he's also a scintillating lecturer and a sensitive mentor-teacher.

For several years, Baylor has been divided between those who revere its legacy as a great teaching school and those who want to see it rise in the ranks of research institutions. Garland demonstrates that passion for forming lives and zeal for exploring the world of ideas can reside together, in harmony.

- **Honor & integrity**

Baylor's problem with disharmony and division the past decade or so has developed because too many people have been working too many agendas.

Suspicion and distrust have infused dysfunction in the “Baylor family.” But David Garland is honest and sincere and full of integrity. Baylor will know that what they see is what they get. And they can begin to trust again.

Garland can lead this because (a) he knows biblical ethics, starting with truth-telling and trustworthiness, is at the heart of the gospel, (b) his life is patterned after that gospel, and (c) he is true with God, himself and others.

- **Smart & experienced**

I can imagine some of you who read the previous section said to yourselves, “Yeah, then (fill in the blank—the regents, the faculty, the alumni) will eat his lunch.”

Garland is smarter than that. He’s been involved in top-flight academic institutions more than 30 years, and he knows how people behave. He’s not naive. He’s an integrity evangelist; he can convert bad actors to better behavior.

- **Open & inclusive**

One of the beautiful aspects of Truett Seminary is it is a place where people from many backgrounds and perspectives come to learn together. And a vital part of what they learn is to trust and accept one another.

At Truett, people who hold the range of theological perspectives are respected. The Baptist principle of the priesthood of all believers is affirmed. This spirit can help restore unity at Baylor. Baylorites need to see they can disagree, love Baylor and respect each other. David Garland leads by example, and the “Baylor family” can learn from him.

- **The Garland team**

Despite his enormous gifts and abilities, Garland wed over his head. He is married to Diana Garland, dean of Baylor’s School of Social Work. She also embodies teacher and scholar. She’s world-renowned for her research and practice in church-based social work. She’s a gifted author. And she’s the

kind of beloved teacher whose students follow her example into the poorest homes and neediest neighborhoods and most sensitive congregations, serving the people whom Jesus called “the least of these.”

She’s a strong, funny, energetic, compassionate, faithful and inspiring teacher, dean, minister and friend.

The regents have done well to choose David Garland, and we can pray with confidence that Baylor will grow in unity in the coming months.

Marv Knox is editor of the Baptist Standard. Visit his blog at baptiststandard.com .