

STAFF

Celebration & Convocation



OCTOBER 22, 2024

10:30AM

GEORGE W. BUSH INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM

Honoring staff excellence, new inductees of the 25+ Years of
Service Club and staff award recipients

smu.edu/smusa

smusa@smu.edu



PRELUDE & PROCESSIONAL



Welcome	—————◆	Christopher Ham Staff Association, Immediate Past President
Invocation	—————◆	Lisa Garvin Chaplain and Minister to the University
Introduction of Speakers	—————◆	Amanda Bobo Staff Association, President
State of SMU Address	—————◆	R. Gerald Turner President of the University
Recognition of Staff	—————◆	R. Gerald Turner President of the University Amanda Bobo, Christopher Ham, Breanna Webb Staff Association Executive Board Members

Twenty-Five Year Club Inductees

Jinyoung Bae	Cathy Heckman	Jean Branning Porter
Robert Blissitt	Alan Wilfred Humason	Jeanene Renfro
Tina Brosseau	Linda Kao	Kristan Lyn Scoggins
Jimmy Powell Burnett	Donald Lee Kline, Jr.	Paula M. Serna
Aren Cambre	Jacqueline McLelland	Jesus Munoz Sigala
Ruben Adame Chambers	Jason L. McMinn	Bernadina E. Trujillo
Brad E. Cheves	John Allen Milazzo	Sharla Ann Walker
Catherine Collins	Susan Lynn Bate Moore	Jason Terry Warner
Nancy L. George		

Presentation of President's Awards	—————◆	R. Gerald Turner President of the University Amanda Bobo, Christopher Ham Staff Association Executive Board Members
Presentation of Loretta O'Reilly Hawkins Award	—————◆	Mal Williams Staff Association, VP of Staff Development
Closing Remarks	—————◆	Amanda Bobo Staff Association, President
University Hymn - "Varsity"	—————◆	All sing together

UNIVERSITY HYMN

"Oh we see the Varsity, Varsity, Varsity
as she towers o'er the hill over there.
And our hearts are filled with joy, SMU, SMU,
Alma Mater, we'll be true forever!"

STAFF WITH TWENTY-SIX OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE

FORTY-SIX YEARS

Rojelio Torres - Facilities, Planning and Management

FORTY-FOUR YEARS

Andy Frye - Enrollment Services

Joe Papari - Enrollment Services

Winston Tubb - Dedman School of Law

FORTY-TWO YEARS

Tito Munoz - Facilities, Planning and Management

FORTY-ONE YEARS

Jane Lenz Elder - Perkins School of Theology

Lisa Montes - Dedman School of Law

Dee Powell - Cox School of Business

FORTY YEARS

David M. Davis, II - SWGSB

THIRTY-NINE YEARS

Chuck Donaldson - Meadows School of the Arts

Ellen Frost - Perkins School of Theology

Jennifer (JJ) Jones - Student Life

Sheri Starkey - Department of Human Resources

Diana Vineyard - Dedman College

Dale A. Winkler - Dedman College

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS

Michael Washington - Campus Services

THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS

Sherry Aikman - Dedman College

Laura Amberson - Dedman School of Law

Bobbie Heine - Dedman School of Law

Rebecca (Becky) Hood - Simmons School of Education

THIRTY-SIX YEARS

Jaynell Dalby - Office of Budgets and Finance

Debbie Seiter - Office of Information Technology

Alison Tweedy - Campus Services

STAFF WITH TWENTY-SIX OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

Elizabeth Aguirre - Cox School of Business
David Anderson - Dedman College
Judith Benes - Dedman College
Jim Dees - Lyle School of Engineering
Gregory Ivy - Dedman School of Law
Mary Varela - Dedman College

THIRTY-FOUR YEARS

Robert Buckner - DEA-Strategic Affairs
Jorge Cruz - Office of Information Technology
Christopher Eatmon - SMU Libraries
Kent Gadell - Facilities, Planning and Management
Sandra Heads-Thorpe - Dedman School of Law
Stephen Leary - Meadows School of the Arts
Jacqueline Wilborn - Enrollment Services

