

Baylor regents reject reform group's call for new investigation

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WACO—Baylor University's board of regents reaffirmed confidence in the Pepper Hamilton investigation of the university's response to sexual violence, rejecting a call by Bears for Leadership Reform for another probe.

During a Dec. 11 executive session, the regents considered questions about the thoroughness and fairness of the Pepper Hamilton investigation and discussed a decision by a regional [accrediting agency](#) to place the university on a one-year warning for noncompliance in three key areas, the university reported.

Special committee reports to regents

In October, regents appointed Joel Allison, Dan Chapman and Cary Gray of Dallas and Jerry Clements of Austin to a special committee to review the methodology, scope and findings of the Pepper Hamilton investigation.

After the committee reported its findings and analysis, the board concluded the Pepper Hamilton investigation was comprehensive, unbiased and professional. Regents [voted unanimously](#) against engaging another firm to review the investigation.

"Our review found no reasonable grounds to question Pepper Hamilton's investigation or the board's decisions that were made in reliance on their report to us. Our conclusion was that the law firm had been complete, fair and accurate," Clements said.

“If anything, our second look at the law firm’s investigation only strengthened the board’s conclusion that Pepper Hamilton did a thorough and professional job in fulfilling its agreed-upon scope of work.”

Bears for Leadership Reform disappointed

John Eddie Williams, a Houston attorney and president of Bears for Leadership Reform, voiced his displeasure with the board’s decision.

“Bears for Leadership Reform is extremely disappointed that the Baylor University board of regents has denied our [request](#) for a joint, independent investigation into the university’s handling of sexual and domestic assaults on our campus,” Williams said.

“For months, Baylor regents have stonewalled and deflected blame, ignoring the voices of thousands of members of the Baylor Family who seek the truth about this unconscionable scandal.”

The regents’ decision to reject the call for a new investigation underscores his group’s belief the sexual violence scandal “is the result of a failure of culture that has its roots in a failure of leadership,” Williams asserted.

“Secrecy and innuendo must be replaced by truth and total transparency,” he said. “Scapegoating and deflection must yield to full accountability. And the board must reform and change how it operates to restore Baylor’s integrity and ensure a brighter future.”

Investigation sparks board actions

Baylor’s board of regents hired the [Pepper Hamilton](#) law firm last year to conduct an investigation soon after Sam Ukwuachu, a former Baylor Bears football player, was convicted and received a 180-day jail sentence and 10 years’ probation for sexual assault.

In May, two weeks after they received a “comprehensive briefing” from

Pepper Hamilton, the [regents voted](#) to remove Ken Starr as president, fire Head Football Coach Art Briles and sanction Athletic Director Ian McCaw. Starr later stepped down as chancellor and as a law school professor, and McCaw resigned as athletic director. Recently, Liberty University hired McCaw as its athletic director.

The regents announced the Pepper Hamilton investigation revealed a fundamental failure by Baylor to implement Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.

The [Findings of Fact](#) document regents released cited concerns about “the tone and culture within Baylor’s football program as it relates to accountability for all forms of student athlete misconduct.”

Regents release some details; Briles files lawsuit

In a [Wall Street Journal](#) article published Oct. 28, some Baylor regents revealed previously undisclosed details from the Pepper Hamilton investigation. The *Journal* interviewed three regents, quoting Chairman Ron Murff and Cary Gray.

The regents said 17 women reported sexual or domestic assaults that involved 19 football players, including four gang rapes, since 2011. In at least one instance, regents told the *Journal*, Briles knew about an alleged gang rape involving some of his players and did not report it to the university’s Title IX office or its judicial-affairs office.

Recently, Briles filed a libel and slander [lawsuit](#) against regent Murff, Gray and regent David Harper, as well as Reagan Ramsower, Baylor’s senior vice president and chief operating officer. He asserts Baylor officials conspired to damage his reputation, and their efforts have prevented him from securing another coaching job.

Civil Rights probe and accrediting agency updates

At the Dec. 11 meeting, regents also heard a progress report on the university's cooperation with an [investigation](#) by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights into Baylor's Title IX compliance.

The office initiated the probe after Patty Crawford, former Title IX coordinator at Baylor, filed a complaint alleging noncompliance with the federal law that forbids discrimination based on sex. The board of regents also endorsed the commitment by university leaders to continue improvement as outlined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges under a one-year warning issued by the accrediting agency.

The warning does not affect Baylor's accreditation but calls for the commission to monitor ongoing university documentation of compliance in three core standards—student support programs, services and activities consistent with Baylor's mission; appropriate administrative and fiscal control over intercollegiate athletics program by the president; and enactment of additional steps to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment for all members of the campus community.