SIMMONS ADDS CAPACITY WITH SECOND HALL
NEW CENTER FocusES ON RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

COUNSELING CENTER PILOTS ASPERGER’S PROGRAM
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEGREE OFFERED

DEAN’S MESSAGE
UPCOMING EVENTS

smu.edu/ChangingMinds
Spring 2014
CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN ON HAROLD CLARK SIMMONS HALL

To serve a growing number of faculty, students and programs, a new building named after Harold Clark Simmons will be constructed next to Annette Caldwell Simmons Hall beginning this summer. It is scheduled to open in 2015.

The new hall, as well as three new endowed academic positions, are funded by a historic $25 million gift presented by Harold C. and Annette Caldwell Simmons in 2013.

Beyond the bricks and mortar, technology will shape the function of Harold Clark Simmons Hall. Part of the space will be dedicated to three laboratories wired to train students in teaching, instructional design and assessment.

“What we can offer in these labs is a place for teachers to practice being teachers in low-stake environments,” says Simmons Dean David Chard. “The typical approach to teacher development is to take teachers from their coursework to the classroom, without the opportunity to practice what they’ve learned.”

One of the labs will simulate pre-K-12 classroom environments, with computer avatars standing in for students. Anthony Caucias, Simmons director of instructional design and learning technology, will work with the University of Central Florida’s Teach Live system to customize the simulations. “The avatars are controlled by actors in Orlando, Florida, who play the role of students,” he says. “We prepare the actors for classroom situations, and the teacher interacts through the same technology used in video games. After role-playing, teachers will go to the assessment space to reflect on what they’ve learned.”

In the new assessment lab, software programs will allow teachers to review and assess their data and performance. These assessments also will be related to the new design lab, where teachers can construct the resources they need to connect with their students.

The instructional design lab will be open 24/7 and give teachers access to traditional materials and current technology to develop lesson plans and social media applications.

Aside from laboratories and classrooms, the new building will be home to the Teaching and Learning Department and the Center on Communities and Education.

Chard says the new hall demonstrates the Simmons family’s continued commitment to education. “This extraordinary gift enables our school to leave a more durable imprint on education,” he says. “As a school, our job is not just to impart evidence-based practices, but to create the evidence,” says Simmons Dean David Chard.

The center is run by Executive Director Scott Baker, who has been a principal investigator on 30 federally funded grants and is the former associate director of the University of Oregon’s Center on Teaching and Learning. He believes in the importance of providing a wide range of services for the faculty, including placing research findings into practice. “We want to collaborate with faculty and other institutions and have direct applications to what happens in schools,” says Simmons Dean David Chard.

Another component of the center is to conduct evaluations of area organizations serving children and families. “We are finding an opportunity to work more closely with these organizations to help them understand the purpose of evaluation,” Baker says. “What we are hearing from them is that they would like to use data from evaluations to help improve their services.”

The center is working on program evaluations with organizations such as the Concilio, Dallas Arboretum, Parish Episcopal School and Texas A&M. Academics also in development is a major evaluation of The School Zone in West Dallas, a collaboration between 27 nonprofits, 16 public, private and charter schools, including the Dallas Independent School District’s feeder schools for L.G. Pinkston High School. The School Zone is led by Simmons’ Center on Communities and Education.

Securing research funding is key to the center’s success. So far this academic year, Simmons faculty members have brought in grants totaling $64 million. The goal is to reach $10 million annually. “This is a formidable challenge,” Chard says, “but our faculty members are active researchers and I anticipate that external agency funding will quickly surpass our goal.”

DEANS, SPELLINGS DISCUSS HIGHER ED AT LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Simmons Dean David Chard (left), Margaret Spellings, former U.S. Secretary of Education and president of the George W. Bush Presidential Center, and Simmons Associate Dean Michael McLendon presented “Accountability, Affordability and Performance in Higher Education” at the Library of Congress last fall. At the event, Chard also announced his appointment of McLendon as the Annette and Harold Simmons Centennial Chair in Education Policy and Leadership.

CENTER ON RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

When current methods in education and human development aren’t working, what’s the best way to change them?

Finding the answer to that question is the mission of the Center on Research and Evaluation at the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. The newly created center supports faculty research and program evaluations, through development of knowledge and dissemination of information. “As a school, our job is not just to impart evidence-based practices, but to create the evidence,” says Simmons Dean David Chard.

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HONORING LUMINARY RECIPIENTS

Madeline McClure (left), founder and executive director of TexProtects; Jonah Edelman, co-founder and CEO of Stand for Children, and Terry Ford ’74, co-founder and executive director of Lumin Education, are the 2014 Simmons Luminary Award recipients. Marvia Wright Edelman (not pictured), founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, was also recognized. The recipients were honored for their work advancing the education and well-being of at-risk children.

The staff at the Center on Research and Evaluation includes Assistant Dean Kathleen Crabtree (not pictured); Assistant Director Julie Rahim, Dylan Farmer, project coordinator, and Karen Rembley, program manager. Standing are Professor Aki Kamata (left), Thom Spy, doctoral candidate, Executive Director Scott Baker and Wendy Whaley, administrative assistant.
COUNSELING YOUNG ADULTS WITH ASPERGER’S LEADS TO PROGRESS

The air is charged with excitement and pride at the Center for Family Counseling, SMU-in-Plano. Seven graduate students have just finished group counseling sessions and are preparing to discuss the progress their clients have made.