THIRTY-THREE YEARS

Andrea Maupin - Office of Information Technology

THIRTY-TWO YEARS

Pamela Bell - Office of Budgets and Finance
Nazario Del Rio - Facilities, Planning and Management
Susan Strobel Hogan - Resident Life and Student Housing
Lorinda Lamb - Office of Budgets and Finance
Alan Pushin - Office of Information Technology
Jerrell Stracener - AT&T Center for Visualization

THIRTY-ONE YEARS

Kathy E. Brooks - Office of Budgets and Finance
Christopher Hayward - Dedman College
Hillsman Jackson - DEA-Public Affairs
Melissa Keene - Meadows School of the Arts
Scot Montague - Dedman College
Chris Smith - Office of Information Technology
Sandra Tefft - Facilities, Planning and Management

STAFF WITH TWENTY-SIX OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE

THIRTY YEARS

Janet Allmon - SMU Libraries

Jose M. Moreno - Facilities, Planning and Management

R. Gerald Turner - President

Ronald L. Wallace - Facilities, Planning and Management

TWENTY-NINE YEARS

Monica G. Cordero - Enrollment Services

Abby Kinney - Office of Budgets and Finance

Julia Maynard - Office of the Provost

Maria Richards - Dedman College

Kathleen Scott - DEA-Marketing and Communications

Mannie Tanner - Police Department

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS

Ian Aberle - Office of Information Technology

Rene Bowen - DEA-Annual Giving and Alumni Relations

Eric English, Sr. - Facilities, Planning and Management

Larry Helpert - Facilities, Planning and Management

Terry M. Johnston - Office of Information Technology

Sean Miller - Facilities, Planning and Management

James Pan - Office of Information Technology

Shawn Remek - Office of Information Technology

Katherine Schacht - SMU Libraries

Merlin Wilkerson - Office of Information Technology

TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS

Rebekah Bell - Dedman School of Law

Ricardo Del Rio - Mail and Copy Services

Robin L. DeVore - Office of University Division Support

Alejandro Estrada - DEA-Records and Gift Administration

Pamela G. Henderson - Meadows School of the Arts

Lawrence J. Hengst, Jr. - Meadows School of the Arts

Cheryl Hitt - Facilities, Planning and Management

Laurene Klassen - Office of Information Technology

Kevin Knox - Cox School of Business

Diane E. Kucera - DEA-Records and Gift Administration

Toni Nolen - SMU Libraries

Janet Thomas Stephens - Meadows School of the Arts

Todd Wright - Lyle School of Engineering

STAFF WITH TWENTY-SIX OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE

TWENTY-SIX YEARS

Jared T. Calkins - DEA-Development/Alumni

Karie A. Conklin - Office of Information Technology

Peter Franklin Davis - Health Center

Steven B. Denson - Cox School of Business

Manuel Richard Diaz - Division of Enrollment Services

Pamela Kay Fincher - Office of Information Technology

Cindy L. Havens - Dedman College

Erich Emil Heise - Office of Information Technology

Bobbie Lay - Meadows School of the Arts

Cruz Lopez - Division of Enrollment Services

Michael Morton - Athletics

Janey C. Rodriguez - DEA-Development/Alumni

Deborah L. Rozier - Office of Budgets & Finance

Rebecca Kay Sampson - Human Resources

Ruthann Swanson - SMU Libraries

Sunsharae Smith Thierry - Office of Information Technology

Jorge Villa - Cox School of Business

Robert Walker - SMU Libraries

TWENTY-FIVE YEAR STAFF INDUCTEES

Linda Kao

Linda is Associate Dean in the Cox School of Business. She joined SMU as the inaugural Director of International Programs launching the full-time MBA Global Leadership Program (GLP) and expanding the global opportunities to all the graduate programs. Before coming to SMU, she was a meeting and event consultant even working on seven Olympics, three World Cups, and many other international events. She has been a community leader advocating for Asian American businesses and causes as well. She received her BBA from SMU. She has enjoyed travelling with SMU students and seeing how these life-changing trips impacted their global perspectives. She is married to Joseph and has a son – Jonathan and a daughter – Juliana (currently a Junior at SMU). Linda enjoys museums, musicals, Wordle, Sudoku, and connection games. She is a 'True Crime' buff and likes watching current events and streaming.



