

Georgia Baptists, Mercer settle on separation terms: Both sides pledge amicable end to relationship

by [ABP news](#) in the [January 10, 2006](#) issue

Mercer University and the Georgia Baptist Convention have agreed to terms that will end their 172-year-old relationship. The convention will end funding of the school after 2007, and Mercer will get control of trustee elections and all assets, including a \$19.6 million endowment.

The Georgia Baptist Convention mandated in mid-November an “orderly” dissolution of the relationship after convention officials complained that the school had “moved away from the theology, doctrine and principles for which the convention stands.” The convention complained specifically about a pro-gay student group on campus and university support for “non-Southern Baptist organizations.”

The terms, negotiated by Mercer president Kirby Godsey and convention executive Bob White, were approved December 13 by the convention’s executive committee. The agreement has been approved by Mercer’s executive committee and will be considered by trustees in April.

“Neither of us got everything we wanted,” White told the executive committee, “but I want to help bring about an orderly discontinuance of the relationship.” Both sides pledged an amicable end to the relationship, which has become increasingly tense in recent years as conservatives have gained power in the state convention.

Under the agreement, Mercer will create a self-perpetuating board, rather than allowing the convention to elect a portion of trustees. Endowed capital-improvement funds totaling \$19,572,959, contributed by the convention in past years, will be released to the university.

The convention will continue to fund approximately \$3.5 million for Mercer scholarships for 2006 and 2007, after which convention support will end. Mercer will seek similar funds directly from churches beginning in 2006. *-Associated Baptist*

Press