

Nearly 3 Years After Falwell Jr., Liberty Names New President

Since the chaotic exit of Jerry Falwell, Jr., as president of Liberty University in the summer of 2020, the large Christian college in central Virginia has been searching for its next leader. And the evangelical school's executive committee has finally found one.

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Dondi Costin, Ph.D., will serve as Liberty's sixth president, and Jonathan Falwell, son of the late Jerry Falwell, Sr., who founded the now-university as a Bible college in 1971, will be formally installed as the college's third chancellor, a significant appointment, given it's a role his father once held alongside his titles as founder and president of the university.

Costin, who served in the U.S. Air Force for 32 years and ended his tenure in the military as Air Force Chief of Chaplains, holds five master's degrees—two of which he received from Liberty—and a doctorate in organizational leadership. He is leaving his position as president of Charleston Southern University in South Carolina to assume the role in Virginia.

"As one whose life and ministry have been profoundly shaped by Liberty University, I can think of no educational institution with more global impact than my two-time alma mater," Costin said in a statement obtained by CBN News. "I am beyond grateful to the board for entrusting me with this extraordinary opportunity."

He went on to say he and his wife Vickey "look forward to locking arms with the Liberty family as we honor the university's past and drive toward its future. With God's help

and for His glory, the very best days of our great university are still ahead of us.”

News of Costin’s appointment, which comes after a lengthy hunt conducted on behalf of Liberty’s search committee by the executive recruiting agency CarterBaldwin, follows reports Jerry Falwell, Jr., is suing the Lynchburg-based university.

In mid-March, Jerry Falwell, Jr., who navigated Liberty through a time of significant expansion, filed suit in federal district court in Lynchburg, Virginia, seeking nearly \$8.5 million in retirement benefits he claims the university has improperly withheld from him, according to WSET-TV.

The lawsuit alleges the younger Falwell was owed \$7.6 million in 2020, when he parted ways with Liberty in the wake of unflattering reports detailing an untoward, years-long sexual tryst involving Jerry Falwell, Jr., his wife Becki and then-Miami-based pool attendant Giancarlo Granda.

While Jerry Falwell, Jr., has acknowledged an affair took place, he has denied having any role in it.

The former university president further claims in his court filing he was supposed to be credited an additional 6% investment return in the years after his retirement, now totaling around \$8.5 million.

 Liberty, it should be noted, sued Jerry Falwell, Jr., for \$10 million in 2021, claiming he renegotiated the terms of his contract in bad faith, failing to disclose to university board members the details of the salacious scandal that would soon unfold, as first reported in late August 2020 by Reuters. {eo}

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