Susan Moore

Susan is the Director of Facilities Financial Support within the Office of Budgets and Finance. She began at SMU in the newly created position of Project Cost Coordinator in Campus Planning and Plant Operations. She is responsible for implementing e-Building, Construction Project Management software on campus. Before SMU, Susan worked at Bristol Hotels and Resorts in new construction and renovations, as well as for Huie Miars Construction. She received her Bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University and a Master of Science in Facilities Management from SMU. She says that watching her daughter, Renee, compete on the SMU Rowing team was one of the highlights of her years spent at SMU. She has a daughter, Renee (Rowing Team!), a son-in-law, Lee, and two grandchildren – Milo and Mia. Susan enjoys cycling, hiking, traveling (spending time on the beach), going to concerts, and enjoying her grandkids.



Jean Porter

Jean Porter is the Manager for the Mane Course (front desk). She started out in the Registrar's Office as an Academic Records Counselor and worked various positions in that office before being promoted to her current position. Before she joined SMU, she worked for Walker Engineer after staying home and raising her three children. She attended Eastfield College. She says watching daughter, Lacey, graduate from SMU with her Bachelor's degree and continuing on to complete her Master's in Education Leadership and then for her to join the SMU staff family is her fondest memory. She has been married to Dan, who is also a SMU graduate with a MA in Dispute Resolution, for 48 years. They have raised three children - Lacey, Lindsey, and Dan III (also a SMU attendee) and four grandchildren - Riley, Reece, Paxton, and Lily. She enjoys spending time with her grandchildren, riding motorcycles, and gardening.



Jeanene Renfro

Jeanene is a Senior Advisor working with pre-majors in the University Advising Center. She started in the Office of the Dean of Dedman College where she worked as editor of the Dedman College Newsletter and undergraduate student admissions. She was the first to travel as a recruiter for the college. Before SMU, she worked for the University of Utah on new student orientation. She received her BA in History. She remembers the first Dedman College Celebration in Dallas Hall where they custom-built dining tables that were hung OVER the railings on the second and third floors to provide seating for graduate students. Jeanene has eight siblings, being the second oldest, and three children of her own. When not at SMU, she enjoys reading.



Kristan 'Kristi' Scoggins

Kristi is a Senior Maintenance Coordinator in the Office of Facilities, Planning & Management but she actually started in the Cox School of Business in their Information Technology Services department. It was part of the OE2C changes that had her moving to the Office of Facilities, Planning & Management. Before SMU, she was a stay-at-home mom raising her two daughters. She says that during her time in Cox (and working for Allen Gwinn for 17 years) was 'definitely a part of my time here at SMU that will always bring many fond memories and smiles to my face.' She has been married to her husband, Randy, for 34 years and they have two daughters and one granddaughter about to turn 2 in November. Kristi enjoys crafting, her pets, and watching and cheering for the Dallas Cowboys.



Paula Serna

Paula is a Senior Program Specialist in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the Simmons School of Education. She started at SMU as a Coordinator in the Department of Teacher Education prior to there being a school of education on campus. Before joining SMU, she worked with DISD in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Dallas Reading Plan as part of their administration team. She received her Bachelor in Humanities from SMU and will graduate this December with a MS in Counseling from SMU. She says one of her favorite memories is taking brief walks, to capture a moment of tranquility by just appreciating the beauty of the campus. She does this still to this day! She enjoys playing tennis, karaoke, and she is looking forward to resuming her ballroom dancing classes after graduation.



