

BGCT president: San Marcos Baptist Academy, South Texas School of Christian Studies

August 31, 2016

I am looking forward to our Texas Baptist annual meeting Nov. 13-15 in Waco. We will celebrate our institutions and the incredible gift we have with each and every one of them. Make plans to join us at the annual meeting, and please stop by each of the displays this year, because we will be "Celebrating Service."



René Maciel San Marcos Baptist Academy was born from a December 1905 meeting of Baptists of Southwest Texas when two pastors voiced the need for a Baptist school in the southwestern area of the state.

A committee was appointed to select a location and secure bids for the contemplated school, and on the recommendation of J.B. Gambrell and J.M. Carroll, a committee that had selected a location and secured bids agreed to establish an academy in San Marcos. The citizens of San Marcos voted to support the school financially, and 57 acres were given for the campus.

In September 1906, the Conference of Southwest Texas Baptists elected trustees, who then chose Carroll as the first president of San Marcos

Baptist Academy. The school was chartered by the state July 10, 1907, and construction of the first building began later that year. The academy opened its doors to 200 students in September 1908 and graduated 11 in May of 1909. A year later, the school became affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.



San Marcos Baptist Academy Located on a 220-acre Hill Country campus, San Marcos Baptist Academy offers a fully accredited college preparatory curriculum in a nurturing atmosphere for boys and girls in middle school and high school. The academy welcomes boarding students from around the world, across the United States and all over Texas, as well as day students from San Marcos and surrounding areas.

The only secondary school among Texas Baptist educational institutions, San Marcos Academy is led by President Jimmie Scott, whose tenure at the school in various administrative roles spans five decades. It has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools since the early 1900s.

With a current coeducational enrollment of 275, the academy offers an impressive variety of student programs, including a century-old Junior ROTC unit; competitive athletics for all ages; equestrian training; accommodations for students with mild to moderate learning differences; and a technology-enriched teaching environment that includes a laptop initiative and distance learning opportunities.

For more information, [click here](#).

Another Baptist educational institution that filled a void in South Texas is the **South Texas School of Christian Studies**, a name selected in 2014.



South Texas School of Christian StudiesThe school actually dates back to 1946, when the pastor of First Baptist Church in Beeville, Aubria A. Sanders, gathered some pastors and proposed the BGCT establish an institution of higher learning in Beeville. The trustees ultimately settled on Ward Island in Corpus Christi, previously a U.S. military radar station, and called it the University of Corpus Christi.

From 1947 to 1973, UCC was a four-year Baptist university, but Hurricane Celia in August 1970 nearly destroyed the campus and prompted an agreement with the city of Corpus Christi and the state of Texas to create Texas A&I University-Corpus Christi on that campus in the fall of 1973. That school has changed names and currently is Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, located on more than 200 acres, but the BGCT retained 10 adjoining acres for religious education.

Those 10 acres were placed in the hands of the local Baptist association's Christian Education Activities Corporation, which in 1980 opened its main building. That corporation eventually became the Baptist Learning Center of South Texas.

Undergraduate classes in religion began in the fall of 1977, when the Baptist Learning Center and Brownwood-based Howard Payne University reached an agreement to enable ministry-minded students to attend classes

on Ward Island and gain academic credit through Howard Payne.

In 1997, Baptist Learning Center partnered with the Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University to offer the master of divinity degree in Corpus Christi. In 2011, the learning center partnered with Hardin-Simmons to provide bachelor's degrees for South Texas students.

In the summer of 2012, the South Texas School of Christian Studies, led by President Tony Celleli, purchased a three-acre campus in McAllen and also solidified a new undergraduate partner through Hardin-Simmons. The South Texas School also has started the process of becoming a fully accredited institution and currently holds candidate status with the Association for Biblical Higher Education.

The school now offers certificate, undergraduate and graduate programs through Howard Payne University and Logsdon Seminary. In 2015, it experienced its highest student enrollment to date during its summer/fall terms.

For more information, [click here](#).

René Maciel is president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and president of Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio.