VIPs - Very Important Ponies

Some of our VIPs this month are:

Jerrod Harrell - I wanted to thank and recognize one of your employees, Jerrod Harrell, for his help last week. My daughter had a registration problem during Spring enrollment and Jerrod went the extra mile so that our daughter’s account could be cleared and she could register on time. Jerrod made several phone calls on her behalf and even called me to provide an update on the situation. The personalized attention that a student receives at SMU is very much appreciated -- our family’s experience is just one example of the wonderful support each student receives. Please express our appreciation and thanks to Jerrod. Thank you. Happy Dad!

December Graduation

December Graduation takes another step in 2007 by moving the ceremony to Moody Coliseum. Attendance in December has increased from a few hundred undergraduates in 1995 when the ceremony was called a recognition, to 2006 when McFarlin Auditorium hosted two graduate/professional ceremonies and one undergraduate ceremony. Even with three events, a small number of guests watched the program in the Hughes-Trigg Theatre through a simulcast.
The first time the Blanton family came together after the building’s dedication was before the winter break in 2004. Traditionally the areas in Enrollment Services and later the Division as a whole, had a pot luck lunch to celebrate the holidays. But the move to Blanton provided a wonderful opportunity to bring together all of the Blanton family -- ITS, SMU-in-Taos, the International Center and Enrollment Services. Associate Provost Tom Tunks hosts the event each year and provides the food. (yes, he cooks all night ... with his SMU catering elves)! This year over 175 joined in the Blanton meeting rooms for food and fellowship.

The DES holiday lunch has developed several tradition included entertainment. This year the Blanton Holiday Lunch was graced by violin music provided by Catalina Aguirre. Catalina, a temporary staff member in SFS, played a mix of holiday songs and classical music. This added greatly to the festivities.

Another tradition is holiday giving. People of all faiths feel that giving to others is an important part of their most significant holidays. The Blanton staff has included this in each holiday luncheon. The Westridge Nursing Home in Lancaster was suggested by Jackie Wilborn, manager in Academic Records. Westridge houses 85 seniors who are cared for and provided medical assistance. The Blanton family collected toiletry items and made greeting cards for the residents. Jackie will deliver the items to Westridge and share our good wishes for the new year.

The fellowship is evident with the volume of conversation from the guests. The delicious food is a good draw, but the staff also see this as a time to catch up with others they do not see often. One of our guest, Dr. Lori White, Vice President of Student Affairs, offered the invocation. She now is a permanent part of our Blanton Holiday family and our traditions at this time of year.

The December 2007 Graduation ceremony combined parts of Commencement and the Diploma Ceremonies of the May event. Moody Coliseum is set up as it is for commencement and the ceremony mirrors the program through the hooding of the Ph.D and D.E graduates. In December the masters, professional, and undergraduate students are announce and congratulated as they walk across the stage, are handed a diploma cover and greeted by the school deans and Dr. Turner. Students receive their diploma’s in the mail after January 10, 2008.

Over 700 students were conferred degrees in December 2007. Provost Paul Ludden, in his remarks at the ceremony, stated that these degrees will “amplify” the graduate’s talents and skills but that this is only the beginning. He challenged each to use their education to amplify their own lives. How each does will amplify others through education, science, engineering, law, business, the ministry, and the arts.

Music was a highlight of December Graduation. The Imperial Brass played, providing just the right amount of pomp and entertainment. The group is composed of local musician who play in area symphony orchestras but enjoy being a part of a brass ensemble in the off hours. Graduating senior Jaime Pesantes shared his fantastic voice with the audience singing America the Beautiful and Varsity.

December Graduation 2007 is a pilot. The 2 hour and 5 minute ceremony will be evaluated to assist in future planning. SMU is committed to making every graduation memorable for our graduating students, their families, and guests.

For more on Academic Ceremonies go to: http://www.smu.edu/registrar/ and click on the ceremony of your choice.

The reaction was very positive. Staff felt that the logo and sweater presented a professional look and was welcome on a cold night. Graduates participating in the ceremony received a two pen set in a box adorned with the logo. Another nice touch to acknowledge the achievement of our graduates.
From the Blanton Family to you
--
have a joyous and safe holiday.