Sharla Ann Walker

Sharla is Director of SFS Production and Operations. She actually started in 1996 in Financial Aid answering the phones and working the front desk, but stopped working to complete her degree in Management Information Systems after transferring academically to SMU. Upon graduation, they immediately hired her back as an Information Systems Specialist. She has held various positions at SMU, including Financial Aid Module Lead, Associate Director of FA Systems, and when they merged the FA and SF tech teams together, she was promoted to her current position. Before SMU, she was a single mom in college. She says that she has so many great memories of SMU but mostly she is grateful to SMU – for allowing her to grow; having leaders who believed in her; and pushing her out of her comfort zone. Sharla has 2 daughters – Shaeli and Baylee, as well as three grandchildren – Roman, Amya, and Avere. She enjoys sports and games – anything competitive. She likes watching football and playing volleyball. She loves the lake and beach – anything with sun and water.



Jinyoung Bae

Jinyoung is in the Office of Information Technology. She began her career at SMU immediately after school in the OIT Department. Her supervisor, Ron Lujan, writes, “In addition to her technical brilliance, Jinyoung is deeply admired for her calm demeanor, humility, and willingness to go above and beyond. Despite her immense knowledge and contributions, she remains modest and shies away from the accolades she so richly deserves.” She received her Bachelors in South Korea and received a Master’s degree from the University of Texas at Dallas. Jinyoung says that every day is precious [at SMU] working with such kind people on a beautiful campus. She has her mother, a sister, brother-in-law, and two nieces. She enjoys exercising.



Tina Brosseau

Tina is the Assistant to the Dean in the Dedman School of Law. She began at SMU in her current position where she has had the pleasure of assisting three deans and two interim deans. Before SMU, she worked at Kaiser Permanente for eight years. Tina says that meeting people from every walk of life and making many friends over the years has been one of her fondest memories. She also says that she has shaken the hands of two Supreme Court Justices – Justice Antonin Scalia and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg – something she could not have done if she worked elsewhere. She has been married to her high school sweetheart for 42 years and they have two children – one daughter and one son. She also has four grandchildren. She loves dogs and enjoys reading, family game nights, doing puzzles, and gardening. She also enjoys spending time with family and friends. **Fun Fact:** Her predecessor also came from Wisconsin and lived in the town where Tina was born.



Aren Cambre

Aren currently works on the OIT Web Team with roles evolving from System Analyst to Web Developer to Team Lead to Director. He is even an Adjunct Professor in Cox. He actually started out as a part-time student worker at the ITS Help Desk and moved onto the web team a year later becoming the SMU webmaster. Before SMU, he owned his own business selling computers and installing networks. He attended SMU and has received four degrees: Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science; Bachelor of Science in Mathematics; Master of Science in Computer Science; and Doctorate of Engineering in Engineering Management. His fondest memory...proposing to his wife at the main quad fountain! He is married to Jennifer and has two children – Alec (a Junior at SMU) and Ethan. He enjoys driving people crazy, biking and Scouts.



Donald Kline, Jr.

Don is in the Office of Information Technology. He has always been in the Office of Information Technology, which was originally known as Information Technology Services. Before joining SMU, he was a geologist working with geological and geophysical applications. He received his Bachelor's in Geoscience from The University of Texas at Dallas. Don started at SMU when the Y2K computing crisis was 'looming large'. He states that they survived and then moved on to challenges facing campus – the growing use of email and campus computing services. He is married and says he and his wife have lived in Dallas all their lives except for one year when they lived in Quito, Ecuador. They have two children, a daughter and a son. He enjoys travelling and golf.



John Milazzo

John is the Digitization Coordinator in the Norwick Center for Digital Solutions. He started as a student worker for the Central University Libraries with the Center for Information Processing. There really isn't a 'Before SMU' - he graduated from Jesuit High School and started at SMU and his journey here was underway. He received his Bachelor's in Business from SMU. John quips that there are quite a few memories since SMU has been a part of most of his life, but he does remember coming to work with his dad in the summers and playing makeshift baseball in the hallway of the third floor of Fondren West. He met his wife, Christine, here at SMU and has one son – Allen. He says that almost his entire family – including some extended family – have worked for SMU at different times over the years. He enjoys attending live concerts, listening to music, drumming, art, board games and baseball.



