

Baptist professor offers her version of dismissal: Klouda says gender was the reason

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A female professor of Hebrew who was denied tenure at a Southern Baptist seminary says she was told by its president that her gender was the reason for her dismissal.

Sheri Klouda, who is now at Taylor University in Indiana, was denied tenure at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Oklahoma pastor and blogger Wade Burleson, writing January 17 on his personal blog, accused Southwestern president Paige Patterson of gender discrimination. The next day, T. Van McClain, chair of the seminary's board of trustees, said in a statement that Burleson's blog entry was "filled with inaccuracies."

Klouda has since agreed with Burleson's version of events. "I suppose there could be inaccuracies in the entry, but with regard to me and what happened at Southwestern, Wade's version of events is accurate," she said.

Ten days after Patterson became seminary president in 2003, he assured her that her job was safe. "He made some pretty grim statements in press conferences following his appointment," Klouda said, "but he told me in a meeting that I would not lose my job because of my gender."

On June 7, 2004, Klouda said, she was told by a school administrator that Patterson would not recommend her for tenure.

"It's no secret that the issue was my gender," Klouda said. "When I wasn't assigned any classes for the fall semester of 2006, Patterson encouraged me to tell my students that the decision was based on his views and convictions about women teaching men. He believes that the local church is a paradigm for the school, and in the local church, women may not be in leadership." *-Religion News Service*