

# **The Future is Here: SAGU To Become Nelson University**

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For Immediate Release

WAXAHACHIE, TX – March 1, 2024 – During the 2023 spring meeting of Southwestern Assemblies of God University's Board of Regents, members enthusiastically voted to change the name of the university from Southwestern Assemblies of God University to Nelson University.

This change represents a pivotal moment as we choose to boldly identify with our visionary founder, P.C. Nelson, and prepare to embark on our second century of Kingdom impact. Nelson's vision and values have inspired and guided this institution for nearly a century. The choice of Nelson University represents our unwavering commitment to this rich heritage, characterized by an innovative, Spirit-empowered learning environment.

This momentous decision is the culmination of a rigorous process that began in 2020, soliciting input from a wide variety of stakeholders. A professional firm specializing in naming and verbal identity was hired to assist the University in discovering a name worthy of the heritage and history built over the last hundred years.

The outcomes of these discussions, along with the data, surveys, and focus groups, yielded many possibilities, all thoughtfully considered. Extensive input was received on the leading names emerging from the process from the following constituent groups – members of the Board,

those serving in the alumni association and women's auxiliary, the faculty and staff, the student body, and a number of supporting alumni and donors.

While those surveyed had various opinions on particular names, a substantial majority was confident that the University will benefit from a name change as it approaches its centennial celebration in 2027 and prepares to step into the next hundred years.

Along with the significant support for change among all stakeholder groups, the overwhelming position of those surveyed was that the institution must remain devoted to its parent church and its doctrinal tenets, which, not surprisingly, had been established as a non-negotiable condition by the Board of Regents, given a majority of members are District officials making up eight owning Districts and nine affiliated Districts of the Assemblies of God.

Those surveyed further expressed their desire that a new name would not only position the University toward the future but also retain a connection to its heritage. Dr. Gaylan Claunch, Superintendent of North Texas Assemblies of God, and a member of the Board of Regents remarks, "Nelson University is a fitting homage to Reverend P.C. Nelson. God gave him a vision for the establishment of a Christian university that would equip Spirit-empowered leaders with career and ministry skills based on solid, biblical training better enabling them to influence the world for Christ. I believe the name *Nelson University* will honor our strong heritage and serve as a beacon, attracting students who resonate with its values and mission, and I am proud to be a part of its enduring legacy."

Over the last century, the University has been known by several different names. It became "Southwestern Bible Institute" in 1927, following the merger of Southwestern Bible School, Shield of Faith Bible School, and Southern Bible Institute. In 1963, it became "Southwestern Assemblies of God College" and was regionally accredited shortly thereafter. In 1994, it became "Southwestern Assemblies of God University." Interestingly, most

of these changes preceded seasons of growth and advancement. There is an excitement among faculty and staff about what God intends to accomplish through “Nelson University” in this coming season.

"No one has any greater affection for 'Dear Ole Southwestern' than I do," says President Kermit Bridges, "yet it has become increasingly clear that my personal sentimentality is not the most important factor in this decision. What is most important is that we position the University to achieve a greater Kingdom impact in its second century than it has experienced in its first century. I am confident that our greatest days are ahead, and this coming change marks the beginning of a new era in the University's history."

The University's vision of being a distinguished Christian university that equips Spirit-empowered leaders with career and ministry skills by providing affordable education, hands-on training opportunities, and innovative academic programs remains unchanged. The University's lifestyle standards for employees and students remain unchanged as it prepares to step forward into the next hundred years with a renewed sense of purpose and expectation for all that is to come.

This exciting announcement comes with a call to prayer for God's continued guidance and favor as the University approaches its momentous and long-awaited transition this fall, officially moving into its next era of Kingdom work.

For more information on this historic moment, please visit [www.nelson.sagu.edu](http://www.nelson.sagu.edu).