

BAPTIST FEATURES

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Editors: This is the nineteenth in the Series on SBC agencies.

Education Commission
Helps Schools In Need

By Leonard Hill
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Late one August afternoon, the 'phone jangled in the Southern Baptist Education Commission's office in Nashville, Tenn. The president of a Baptist college was calling long distance.

"I've got to have help quick!" he said in an urgent voice. "School begins in two weeks, and my dean has just resigned. Where can I get another one?"

Good college deans are not easily found overnight, and this was a Baptist college in need, posing additional problems. The school required a Baptist, active in his local church. The man had to meet the qualifications of scholarship and ability. Finally, the college had to compete with other schools, many of whom were able to offer higher salaries.

The call was not in vain. Rabun L. Brantley, executive secretary of the Commission, and his staff are used to difficult requests. Helping Baptist colleges find teachers is one of their services. The school secured a good dean--he is still with them.

"Teachers are the key to the success of a Baptist college," says Brantley. Financial support depends on good teachers. Well-trained denominational leaders depend on good teachers. Whether a preacher is loyal to the efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention is determined most of the time before he enters a seminary--again the importance of good college teachers."

Assisting Baptist colleges in finding capable teachers is a big enough task, but it is just one of many things done by the Convention's Education Commission from the \$60,000 of Cooperative Program money allotted last year.

The main work of the Education Commission is to serve as a clearing house and source of information for the entire Convention on matters related to Christian higher education and Baptist colleges. It also serves as a promotion agency focusing the attention of Southern Baptists on higher education.

The confidence of the presidents of Southern Baptist colleges in the commission is demonstrated in this fact. The commission annually places more teachers in Southern Baptist colleges than does any professional agency, and some other agencies have staffs six times larger.

Besides helping to place teachers, Brantley and his associates assist colleges in recruiting teachers.

"Colleges desperately need trained teachers in every area except theology and religious education, where there is an oversupply," says Brantley. Especially are they looking for teachers with a doctor of philosophy degree in English, psychology, math, chemistry, physics and biology."

Those interested in teaching know to contact the Education Commission at 161 Eighth Ave. No., Nashville. Here are kept on file names of available or interested Baptist teachers. The names are circulated regularly to college administrators. Neither teacher nor college is charged by the Commission for this service.

To increase the supply of Baptist teachers, an extensive recruiting system is being built up that would be the envy of many athletic departments. Baptist student directors, deans, department heads, pastors, and other Baptist teachers are encouraged to notify the Commission of prospective teachers.

A member of the Education Commission staff annually visits many college campuses, interviewing top graduate students and interesting them in teaching in Baptist colleges.

At this point, Brantley likes to mention his hope that some day a large number of scholarships will be available for helping to educate outstanding students interested in teaching in Baptist schools.

Each February, the Education Commission leads the emphasis on Baptist colleges and Christian education, to reach prospective students.

During the February emphasis, young people are informed of the need for dedicated Christians in all vocations. "Young people should seek the leading of the Lord in whatever they undertake," says Brantley.

The Commission's publication, College and Career, is supplied to many young people, and to church and high school libraries by interested churches or individuals. It contains information such as admission to college, how to select college and what subjects to take in high school to prepare for college.

The Commission receives many requests from young people concerning scholarships available from different colleges. One boy wrote asking for the address of all Baptist colleges having football teams!

Every three or four years, a directory of the 71 seminaries, colleges and schools is published by the Commission, containing valuable information for pastors and others who counsel with young people. It lists all the Baptist colleges, their curriculum, location and other vital information.

Though the Commission is not in the business of fund raising, it often advises colleges on finances, as well as on new buildings, curriculum and accreditation problems.

Some eight metropolitan areas are considering or planning new Baptist colleges. Upon the invitation of an organized, authoritative Baptist group, the Education Commission has conducted several surveys, and provided helpful information on the advisability of beginning a new school.

Brantley is proud of the fact 82 per cent of the Southern Baptist colleges and junior colleges are accredited--compared to the national average of 77.5 per cent.

Teachers in Baptist colleges and Baptist teachers in non-Baptist schools, trustees and administrators receive the Educator, a monthly publication of the Commission.

"We have no authority over any college," says Brantley. "We exist simply to provide as much service as our budget and size of staff permits."

Outline:

TEACHING PROSPECTS: Miss Marjorie Howard, administrative assistant, examines the file of prospective teachers maintained by the Southern Baptist Education Commission in Nashville. Plenty of qualified Bible and religious education teachers are on file, but there is a serious shortage of teachers qualified in such areas as psychology, science and English. The file is maintained as a placement service for Baptist colleges. (BP) Photo.