

The estimated 46,000 autonomous churches that cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention pool their resources to support the work of the six theological seminaries. The Convention operates these seminaries to train its ministers and Christian workers. The six are:

[The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Louisville, Kentucky (1859);

[The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Fort Worth, Texas (1908);

[New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in New Orleans, Louisiana (1917);

[Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention](#) in Ontario, California (1944);

[The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Wake Forest, North Carolina (1951); and

[Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Kansas City, Missouri (1957).

Collectively the six seminaries have been given a challenging mission: “to prepare God-called men and women for vocational service in Baptist churches and in other Christian ministries throughout the world through programs of spiritual development, theological studies, and practical preparation in ministry.”

Seminary-trained students are trained to go and evangelize, baptize, disciple, and teach individuals across the nation and around the world ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). The Convention has committed itself to provide seminary education and training at the lowest cost possible so graduates are not burdened with debt as they embark on this noble quest.

The six seminaries are funded in part by the Convention’s Cooperative Program. The Cooperative Program helps fund ministries and missions through cooperating state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. About 22 percent of all Cooperative Program contributions received by the Southern Baptist Convention are directed to the six theological seminaries and the SBC Historical Library and Archives. In addition, the seminaries are supported by endowments, donations, tuition, and fees.

Educating Students



One might ask, “How do the seminaries advance theological education?” The six seminary presidents work together as the Council of Seminary Presidents. Individually, they each oversee the seminary their respective trustees have elected them to lead. Collectively, they direct a program called Seminary Extension of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Begun in 1951, the Seminary Extension program is a self-funded ministry with more than three hundred teaching centers. It offers training to bivocational pastors, small church pastors, and volunteer church leaders where they live. Though it is accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council, it does not offer any degree programs. This ministry helps to assure quality training, from a Southern Baptist perspective, to Southern Baptists where they live and serve.

In addition to the Seminary Extension program, most of the seminaries provide a college experience through accredited pre-baccalaureate and baccalaureate programs for students who have not completed a college degree. The seminaries also provide fully accredited residential master’s and doctoral training at their main campuses, as well as baccalaureate and master’s programs through Internet-based coursework and at numerous extension centers, extension campuses, and extension classrooms.

The largest programs of training offered by the seminaries are master's-level theological education for ministers and Christian workers. Upon recommendation by their churches, students called into vocational ministry may enroll to prepare themselves for ministerial service. Grounded in the teachings of God's inerrant Word, future ministers, missionaries, and employees of the various entities are trained to labor in the Great Commission.



The seminaries train qualified students at the doctoral level for programs of leadership, research, writing, and teaching. In an era when many faith groups have seen a decline in the number of students surrendering to God's call for ministerial service, the six Southern Baptist seminaries have flourished. The most recent reporting period saw more than sixteen thousand students enrolled in one or more courses in the six seminaries. Many of these students are part-time, but the full-time equivalency (total number of students divided by 24 semester hours) was more than 7,650. The average Cooperative Program allocation per Southern Baptist student during the most recent school year was more than \$30,000, far more than the actual cost charged to students. In the master's-level programs alone, the seminaries have graduated between 1,200 and 1,400 students each year during the past decade to provide leadership in the churches.

Preserving History

In a related assignment, the Council of Seminary Presidents oversees the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. With more than thirty-nine thousand books, nineteen thousand reels of microfilm, hundreds of bound periodicals, SBC Annuals, state convention and associational annuals, video and audio recordings, and nine thousand linear feet of other archival materials, this center for the study of Baptists ensures that scholars have access to the rich history and work of previous generations of Baptists.

Serving the Convention

Historically the professors and officers of the seminaries have played important leadership roles in the life of the Convention. Many Convention study groups have included representatives of the Southern Baptist seminaries. Conversely, qualified Southern Baptist leaders have been appointed as seminary professors and presidents.

A large number of churches and local associations that cooperate with the Convention are headed by graduates of these seminaries. Seminary graduates serve on the mission field both in North America and overseas and serve in other SBC entities. In addition, the leadership of many state conventions and their related ministries often hold degrees from SBC seminaries. These leaders pass along vital suggestions about potential improvements in seminary education based on their field experiences. As a result, the symbiotic relationship between the seminaries and their alumni both enriches the seminaries and Southern Baptist life in general.

The teaching component of the Great Commission is certainly emphasized by the seminaries ([Matthew 28:20](#)). The six seminaries are repositories of two thousand years of Christian teachings that the churches promote to their members.

Conclusion

Indeed, the relationship between the seminaries and the churches remains an important foundation for fulfilling the Great Commission in Southern Baptist life. The ministry training provided to the Baptist church leaders by the seminaries and the support of the seminaries by the churches through the Cooperative Program exemplifies the cooperation in Southern Baptist life.

This principle of cooperation is one of the eighteen spiritual principles enshrined in *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

The work of the six seminaries involved in theological education continues to be a valuable part of Southern Baptist life.

For more information contact a seminary near you:

[Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention \(Ontario, CA\)](#)

[Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary \(Kansas City, MO\)](#)

[New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary \(New Orleans, LA\)](#)

[Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary \(Wake Forest, NC\)](#)

[Southern Baptist Theological Seminary \(Louisville, KY\)](#)

[Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary \(Fort Worth, TX\)](#)