



CHAMPIONING NORTH AMERICA:

TRILATERAL ECONOMY AND THE POWER OF SOFT DIPLOMACY

April 16, 2026

SMU Bridwell Institute
for Economic Freedom

SMU
Tower Center

CANADA ↔ TEXAS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



SMU
Mission Foods
Texas-Mexico Center



Championing North America: Trilateral Economy and the Power of Soft Diplomacy convened government officials, academic experts, and industry leaders to examine the evolving economic relationship among the United States, Mexico, and Canada, emphasizing how deeper regional coordination, modernized trade frameworks, and cross-border collaboration can strengthen North America's global competitiveness.

The discussion also highlighted the 2026 FIFA World Cup as both a practical example of trilateral cooperation and a platform for soft diplomacy, showcasing the region's shared capacity while expanding its global visibility and long-term economic engagement.





Welcome by **Bob Vargo**, Co-Director,
Canada-Texas Chamber of Commerce



Closing remarks by **Tiffany Melvin**, President, North
American Strategy for Competitiveness (NASCO)



Opening Remarks by **Luis Rodríguez Bucio**, Consul
General, Consulate General of Mexico in Dallas

Conversation I: USMCA—Historical Reflections & North America’s Future Outlook

Speakers reflected on the evolution from NAFTA to USMCA, emphasizing the agreement as both a modernization of regional trade rules and a strategic tool for strengthening North America’s global competitiveness. The discussion focused on geopolitical positioning, policy coordination, and the challenges of implementation and future review, highlighting both opportunities and uncertainties in sustaining regional integration.



Doug McCullough
Director, Canada-Texas
Chamber of Commerce



Raymond Robertson
Director of Mosbacher Institute For
Trade, Economics, and Public Policy,
Texas A&M University & Senior Fellow
of The SMU Mission Foods Texas-
Mexico Center



Susan Harper
Consul General,
Consulate General of
Canada in Dallas



Andrew Lawson Carranco
Legislative Affairs Chair,
Laredo Chamber of
Commerce

Conversation II:

2026 World Cup — The Power of Soft Diplomacy and Regional Economic Impacts

The discussion explored the 2026 FIFA World Cup primarily as a vehicle for soft diplomacy, highlighting how the joint hosting effort can enhance North America's global image, cultural influence, and cross-border engagement. Speakers emphasized the role of sports in shaping international perceptions and fostering long-term economic and tourism benefits, rather than focusing narrowly on infrastructure or bid competitiveness.



Courtney Weeks

Assistant Director, SMU Mission
Foods Texas-Mexico Center



J.H. Cullum Clark

Director of The Bush Institute,
SMU Economic Growth Initiative
George W. Bush Institute



Monica Paul

Executive Director, Dallas Sports
Commission & President Of The
North Texas Fwc Organizing
Committee



Erik Mora

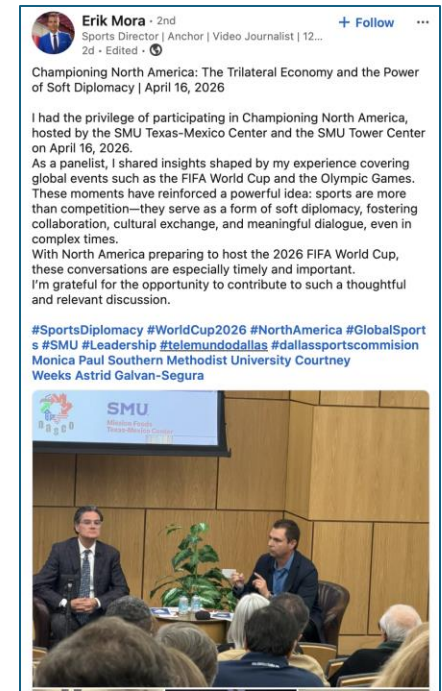
Sports Director and
Sports Anchor, Telemundo 39



