

Institutional Relations Committee
05/18/26

Theological Education Council
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Item of Consideration: Recommendation for re-endorsement of Baptist University of the Americas graduate ministry degree for Ministerial Financial Assistance (MFA)

Highest Authority for this item: Institutional Relations

Originating Source: Director of Theological Education & Theological Education Council

Background:

Baptist University of the Americas offers one graduate ministry-related degree program eligible for Texas Baptists MFA program. First endorsed for MFA in 2022 the MA in Practical Theology and Ministry equips students to serve as senior or associate pastor, church staff minister, denominational minister, in a non-profit organization staff role, some chaplaincy services, or in a diverse para-church ministry capacity. TEC reviews new programs three years after launch to assess and reaffirm the respective graduate and/or post-graduate programs.

DBU Re-Endorsement Visit:

On October 7, 2025, a visiting team consisting of Dr. Van Christian (TEC member) and Dr. Stephen Stookey (Director, Theological Education & Institutional Engagement, BGCT) visited BUA to review the MA in Practical Theology and Ministry program.

Visiting Team's Report:

The visiting team was warmly welcomed by Dr. Lee "Rusty" Waller, Dean of Academic Affairs. Meetings were held through the day with the following:

- Dr. Waller
- Current BUA MA students
- Graduates of BUA's MA program
- BUA Faculty/Contingent Faculty teaching across BUA undergraduate and graduate programs

The visiting team observed the following related to BUAs MA in Practical Theology and Ministry program:

- accomplishes institutional core goal to provide a quality, affordable education in a cross-cultural community;
- Noted intentional, regular assessment and requisite curricular changes to the MA program—e.g., addition of BIBL 5320 Biblical Research and Interpretation, EDUC 5310 Practical Strategies in Teaching and Learning, THEO 5315 Exploring Baptist Heritage: Faith, Doctrine, and Practice, LEAD 5310 Models of Modern Church Leadership;

- Noted increased emphasis on academic rigor and mitigating grade inflation;
- creates understanding of and appreciation for Texas Baptists with students receiving MFA;
- noted value of scholar practitioners among contingent faculty;
- noted heavy dependence on contingent faculty;
- institution maintains a clear missional identity and programmatic focus; and,
- meets MFA academic objectives.

The visiting team offered the following suggestions:

- encourages continued development and promotion of academic rigor and research emphasis for practical application; and,
- encourages the university as finances allow to pursue full-time faculty with theological education discipline-specific terminal degrees.

Suggestions come with no required action. They represent the observations of the site visit team. The team was impressed with BUA's early assessment and curricular adjustments to the MA program.

Background Attachments: None

Recommendation: Re-endorsement of the MA in Practical Theology and Ministry program at BUA for Ministerial Financial Assistance is recommended.