During this particular session, one client who had been nonverbal suddenly began talking. Meg Stuts and Michael Ferraro, co-facilitators of the session, are unsure why he began to speak, but they’re thrilled because he not only participated for the first time, but his peers were supportive and encouraging.

These kinds of developments are rewarding for the graduate students as they work to earn a Master of Science in Counseling at the Simmons School of Education and Human Development. The graduate students have a multitude of specialties to choose from such as play therapy, chemical dependency counseling, or marriage and family counseling. And, they get to use the counseling skills they’ve acquired in a unique pilot program designed for young adults with Asperger’s syndrome, a diagnosis on the autism spectrum.

The client’s director, Sarah Feuerbacher, says there is a great need for counseling young adults with Asperger’s. Families who have special needs children enjoy a strong support network while their children are in school, but once these children have graduated from high school, that support suddenly disappears. “When you lose your biggest resource and support system, it goes to show how lonely it can be and how much a family as a whole needs services, not just the individual,” she says.

The clients her graduate students work with range in age from late teens to early 30s. They come from the nonPareil Institute, a Plano-based organization that trains and develops ways to gauge the pilot program’s success at the National Mediation Board (NMB) in Plano. His work for the NMB includes development and use of information and communication technologies for dispute resolution efforts.

FEUERBACHER says. “The options have been, if they do receive outside help, it’s in the form of daycare, and that’s not the functionality of the individuals at nonPareil. They don’t need daycare, they need a safe place where they can voice their feelings and thoughts and need the ability to build their self-confidence.”

NonPareil clients receive an eight-week course of group counseling sessions, with an option to sign up for more. Depending on their needs, they’re organized into groups that address social skills and team building.

Laura Fleming, a graduate student working with a team building group, says that people with autism are often perceived as not having enough when actually they have as many emotional issues as anybody who seeks counseling services. As counselors, she and her colleagues must employ unique ways of addressing their clients’ needs because of the range of disorders. They create exercises that develop communication and cooperation skills, the ability to identify emotions, share confidences and take risks. Just asking for help can be a challenge for someone with Asperger’s. She’s encouraged by the camaraderie that has developed over time among the clients in her group.

Ferraro adds that the counselors try to create an environment where their clients feel free and safe to interact with each other and with them.

Meanwhile, the counseling sessions with nonPareil clients provide, Feuerbacher develops ways to gauge the pilot program’s impact. “We are continuing to evaluate and create assessment tools that are appropriate to use with this population and get us the information we are looking for in increasing self-esteem, social skills and teamwork.”

Professor Jill Allor received a $1.5 million grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (U.S. Department of Education) to develop a reading program to supplement current reading instruction and increase the intensity of instruction for students with intellectual disabilities. Professors Stephanie Al Otaiba and Paul Yovanoff are co-principal investigators.

For more information, contact the Department of Teaching and Learning at smu.edu/TL.
JEANIE GREENIDGE ’10 
BRINGS MEANING TO TEACHING

JEANIE GREENIDGE ’10, veteran teacher at O’Bannon Middle School in Garland, TX, wrote about why she became a teacher in the spring issue of Teaching Tolerance. Feeling invisible as a child, she says, “Stripped of all power and in pain, they feel disappearing from their own lives,” she says. "My first priority as their teacher is to see that their lives are beyond their control."

ESMERALDA ORTIZ is director of community relations for the Center on Communities and Education in Simmons. She has played a central role in managing The School Zone, a multi-partner education partnership that supports struggling students and their families in West Dallas. Her work is highlighted as part of SMU’s World Changers Shaped Here campaign. Read more at smu.edu/World/Stories/Ortiz

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Through rigorous research and fresh thinking, we in the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development are strengthening our commitment to teaching.

Now in our seventh year on campus, we wish to acknowledge a growing constituency of support. Thanks to our alumni and friends, we are able to draw on important resources to advance our work. With financial support for scholarships, we can attract and retain top scholars who will complete their degrees and make a profound impact on people’s lives through their work.

I encourage you to support our future leaders and help us move the Simmons School forward in a strong direction.

With appreciation,

David J. Chard, Ph.D.
Leon Simmons Endowed Dean

EVENTS

May 17, 2014
GRADUATION RECEPTION

The school hosts a reception honoring May graduates in Annette Caldwell Simmons Hall, 3101 University Blvd., at 11:30 a.m.

May 20, 2014
ANNUAL EDUCATION BREAKFAST

The Center on Communities and Education sponsors its annual breakfast on education. This year’s topic focuses on parental involvement in student achievement. For information, contact Erin Crosby, ecrosby@smu.edu.

June 7-29, 2014
STUDY AWAY

Simmons offers three European study trips in June: MLS’ art history tour in Italy and two Dispute Resolution courses in Madrid and Geneva. Visit smu.edu/MLS and smu.edu/DRC.

June-August 2014
COLLEGE READINESS

A variety of Simmons college preparation programs for middle and high school students begins mid-June, ending early August. Visit smu.edu/Youth

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Southern Methodist University
Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education & Human Development
David J. Chard, Ph.D.
President and Dean

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