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COMMENT INSIDE: Film crew presses Baylor officials on intelligent design Web site's removal

Friday, September 21, 2007

**By Tim Woods**

Tribune-Herald staff writer

Baylor University's recent controversy regarding a professor's intelligent design-related Web site took a dramatic turn Thursday when a film crew went to President John Lilley's office, hoping to speak to him about what they deem academic suppression.

But Lilley was out of town.

Mark Mathis, associate producer for the film *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, and a film crew went to Lilley's office about 10 a.m. When they learned Lilley was in Houston and unavailable Thursday, Mathis asked to speak with Baylor spokeswoman Lori Fogleman.

The movie claims to uncover instances of suppression of intelligent design research by anti-religious dogmatic scientists and educators, its developers say. It features comedian and former presidential speech-writer Ben Stein and is set to be released in February 2008.

"The documentary is really about Ben Stein's journey of trying to figure out why it is that, in science, there is . . . such antipathy for anybody who would question (Darwinian evolution)," Mathis said Wednesday as the film crew drove from Dallas to Waco.

Mathis said Stein and the film's producers believe Baylor's removal of distinguished engineering professor Robert Marks' Web site devoted to evolutionary informatics — a concept Marks' collaborator, William Dembski, termed "friendly" to intelligent design — from its server is an example of academic suppression.

While Baylor officials have said the site was removed for procedural reasons, namely the absence of a disclaimer separating the university from involvement in Marks' research, Mathis believes it was taken down because of its content.

"To us, it seems pretty obvious what's going on with Professor Marks' Web site. . . . To us, that's academic persecution and suppression," Mathis said. "What is the problem with tenured, distinguished university professors pursuing a scientific idea? What's wrong with that? It's especially interesting in the case of Baylor, in that this is happening at a Christian university."

Baylor provost Randall O'Brien, who was in New York on Thursday, said Marks is free to conduct evolutionary informatics research and, like Fogleman, denied the site was removed because of its content.

"What we say is you have the freedom to formulate your own views and so forth, just make sure that you

issue a disclaimer that your particular view does not necessarily express the view of Baylor University,” O’Brien said. “We fully endorse the right and responsibilities of academic freedom.”

### **Deal in works**

Fogleman and O’Brien also said that Baylor’s legal counsel, Charles Beckenhauer, and Marks’ St. Paul, Minn.-based attorney, John Gilmore, are working to reach a mutually satisfying agreement that would allow the site to be restored.

Fogleman did not know how long the discussions might take.

“The conversations (between Beckenhauer and Gilmore) are private, but they are progressing,” Fogleman said.

Outside Baylor’s Pat Neff Hall, which houses Lilley’s and Fogleman’s offices, Mathis pressed the issue of academic suppression with Fogleman.

“This had everything to do with the fact that (Marks’ site) was friendly to intelligent design, didn’t it?” Mathis asked Fogleman.

“I just know that right now there is a discussion between the parties . . . and it will be resolved to mutual satisfaction,” Fogleman replied.

“The content of the site has nothing to do with this,” Fogleman later said, again stressing Baylor’s stance that it is a procedural matter.

Mathis then asked Fogleman about whether or not she is allowed to openly refer to intelligent design.

“You will not say ‘intelligent design.’ Is that forbidden? You keep saying ‘content.’ . . . You haven’t said (intelligent design) and it stuck out to me,” Mathis said. “You guys are holding your cards so tight . . . Are you not allowed to say it?”

Fogleman responded, “I am allowed to say it, (but) I’m not saying it because you’re asking me to.”

Though the goal of the visit was to get Lilley to speak on the record about the matter, Mathis said after the terse yet cordial conversation that he appreciated that Fogleman would come out to answer questions with their cameras rolling.

“I’m happy that at least she came out and talked to us,” he said. “She had the courage to do that, at least.”

Unruffled by the incident, Fogleman said she wasn’t surprised by any of Mathis’ questions or his determination in getting the answers.


“It just made for an interesting day,” Fogleman said. “I thought that Mark and I had a respectful conversation.”

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