Honing Those Who Inspire

Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the Annette Caldwell Simmons Hall could be dedicated this fall. The Simmons School wishes to thank everyone who has contributed, especially the families pictured here who from the beginning gave us the momentum to build.

Congratulations to the following donors:

- Cathy and Bob Zollars (right) and Family honoring Alice Stultz Jackson
- Fred and Jill Leach honoring Sally Adams Leach Center
- Dan Stultz and Sara Stultz and Family honoring Alice Stultz Jackson
- R. Gerald Turner honoring Gail Turner (left)
- Pat Noel (left) and Will Noel and Family honoring Virginia G. Noel
- Pat Noel (left) and Will Noel and Family honoring William Morgan
- Denny and R.R. Holman, Anna and Rick Herrick honoring Coach Bob and Lorene Pennitt (pictured in front)
- Lorene Prewitt (pictured in front)
- Herrscher honoring Coach Bob and Denny and B.R. Holman, Anne and Rick
- Dr. Dan Stultz and Sara Stultz and Family honoring Alice Stultz Jackson

Thank You!

Simmons Expands Education Policy and Leadership Programs

Uzma Kahn is among the first graduates of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development to earn its new Master of Education in Educational Leadership. “The program took us through what an administrator faces, step by step,” says the new principal of a private religious school in Richardson, Texas. “The learning experience was immense.”

The degree was launched by the Simmons School’s Department of Education Policy and Leadership in 2009 to develop aspiring principals’ analytical skills and help them lead transformative change in preK-12 schools. The Master’s program, which can be completed in one year, includes management courses designed in collaboration with SMU’s Cox School of Business. The focus of the program is designing and evaluating instruction in the classroom while helping teachers achieve success with students.

“Everything our candidates learn is current and evidence-based and then immediately applied,” says Lee Alvoid, department chair. “Our internship is simultaneous with coursework. We took great care in how we laid out courses so that our candidates could model the different tasks principals have to do during the school year.”

Robyn Callahan, an assistant principal in Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District, earned her Master’s in August. She says the immediate application of what she learned gave her an advantage in the workplace. “Everything I was doing for class was based on data of my current elementary school,” she says.

The Simmons School also is developing a Master’s program specializing in urban school leadership, which presents unique challenges for principals. “There are no simple answers to the complex problems facing urban schools,” says David Chard, dean of the Simmons School. “Often, these schools are in poor neighborhoods, lacking basic resources such as transportation, health care and safety. We know that a one-size-fits-all preparation program for school leaders isn’t enough.”

To create the specialized degree program, the School has partnered with the Teaching Trust, an education nonprofit organization formed by Rosemary Perlmeter, founder of UpStart Education charter schools in North Texas, and Ellen Wood, a financial and social investments consultant. The partnership has resulted in a new Education Entrepreneur Center, housed in the School.

Perlmeter, who has a track record of building successful urban schools, brings a business perspective to the partnership. She and Lee Alvoid believe it’s important for principals to acquire an entrepreneurial mindset. “Administrators of urban schools have to practice a lot of strategies used to turn corporations around,” Alvoid says. “We’ll be balancing the educational perspective with the business perspective.”

The urban program, which launches in summer 2011, has a commitment from the Dallas Independent School District and the Uplift Charter Network to provide mentors—high-performing principals who will be trained to coach candidates during a yearlong residency within the schools.

Tracie Brown, a former DISD principal, is the Education Entrepreneur Center’s Director of Leadership Programs. “We want to home in on issues specific to the needs of communities in inner cities,” says Brown, who also will teach in the program. “It’s not unusual for urban schools to have higher attrition rates. We feel that if we equip the leaders going into these schools, they will stay longer because they will feel more prepared.”

For more information about the Department of Education Policy and Leadership, visit smu.edu/Edleadership.
Researchers to Direct New Applied Physiology Lab

The new 3000-square-foot Applied Physiology Laboratory on the first floor of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development is quiet for now, and half-empty, waiting for students who will learn how to use it for research.

But by this spring when Scott Davis, assistant professor of applied physiology and the lab’s director, gets it up and running, the space will be humming with activity. Davis, who joined the faculty of the Applied Physiology and Wellness Department in August, expects the lab’s research component to be fully functional so that research and teaching can begin in January. The space includes three distinct lab areas connected through technology to give students hands-on experience with research.