Jason Warner

Jason is the Associate CIO of Academic Technology Services for the Office of Information Technology. He started as part of a crew of temporary workers tasked with migrating computers to be Y2K compliant. It was during this time he was hired to be a Desktop Consultant in Meadows. Before SMU he worked as a high school teacher. He received his BA from Baylor and then pursued advanced degrees at SMU earning both a Master's degree and a Doctorate of Education. He says that among those favorite memories, he appreciates more the opportunity to bring together such extraordinary and talented individuals to build exceptional teams. In his down time, Jason enjoys immersing himself in audiobooks – particularly fiction and history. Playing video games is another hobby, as well as being slightly obsessed with following hockey and baseball.



Catherine Collins

Catherine is Assistant Dean for Facilities and Administration in the Cox School of Business, which is where she began her time at SMU. She received her BBA from SMU in Accounting and has her CPA license. Catherine's fondest memory of SMU is her daughter's graduation from SMU – continuing the family tradition. Her daughter has two degrees from SMU and was the standard bearer with the highest GPA. As she puts it, she is from a SMU family – both parents graduated from SMU in the early 50s as well as her two siblings in the 80s. Her daughter is also married to a SMU alum who has degrees from Cox, Meadows and Dedman Law. Her three grandchildren love to attend SMU football and basketball games and the summer sports camps. As Catherine states, "Over the last 25 years, my colleagues at the Cox School of Business have been very supportive like family to make SMU a great place to work."



Nancy George

Nancy is Associate Director of Media Relations in Marketing and Communications. When she started at SMU, it was in the News and Editorial Department for Public Affairs. She worked as a writer for SMU Magazine and was the first editor of a library newsletter. She also edited the Forum, a faculty-staff newsletter. Before SMU, she was in public relations, working for places like Methodist Hospitals of Dallas and the Baylor College of Dentistry. Nancy earned her Journalism degree from SMU and later a MLS from SMU. She has lots of fond memories of SMU, but said that one of the most memorable was when she had once been visiting the Dallas Zoo to interview an Anthropology instructor who is the curator of mammals. While there, a chimpanzee escaped, and as she put it, “Here’s what happens when an animal escapes at the zoo – they lock the people up!” She has three kids, a son-in-law, and two grandkids. Her daughter, one son, and her son-in-law are all SMU graduates. She likes to garden, travel, read, and most of all – spend time with her grandkids.



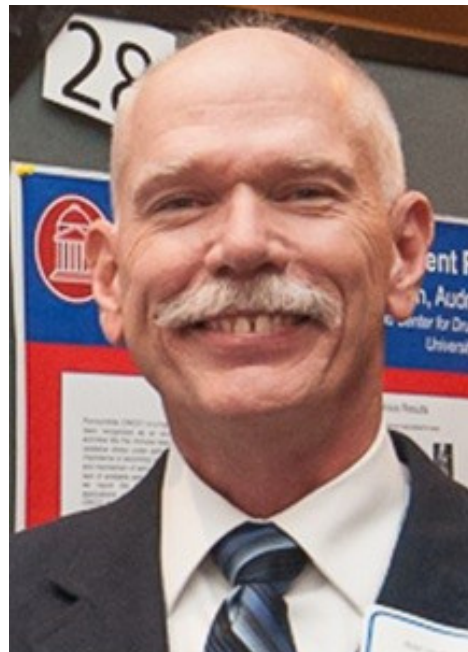
Cathy Heckman

Cathy is a Senior Buyer and Category Manager in Purchasing. As part of her job, she handles a variety of different tasks and custom projects as well as writing instructional materials for all of the unique areas she oversees. When she started at SMU, it was as a Production Manager in the Graphic and Print Department in Business Services. Before SMU, she was a Purchasing Manager at Micrografx, a software development company. She was also a key team member organizing the Micrografx Chili for Children chili cook-off at Comdex in Las Vegas. She attended Texas Tech but earned her undergraduate degree from UTA. She says her fondest memories include her team’s nickname for her – “Print Goddess” and attending the Celebration of Lights with her family. She has been married to Rodney for 33 years and they have one son – Riley. She has a 6-month old granddaughter, as well as two bonus granddaughters – Nevaeh and Dakota. She loves art and enjoys creating watercolors and colored pencil drawings. She is also a history enthusiast. But mostly, she loves spending time with family and camping with her husband and dogs in their travel-trailer.



