Centenary College president to step down after 14 years

By The Associated Press

SHREVEPORT — As of June 1, Donald Webb, president of Centenary College for nearly 14 years, will step down.

“There is a time for everything . . . and this is the time for me to step down,” Webb said on Thursday. “It’s time to let someone else take the baton.”

The 166-year-old United Methodist Church-affiliated liberal arts school lists 1,100 students.

Neither Webb nor George D. Nelson, president of the board, would cite any particular reason for Webb’s decision. However, some faculty members complained last fall when Webb named his son to a top administrative post.

The search for a new president will begin immediately so one can take over by June 1, Nelson said.

Under Webb’s tenure, the Shreveport college flourished.

Despite the nation’s financial troubles, Centenary’s endowment grew from $4 million to $32 million. The operating budget increased from $4 million to $12 million. Several buildings — most recently a music library — were constructed.

The minister-turned-educator earned a reputation as a masterful fund-raiser.

He stirred up some controversy among faculty members when he selected his son, Chris, as chief fund-raising officer and head of the development staff.

The faculty met secretly to oppose the move, which they believed was inappropriate. The Alumni Association called for a national search, but Webb refused, saying the appointment was “strictly a presidential one.”

Centenary was recently ranked 26th on Money Guide Magazine’s list of the top 100 private colleges.

“I’m totally shocked,” said Lee Morgan, an English professor. “I’ll hate very much to see him go. He was an outstanding professor in a whole variety of ways — particularly his efforts on behalf of academic excellence.”

“Of course we’re very sad to hear of his decision,” Nelson said. “We’re very grateful for the 14 years of exciting Centenary history that happened under his tenure. He’s done a magnificent job of bringing this campus together.”