

Baylor regents remove president over failure to unify factions: In spite of John Lilley's "significant accomplishments"

News in the [August 26, 2008](#) issue

John Lilley, president of Baylor University, has been fired for failing to “bring the Baylor family together,” says Howard Batson, chair of the university’s board of regents.

The regents voted July 24 to remove Lilley from office, effective immediately, during their summer meeting in Grapevine, near the Dallas–Fort Worth airport. The vote was taken by secret ballot and the vote total was not announced, Batson said.

Batson cited Lilley’s inability to unite Baylor’s various constituencies at least nine times during a 20-minute telephone news conference and several times in an interview with the *Texas Baptist Standard* shortly after the regents’ vote.

Lilley became Baylor’s president in January 2006, at a time when the university’s constituency had divided over the administration of the previous president, Robert Sloan. Also controversial was Baylor 2012, a decadelong strategy for growing the world’s largest Baptist university and increasing its influence.

Batson affirmed what he called Lilley’s “significant accomplishments” achieved during the past two and a half years. They included Baylor’s highest-ever ranking by *U.S. News & World Report*—75th—among national doctorate- granting universities.

The university in Waco attracted a “large and diverse student body”; last fall’s enrollment was 14,174—the school’s second-highest total. The endowment reached a record high, and 402 students—another record number—were enrolled in Baylor’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Lilley was disappointed with the regents' decision. "I was invited unanimously by the board of regents to come to Baylor," Lilley said in an e-mail. "I did not come to Baylor to advance my career. [Wife] Gerrie and I were reluctant, but finally were persuaded to come because of the unanimous vote and the promised prayers of the regents.

"We felt that we could help to heal the wounded hearts left in the wake of the conflict that preceded us. Despite the board's unanimous vote, it became clear immediately that the Baylor board of regents reflected some of the deepest divisions in the Baylor family." -*Associated Baptist Press*