

# Editorial: Baylor places values ahead of victories

May 26, 2016

Baylor University has risen to the ideals of its Texas Baptist heritage, thanks to the courage and commitment of its board of regents.



Marv Knox In the wake of a humiliating spate of sexual assaults, most notably involving members of the Bears football team, the regents have apologized to the far-flung Baylor family. More importantly, they have taken action to remove campus leaders—including the university president and the head football coach—who apparently enabled the sexual violence, as well as to set Baylor on a course of vigilance for protecting students.

Associate Editor Ken Camp has written [an extensive article](#) detailing the regents' actions. They are to be commended for embracing not only their fiduciary duties but also their Christian responsibility to reset Baylor's direction.

A *Baptist Standard* editorial published earlier this week, "[Baylor's ideals must top gridiron glory,](#)" called for the regents to take several specific actions. No doubt their response to this crisis already was being developed, but, thank God, they embraced all of them.

Those actions include:

- *Release the Pepper Hamilton law firm's report* of its independent investigation into the sexual assault problem at Baylor.

Although the final version of that report apparently has not been presented to the regents, the university released a 13-page [“findings of fact”](#) that excruciatingly details Baylor’s shortcomings.

“Pepper’s findings of fact, as set forth in greater detail in this statement, reflect a fundamental failure by Baylor to implement Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA),” the document reported. “Pepper found that Baylor’s efforts to implement Title IX were slow, ad hoc, and hindered by a lack of institutional support and engagement by senior leadership.”

Ultimately, Baylor should release Pepper Hamilton’s full report, with names of victims redacted. That would be the best course for the university. Meanwhile, releasing the “findings of fact”—and acting upon them—is a great step.

- *Remove Starr as president if the Pepper Hamilton investigation indicates he failed to ensure student safety*, follow up on all charges of sexual assault and rape, provide due process for the accused, and establish a culture of safety and protection for all students.

The regents removed Starr as president effective May 31. They allowed him to retain the nebulous title of “chancellor” and to continue to hold an endowed chair in Baylor’s law school.

Some will say Starr is a scapegoat, and others will counter he’s getting off light. Either way, the Pepper Hamilton findings indicated fault in his stewardship of Baylor, and he has been removed from leadership.

The regents deserve praise for selecting David Garland, former dean of

Baylor's Truett Theological Seminary and a New Testament professor at the seminary, as interim president. Garland's character is impeccable, he is highly regarded as a Christian leader, and he served with excellence as interim president before Starr's tenure.

- *Fire Head Coach Art Briles*, who made the football team a national powerhouse, if research shows he failed to adhere to Title IX standards and in any way turned a blind eye to sexual assault or other improprieties on his team.

The regents announced Briles has been "suspended indefinitely with intent to terminate."

This had to be a gut-wrenching decision for the regents. After decades of mediocrity, the Bears have dominated opponents and contended for top spots in the NCAA rankings. The Bears made Baylor fans proud—until they learned the cost. The regents proved Baylor believes football victories are not worth rapes.

- *Respond appropriately to Athletic Director Ian McCaw.*

McCaw has been "sanctioned and placed on probation." Perhaps he was a step removed from the infractions. But now he knows the entire athletics department must adhere to the highest standards—or pay the cost.

The regents also approved a larger, more comprehensive set of actions and policies designed to set not only the athletics department, but also the entire university straight.

Baylor broke our hearts; the regents are guiding it to live up to its Baptist Christian ideals. Sure, we still can dream of gridiron glory. But whatever happens on the football field, at least we can be proud of Baylor once again.