Alan Humason

Alan works as a Senior Lecturer in Dedman's Chemistry Department. He says once a chemist, always a chemist. Before joining SMU, he worked for 18 years at 8 different laboratories conducting environmental testing. Alan received his bachelor's degree from Amherst before receiving both his master's and doctorate from SMU. He claims to be a 'lifelong learner'. His fondest memories are of receiving his master's degree and having the students give him a standing ovation. This was topped when he received his doctorate and the professors gave him a standing ovation. Alan is married to Melissa, who previously worked for SMU. They have two children -- daughter, Alana and son, Aidan. Alana is currently serving as an Army Logistician. Aidan is currently a student at Greenville University studying History and Education. Alan enjoys spending his spare time bicycling, brewing beer, and pool maintenance. He wrote that when he first came to SMU, he planned to earn his master's degree and leave. But he fell in love with the Chemistry Department and just couldn't leave.



Jason McMinn

Jason is in the Cox Graduate Admission Office. He started in the Business Information Center (BIC) housed in the Cox School but worked with the Cox Graduate Admissions team. Eventually, he moved over into his current position. Prior to joining SMU, he worked with a freight company working his way from mailroom clerk to inside sales manager. He took classes through Tarrant County Junior College and finally finished his management degree here at SMU after many detours along the way. He says his fondest memory is a 'conglomeration' of memories – his wife receiving her Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and Doctorate from SMU; receiving his own degree from SMU; and watching both daughters receive their degrees from SMU. Jason enjoys playing tennis and has just begun 'dabbling' with pickle ball. He claims to be a HUGE NHL fan and enjoys watching and attending Dallas Stars games.



Robert Blissitt



Jimmy Burnett

Jimmy is with Lyle Distance Education. He began at SMU on the Plano campus as part of the SEAS TV Systems workgroup. He said he just hung around for a bit to end up in Lyle. Before SMU, he was in software manufacturing in Richardson; self-employed for a while; and even a butcher at Minyards. His fondest memory here at SMU was submitting an idea for the “big ideas on campus” and winning first place for saving not only his department, but the school about a million dollars a year for a short time. Jimmy has completed several certification courses at SMU in the MCSE program. He has three grown children – Jessica, Jennah, and Justin and one granddaughter - Hayzlee. Katie Nicodemus is his life partner. He enjoys old cars, guitars, drums, lake time, boats and wakeboards, and wake surfing.



Ruben Chambers

Ruben is a Senior Network Tech in the Office of Information Technology. When he started, in what was then known as ITS, he was a student worker. He later became a temp worker and was finally hired full time as a Telecommunications Tech. These moves were directly related to Ruben's increased experience and skills. Ruben enjoyed attending undergrad classes at SMU on scholarship but because of personal issues, was not able to graduate. However, it did lead to him joining the SMU staff family. Ruben has a daughter - Isabella, and a son - Henry. When asked about his fondest memory of his time at SMU, he says that he did not know it at the time, but it was meeting his wife and his closest friends during the first week of his freshman year at SMU in the Umphrey Lee cafeteria. When not at SMU, Ruben enjoys reading, traveling, and trying new foods.



Brad Cheves

Brad is the Vice President for Development and External Affairs. He began his tenure at SMU as Associate Vice President for Development but left in 2001 for a position at another university. He quickly returned to SMU in 2004 in the position he holds today. Before SMU, he was at Pepperdine University School of Law and served in various capacities over his time there. He received his BBA in Finance from Abilene Christian University and then earned his J.D. from Pepperdine. Brad says that he doesn't have just one memory. Over the years, he has enjoyed having the opportunity to see several milestones; experience the excitement of opening new centers and institutes on campus; and celebrating dozens of endowed faculty positions. He has been married to wife Angela for 32 years and they have three sons – two of whom have graduated from SMU and the youngest is currently a Junior, member of the Mustang football team, and a Hunt Scholar. When asked about hobbies, he says that his 'core passion' is doing things with his family. But he also enjoys participating in church activities, running or cross-training and playing golf.



