

By MBT

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It seems the liberal-leaning faculty at SMU is pitted against the conservative-leaning Board of Trustees, student body and alumni and are opposing the University's bid to be the home of the George W. Bush's library.

This from the AP:

SMU Faculty Members Oppose Bush Library

By Angela K. Brown, Associated Press Writer

DALLAS - Negotiations to build George W. Bush's presidential library at Southern Methodist University have divided the campus, pitting the administration and some alumni against members of the liberal-leaning faculty who say the project would be an embarrassment to the school.

Some professors have complained that the combined library, museum and think tank would celebrate a presidency that unnecessarily took the country into a war.

The fear is that the library “will continue to espouse the philosophy and practice of the Bush administration, which has seriously divided our nation and has brought the ire of other countries,” said William McElvaney, a retired professor at SMU’s theology school and co-author a November opinion piece in the campus newspaper titled “The George W. Bush Library: Asset or Albatross?”

SMU emerged as the front-runner in the competition last month when the library site selection committee said it was entering further discussions with the 11,000-student, private university in one of Dallas’s wealthiest neighborhoods. The project will be financed with a private fund drive aimed at raising at least \$200 million.

Bush connections to SMU run deep. First lady Laura Bush is a graduate and is on the board of trustees. Vice President Dick Cheney previously served on the board. Presidential adviser Karen Hughes and former White House counsel Harriet Miers are both graduates.

SMU officials said the project is unlikely to be derailed by the faculty opposition, and said the professors opposed to it are in the minority.

Brad Cheves, vice president for external affairs and development, said the library could help recruit students, attract visitors and increase giving. “It raises the profile of SMU no matter how people feel about President Bush,” he said.

As for the students, Luis Arango, a 21-year-old junior and political science major, said on campus Friday: “This school has a very conservative vibe, and most of the students like Bush. The only people who don’t seem to be the faculty. I know for a fact that some are real liberal and I don’t think should be teaching here.”

As for the alumni, many of them are wealthy and conservative. And Mike Boone, who is on SMU’s board of trustees and earned undergraduate and law school degrees from SMU, said an overwhelming majority of alumni support the Bush library project.

“It’s prestigious and brings a lot of value to a university,” said Boone, a Dallas lawyer who has known Bush since he was Texas governor.

The other finalists are Baylor University in Waco, near the Bushes’ Crawford ranch, and the University of Dallas.

McElvaney warned that not only could the library hurt SMU’s reputation, it could also become a target for terrorists or others who want to strike back at Bush, McElvaney said.

“Dallas is already known as the city in which President Kennedy was assassinated, so does Dallas want a Bush library that could become a prime terrorist target?” McElvaney asked.

The library of the president’s father is on the Texas A&M University campus in College Station.

Universities often compete to host presidential libraries. But this is not the first time that the political passions of the day have stirred resistance to such a project.

In 1981, Duke University faculty members, by one vote, voted against continuing discussions to build Richard Nixon’s library there. Nixon graduated from Duke Law School in North Carolina.

Associated Press writer Jeff Carlton also contributed to this story.

Apparently, the negotiations broke down and the library for Nixon was built in California.

It seems to me that when the faculty complain about not getting the salaries they want or the facilities they need, the administration should remind them of their opposition to the cash cow that is being dropped in their laps.

Perhaps if there was a blue dress to display, they wouldn't have such an opposition....