

## **Baylor Graduate Students Speak at IABCU**

**Abilene, Texas** - The International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities held its annual meeting last week in Abilene. Established in 1949, the IABCU supports high-quality Christian education for schools with Baptist history and heritage. Fifty-one universities attended the three day event hosted by Hardin-Simmons University.

Kimberly Williams Bodenhamer and Chelsea Ruiz represented the Baylor Graduate School during Monday's session. Bodenhamer and Ruiz are members of the Baptist College and University Scholar's Program, an initiative designed to recruit top students at Baptist schools for graduate study at Baylor. Bodenhamer is a 2008 graduate of Hardin-Simmons. She earned a master's degree from Duke in 2010 and is currently in Baylor's doctoral program in Religion. Ruiz earned her undergraduate degree from Mary Hardin-Baylor and is currently a doctoral candidate in Baylor's Chemistry department.

Created in 2008, the Baptist College and University Scholar's Program at Baylor works closely with other Baptist schools to identify and support potential students for graduate study. The aim is to create a partnership with undergraduate institutions to retain potential doctoral students in Baptist universities. Potentially, these students will return to Baptist institutions as faculty.

"One of the most important goals of the BCU Scholars program is connecting Baptist schools that want to hire Christian faculty members with the doctoral students at an early stage. Our hope is that this will address a concern that the leaders of Baptist schools struggle with: how to get to know a Christian faculty member well enough to predict if they would really be a fit for that college or university. By bringing our doctoral students to the IABCU meetings each year, the top leaders will have a chance to experience our students over meals, in presentations, and be acquainted with them for several years while they are still in school," explained Dr. Larry Lyon, Dean of Baylor's Graduate School.

Dr. Laine Scales, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Professional Development at Baylor and a founder of the program noted, "Students who have experienced as undergraduates the care and nurturing of a Baptist college come to Baylor wanting to teach in exactly that kind of environment. We prepare them to flourish as faculty members by providing opportunities for lectures, retreats, reading groups, and conversations about Christian higher education."

Lyon, Scales, Bodenhamer, and Ruiz were joined by other Baylor participants, including Ken Starr, President of Baylor University. Seven students at Baylor are currently participating in the Baptist College and University Scholar's Program.



President Ken Starr, Chelsea Ruiz, & Kim Bodenhamer