Jacqueline McLelland

Jacqueline began her time with SMU in the Cox School of Business in Finance. And that is where she is today. But before starting at SMU, she was a senior bilingual assistant to the CFO at Amerada Hess in New York. Today the company is known as Hess Corporation. She grew up in Marseille, France and received her Associate's Degree in Business there. She has four siblings who all live in France. She is married and has a daughter who graduated from SMU's MSA program in 2014. She says that her fondest memory of SMU is being part of the creation of the Alternative Asset Management Center that has since grown into something so significant and successful. She likes to travel and spending time with her family and rescue dogs. She also writes that having spent a considerable amount of time at SMU, she has been witness to the remarkable growth and transformation of the campus.



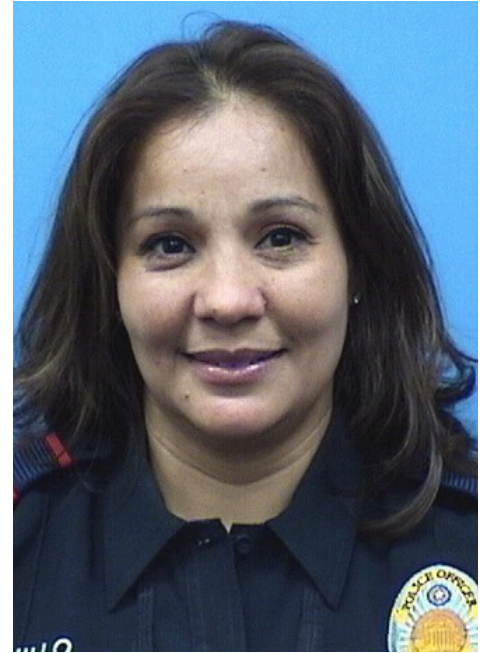
Jesus Sigala

Jesus is a General Service Tech in the Office of Facilities, Planning and Management. When he first joined SMU, he was one of the individuals responsible for maintaining the beauty of the SMU campus by working in the Grounds Department. Before SMU, he held worked in bridge construction and was part of the crew who built the stretch on Interstate 45 between Downtown and Ennis. He is married to Juanita and they have been together for 40 years. They have 5 children - 3 girls and 2 boys who range in ages from 21 to 32. He was born and grew up in Zacatecas, Mexico. For fun, Jesus is a beekeeper and enjoys traveling to Cancun. But he also loves to grill and drink a few cold ones.



Bernadina Trujillo

Bernadina is a Lieutenant Commander, GWBPC Security and Crime Prevention for the SMU Police Department. She started out as a Patrol Officer and has moved every couple of years through the ranks: Criminal Investigation Division, Detective/Investigator; Criminal Investigation Division, Sergeant; Patrol Division, Sergeant; Lieutenant Commander, Patrol Division; and her current position. Before coming to SMU, she worked for DISD in various positions including Pre-K Teacher Assistant, Office Clerk, and Administrative Assistant. She even acquired her Paraprofessional Certificate in Pre-K. She attended college and has completed 60 credit hours and graduated from the Police Academy. She has enjoyed providing a safe environment and security for students, staff, and dignitaries and says she has seen many positive changes throughout her tenure at SMU. Berndina has been married to her husband for 45 years. They have four children and six grandchildren. All four of he children are SMU alums! She enjoys spending time with her six grandchildren.



PRESIDENT'S AWARD WINNER 2024 GRETCHEN C. VOIGHT NEW EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Charles Aguilon

Charles is the Director of the Mustang Band and Athletic Bands. He started at SMU in 2022. He spent 29 years in public education as a band director, campus principal, and school district administrator. Melinda Sutton, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students wrote in her nomination of Charles, "Truly, Charles is the epitome of being a team player and always strives to meet the expectations of the many stakeholders who have opinions about these very high-profile areas. And Charles manages to meet these expectations while maintaining the integrity of the program and putting students first." He has a Bachelor of Music from TSU as well as a Master of Music. He went on to receive a MA in Supervision and Administration from the University of Phoenix. Charles has been married to his wife, Vanessa, for 28 years and they have two sons - Noah and Brandon. Brandon is a SMU graduate. He says that his first halftime performance with the Mustang Band and Spirit Groups is his fondest memory. He enjoys Disney World travel.



