

# Not so fast

**EDUCATION:** Baylor's treatment of an ID-advancing research lab has shifted from friendly to fire | *Mark Bergin*

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Last month, as John Gilmore flew home from Waco, Texas, after apparently resolving a dispute at Baylor University over a faculty member's website supporting intelligent design, the Minnesota attorney sipped a glass of wine, looked out the window, and wondered to himself, "Was this too easy?"

Turns out, it was. On Aug. 9, Baylor officials had agreed that distinguished engineering professor Robert Marks could repost his evolutionary informatics website on the Baptist school's server space—if a disclaimer made clear that any research advancing intelligent design does not represent an institutional position. Less than two weeks later, Gilmore received an email from Baylor general counsel Charles Beckenhauer detailing considerable further alterations Marks needed to make before reposting his site.

Among the demands:

- Delete the title "The Evolutionary Informatics Lab" from the top of every page.
- Delete the name and email address of a Baylor graduate student assisting Marks with his research.
- Post at the bottom of every page and the top of the home page a 108-word public-relations statement denying any institutional support for the research and extolling Baylor's commitment to academic freedom.

Finding such demands excessive, Gilmore replied to Beckenhauer reminding him of the Aug. 9 meeting in which Baylor Provost Randall O'Brien and Dean Ben Kelley of the School of Engineering and Computer Science had accepted a far simpler arrangement: "I believe you have overreached here in order to pacify those at Baylor—and outside of Baylor—who complained to Dean Kelley and who most certainly won't be pleased that the website will go back up in any form."

In an email to WORLD, Provost O'Brien took issue with the notion that the university has reneged on the Aug. 9 decision. He claims instead "that the agreement has not been honored by our esteemed colleague. Our position has not changed, nor has our hope that the agreement will be honored."

But Gilmore told WORLD that he and Marks left the Aug. 9 meeting wholly satisfied with the outcome. Indeed, Marks remarked at the time that the entire ordeal had been "wonderfully resolved" (see WORLD, Aug. 25, 2007).

Either Gilmore and Marks completely misunderstood the university's original position, or O'Brien and Kelley had a dramatic change of heart. "We had eight professionals discuss this for more than two hours. There wasn't a misunderstanding. Somebody didn't like the outcome of that meeting," Gilmore said.

William Dembski, a leading ID proponent who saw Baylor's anti-ID forces derail his Michael Polanyi Center in 2000, believes only university president John Lilley holds enough sway to overrule the provost's earlier decision. Dembski told WORLD that Lilley is concerned about "how Baylor might be perceived in the wider university culture if it were seen as supporting intelligent design."

Given an opportunity to respond to that assertion, Lilley referred WORLD to Baylor's vice president for marketing and communications, who did not respond to a request for comment.

Baylor attorney Beckenhauer also did not reply to WORLD's inquiry, but he wrote in an email response to Gilmore that the Aug. 9 meeting never represented "a final agreement of any kind." That contention conflicts with O'Brien's claim that the university still hopes Marks will honor the initial resolution.

Beckenhauer further stated that Baylor might impose "supervisory directions" for Marks to fulfill his

"obligation to perform the work assigned to him by Baylor." Gilmore called that statement a "veiled threat" to impugn his client's performance, an arena previously unquestioned in the four years since university officials eagerly recruited Marks to Baylor.

Dembski, who has collaborated with Marks on research papers, called Baylor's treatment of his colleague "shameful." The website initially came down after some unknown members of the Baylor community complained about conclusions questioning the ability of Darwinian processes like random mutation and natural selection to generate new information. Dean Kelley immediately ordered the site removed from Baylor's server and later scrubbed all references to The Evolutionary Informatics Lab from Marks' Baylor web space without his consent.

"There are academic freedom issues here," Dembski said. "But at this point the issue is one of plain decency."

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