Davis looks forward to having both undergraduate and graduate students working with him. Sixty students currently are majors in the applied physiology and sport management program and 100 are enrolled in department courses.

“The opportunity at SMU got me into more of what I would consider a traditional university setting where I could do teaching, research and have access to students. I think it’s a nice combination to be around students who want to learn and have them be part of the research,” Davis says. Both he and Associate Professor Peter Weyand, an expert in human locomotion, will teach in the lab.

With his work on multiple sclerosis, Davis is bringing a new field of research to SMU. “The efficiency model developed in the 20th century to drive schools and systems to handle a particular type of student is no longer appropriate in our society,” he says. Davis plans to invite his patients to participate in research and a state-of-the-art lab, the program will achieve national recognition.

To learn more about the applied physiology and sport management program, visit smu.edu/APS.

Scott Davis (left), director of the new Applied Physiology Lab in Simmons Hall, brings his expertise in multiple sclerosis to SMU and will offer students opportunities to do research. Kristine Eikrem Engeset (right), an applied physiology and sport management program, visits with students working with him. Sixty students currently are majors in the applied physiology and sport management program and 100 are enrolled in department courses.

Celebrating Our New Home

Dedicated on September 24, the Annette Caldwell Simmons Hall is a light-filled building drawing together programs that were once spread across the Dallas and Plano campuses in 11 different locations.

For the first time, the Departments of Teaching and Learning, Applied Physiology and Wellness, and Education Policy and Leadership, as well as the Master of Liberal Studies program, are assembled under one roof.

Hundreds of guests, including students, faculty and staff, attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house. A landmark $20 million gift from Harold C. and Annette Caldwell Simmons ’57 in 2007 provided an endowment for the school and its new headquarters.

Training in the 21st Century

Gone are the days of the one-room schoolhouse, where one teacher would instruct children of all ages in the same class. Today’s classrooms are part of complex schools and school systems created to handle a larger number of students while employing fewer adults to teach and provide supervision.

What we have today was designed for efficiency over a century ago. Back then, schools were expected to develop good citizens and provide a safe place for children to stay while their parents were working in industry.

Though we haven’t changed many things about our schools, we expect and need much more from them now. Society keeps changing with advancements in technology and we expect students to compete globally, graduate from college, and be career-ready. Unfortunately, the efficiency model developed many years ago is no longer suitable for our schools.

To deliver what the 21st century requires, we acknowledge that schools must address the needs of each student, not just the collective whole. This means that rather than using the “one size fits all” approach we’ve employed in the past, we must shape teaching to respond to the needs of different kinds of children in different kinds of schools. Similarly, we must assume there is one way to prepare all education professionals.

To be effective, we must address the needs of our communities and that means fine-tuning what we do to prepare the professionals our schools need.

For us in the Simmons School, it’s important to be nimble and our small size allows us to move quickly. As you can read in our cover story, we are doing this by collaborating with education institutions in greater Dallas. Consequently, we get great opportunities to hear what area leaders are doing and technology.

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Making adjustments on how we prepare educators takes effort. In addition to examining evidence of what works in education, we need to keep our eyes and ears open to the needs of our community so we can equip our students to lead schools that our community’s children deserve.

Niehson Evans was in the first grade when he met Annette Caldwell Simmons ’57. She was his teacher at Clark Air Base in the Philippines in 1956, but little did he know when she saw him again decades later at SMU. Evans was Simmons’ special guest at the September dedication of the new hall carrying her name.

In a touching gesture of what teaching means to her, Simmons tracked down her former student through the internet and invited him to be with her for the campus event. Evans is a certified public accountant in Fairfax, Virginia, and serves on the board of directors of the Virginia Society of CPAs.

“It was a pleasant surprise and shock that she found me,” he says. “I was very moved and honored that she wanted me to be a part of the dedication of Simmons Hall. She wanted to pay tribute to her early days of teaching and remembered my name.”

Evans, in fact, attributes his career choice to the guidance he received from Simmons to master arithmetic — proving that the power of a good teacher can never be underestimated.

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