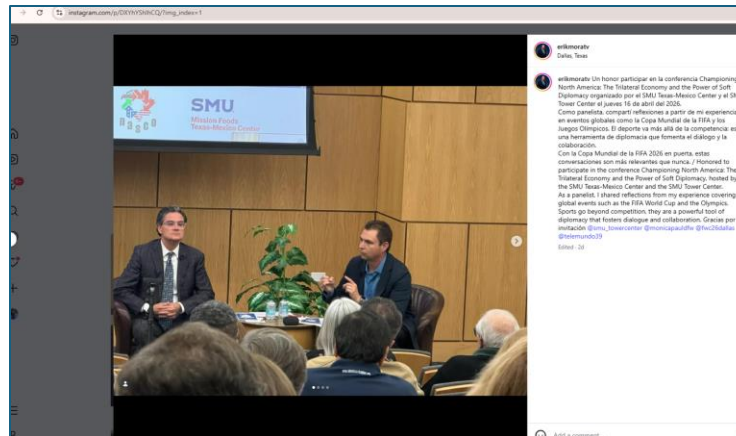




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<https://www.instagram.com/erikmoratv/>

Gaone GiGi Merafhe's Post

Gaone GiGi Merafhe · April 16 at 10:47 PM · 🌐

What an incredible evening at SMU representing the Americas Chamber for Business! 🌟 "Championing North America: The Trilateral Economy and the Power of Soft Diplomacy" opened my eyes to something beautiful - the 2026 World Cup isn't just a sporting event, it's a masterclass in what three nations can accomplish together. Monica Paul from the Dallas Sports Commission said something that gave me chills: "We have the infrastructure across Canada, Mexico and the United States to be able to do that together." 104 matches. Three countries. One vision. This is what happens when we stop thinking in limitations and start thinking in possibilities! 🙌 After 2026? We're looking at a completely transformed North American soccer landscape! 🌐 As someone who believes in building legacies that last generations, I walked away inspired by how collaboration - real collaboration - creates something bigger than any of us could achieve alone. Sometimes the most powerful connections aren't made in conference rooms. They're made when the world comes together and cheers as one. Grateful for evenings like this that remind me why I'm passionate about bringing people together across borders and building bridges that last. 🙌 #softdiplomacy #WorldCup2026 #americaschamberforbusiness #BuildingTheFuture #Legacy #dallas#SMU



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Championing North America: The Trilateral Economy and the Power of Soft Diplomacy
The SMU Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center, in partnership with the Canada-Texas Chamber of Commerce, and North American Strategy for Competitiveness (NASCO), present...

<https://www.facebook.com/iamgaone/posts/what-an-incredible-evening-at-smu-representing-the-americas-chamber-for-business/1024235878036902/>



Andrew Lawson · 3rd+ · 🛡️ · 🌐 · ⋮
"And he is quite the character."--...
4w · 🗣️

I am excited to have been invited to speak about Laredo and North America with the ... more



SMU Mission Foods Texa... · 
Register
4w · Edited · 🗣️

Join the SMU Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center, in partnership with the **Canada-Texas Chamber of...** more



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/andrewlcarran/co/>



Ramir Camu · 3rd+ ·  · ⋮
CEO, Werx Studio | Automating the Workflows, Processes, and Oper...
[Visit my website](#)
6d · Edited · 🗣️

Great event at SMU this week.

The SMU Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center put together a really good conversation around the US, Mexico, and Canada trilateral economy and what the 2026 World Cup means for this region beyond just the games.

This one hits close to home. When people talk about the strength of North American partnership it is not abstract for me, it is the people I work with every day.

Always great to spend time with good friends. Honored to share the evening with the Consul General of Mexico for North Texas General Luis Rodriguez Bucio and **Alfredo Duarte**, local business leader and board member of the SMU Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center. The kind of people who are actually doing the work of keeping this relationship strong.

It was good to be back at my alma mater :)
[Southern Methodist University](#)



https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ramircamu_great-event-at-smu-this-week-the-smu-mission-activity-7451234366808080384-qRT8?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAAFxmHaABOkoXL1xdgzUCw_FSWx3LQ1SJPEI



Doug McCullough · 3rd+ ·  · ⋮
M&A, International, and Tax Law
30m · 🗣️

It was my pleasure to moderate a panel at the SMU Mission Foods Texas-Mexico Center

Championing North America: USMCA - Historical Reflections and North America's Future Outlook

If you weren't able to join us, we hope you will take a moment to watch the video and learn about the ongoing importance to all three parties to the USMCA trade agreement.

<https://lnkd.in/gc7wkpBA>



Championing North America Panel 1: USMCA—Historical Reflection & North America's Future Outlook
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/dougmcullough_it-was-my-pleasure-to-moderate-a-panel-at-share-7453461332076548096-jepl?utm_source=social_share_send&utm_medium=member_desktop_web&rcm=ACoAAFxmHaABOkoXL1xdgzUCw_FSWx3LQ1SJPEI