

The release of facts in response to further accusations against terminated SWBTS president Paige Patterson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Given the wide-spread misrepresentation and misinformation regarding Dr. Patterson, it is important to set the facts straight. Insofar as they continue to be misrepresented publicly, accurate and appropriate responses will be issued.

This media release is in response to a release late Friday afternoon, June 1, 2018, from Kevin Ueckert, chairman of the board of trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS), concerning an executive committee decision of May 30, 2018, to terminate Dr. Patterson immediately.

The sole purpose of this release is to set forth facts and to put into perspective the committee's decision and the way in which that decision was made.

Following is an itemization of the facts regarding the middle of the night termination made by the executive committee without all the relevant documents on which to base a decision:

- Chairman Ueckert states in the release that the executive committee received student records from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) that contradicted an answer Dr. Patterson gave to a trustee's question during the full board meeting of May 22.
- Dr. Patterson was terminated without an opportunity to see the material or to respond to it.
- Neither Dr. Patterson nor his legal counsel was notified of the existence of this material allegedly incriminating Dr. Patterson prior to his termination.
- To date, requests by Dr. Patterson's legal counsel to see the material have been denied.
- At Dr. Patterson's request and after being made aware of the name of the Southeastern student making the accusation against Dr. Patterson, Dr. Patterson's staff checked the terminated president's personal archives for any related correspondence. Letters found from the accuser to Dr. Patterson appear to validate that Dr. Allan Moseley, the SEBTS Dean of Students, and not Dr. Patterson, handled the matter. The accuser also apologizes for what she called her sin and makes no mention of or reference to rape.
- Copies of these letters were provided to Southwestern's legal counsel on May 31, 2018.
- Because the executive committee did not give Dr. Patterson an opportunity to respond before his termination while in Germany for a long-standing commitment, the committee did not have in hand all relevant documents on which to base its decision prior to making that decision.

Following is an itemization of the facts pertaining to the charge in the chairman's release that Dr. Patterson lied in answer to a trustee's question at the May 22 board meeting:

- The incident in question concerns a time period in which Dr. Patterson was in the process of moving to Fort Worth, Texas, from Wake Forest, North Carolina, approximately 15 years ago.
- A personal 'thank you' letter to Dr. Patterson provided to Southwestern Seminary's legal counsel plainly states that a student at SEBTS first interacted with a faculty member and then with Dr. Moseley. She thanked Dr. Patterson for being able to stay in school and for the way in which the school handled the matter.
- No reasonable reading of the letter suggests that the student had reported a rape to Dr. Patterson and certainly not that he ignored it, as is alleged.
- Dr. Patterson first learned of the charges that he allegedly did not report a rape at SEBTS during the May 22 board meeting. Dr. Patterson's response was that he had no recollection of a rape being reported to him.
- To date, as far as we are aware, all parties with direct involvement and knowledge of the situation have stated rape was not mentioned. These individuals include the Dean of Students at SEBTS at the time, a woman assigned to meet with Mrs. Lively, and several staff members.
- Thus, when Dr. Patterson was asked about this charge during the May 22 meeting, he did not have a recollection of any such accusation.
- Significantly, one of the trustees sent a communication during the May 22 meeting to the SEBTS woman assigned to counsel the young woman, and this former SEBTS staff member further confirmed what Dr. Patterson shared.

Following is an itemization of the facts in response to the accusation that an email from Dr. Patterson to the SWBTS chief of the campus security department contains a statement that is "antithetical to the core values of our faith and to SWBTS":

- The fact that an isolated statement from an email is being widely distributed by SWBTS trustees without providing adequate context is unfortunate.
- Dr. Patterson explained the full context of the statement to the apparent satisfaction of the full board, as evidenced by the fact that the full trustee board voted to name Dr. Patterson "president emeritus" instead of terminating him without salary, benefits, or residence as the executive committee later did on its own.
- The student in question had given several different accounts of her story to authorities, school administration, and her family. Dr. Patterson was seeking to understand what actually occurred among the many contradictory statements.
- Anyone who knows Dr. Patterson knows that he never meets alone with women without clear accountability practices in place. He preferred that there be no police presence so the young women would not feel intimidated.

One must wonder what transformed the explanation of this statement from satisfactory at the May 22 meeting of the full board to “antithetical to core values” when considered by the executive committee May 30.

Following is an itemization of the facts related to the accusation that Dr. Patterson failed to deliver documents belonging to SEBTS in his possession:

- Dr. Patterson flatly denies that private SEBTS archives were ever stolen.
- Curiously, these accusations are now surfacing after more than 15 years, which raises the question of motive. Why raise the issue of supposed missing archives after all this time when correspondence shows that the question was raised and settled in 2004.
- This request was actually made to Dr. Patterson’s legal counsel.
- Dr. Patterson’s legal counsel immediately began an investigation which included contacting Dr. Chris Thompson, who supervised the transfer of Dr. Patterson’s library and personal archives from SEBTS to SWBTS.
- Dr. Thompson provided a letter (included below) referencing what transpired. In the letter he writes emphatically that the materials transferred included no SEBTS materials.
- Dr. Thompson had an obligation to SEBTS that no SEBTS papers leave its campus, and he attests to that in his letter.

Following is an itemization of the facts responding to the chairman’s charge that the papers given to the SWBTS’s legal counsel are SEBTS papers:

- Any reasonable reading of the letters reveals that they are personal, not institutional.
- Many officials of organizations receive ‘thank you’ letters.
- The fact that an official responds on institutional letterhead does not change the personal nature of the letter received nor any response to it.

To resolve the dispute about the true ownership of the documents in question, Dr. Patterson’s legal counsel has requested Southeastern Seminary join with him in having Peacemakers Ministries provide an arbitrator agreeable to both parties to decide the ownership of the records in accordance with 1 Corinthians 6, which prescribes how Christians are to settle disputes rather than using the secular court system. So far, SEBTS has not accepted this request.

While confident that no SEBTS documents were taken, Dr. and Mrs. Patterson are glad for SEBTS to have copies of any appropriate correspondence that they are unable to locate.

It is regrettable that these matters have been handled in the manner that they were. Had Dr. and Mrs. Patterson been included in the process and given an opportunity to respond, a much more amicable and less public outcome could have been achieved.