PRESIDENT'S AWARD WINNER 2024 CONTINUING EXCELLENCE

Janet Stephens

Janet is the Director of Meadows Undergraduate Academic Services. She started out at SMU as a temp employee doing data entry for Meadows recruiting/admissions and reception work in the Meadows Records office all while earning her undergraduate degree from SMU in Anthropology. Dean Holland from Meadows wrote in his support of Janet, "Students, faculty, and other staff seek her out for input and guidance on complex enrollment and curricular matters. And, in a school where a majority of students are double majors, many with multiple minors, complex enrollment matters are extremely common. She handles them with grace, good humor, timeliness, and positivity, always putting the good of the student and the organization ahead of herself." She is married to Eric and they have two children - Madeline and Luke. She enjoys attending as many music, dance, and theater performances as possible. She says her fondest memory (and there are many) was meeting her husband while both were on campus as students.



PRESIDENT'S AWARD WINNER 2024 INNOVATION

John LaGrone

John is a Research Technology Scientist in the Office of Information Technology. He began his time at SMU actually as a graduate student in the Mathematics Department back in 2011. He graduated from SMU with his PhD in Applied and Computational Math in 2016. He returned to the Hilltop in 2021 in OIT in his current position. Director of Research Technology for OIT, Eric Godat, says, "The implementation of ColdFront and John's efforts to develop a custom solution to meet SMU's needs, has taken an ad hoc workflow requiring several people hours of time, and streamlined it into a smooth automated process that gives faculty the agency over the machine they need for their research. Without his efforts, we would not be in this position today." John received his Bachelor's from TCU in Math. He is married to Claire and they have a Boston Terrier named Cocchi. He enjoys cooking, especially trying out new pasta recipes.



PRESIDENT'S AWARD WINNER 2024 OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

Jason Warner

Jason is the Associate CIO of Academic Technology Services for the Office of Information Technology. Associate Provost, Sheri Kunovich writes in her nomination, "As a team leader, he creates an environment where his team members can excel in their jobs and provide distinct types of support based on the campus partner they work closely with. This approach allows for a degree of variation that is critical to maintaining the distinct styles in each of the schools at SMU. At the same time, he makes sure that every team member can provide the same level of high-quality support. He directly mentors his team and encourages them to have curiosity in their work which results in a continuous improvement approach."

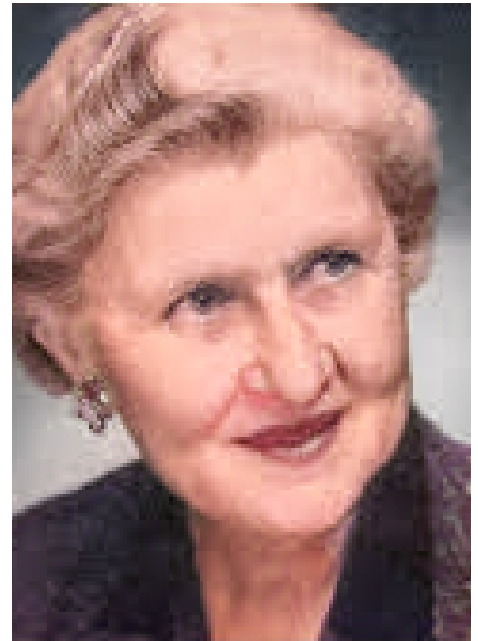
He earned his Bachelor of Arts from Baylor and both a Master's and Doctorate of Education from SMU. He enjoys playing video games as a way to relax. He is also an obsessed hockey and baseball fan, going so far as to keep up with the latest games and stats. And he confesses to enjoying the occasional bourbon - in moderation of course!



LORETTA O'REILLY HAWKINS AWARD

The Loretta O'Reilly Hawkins Award was established to recognize and reward employees who represent the qualities and spirit of Loretta O'Reilly Hawkins, her love of SMU, her commitment to the community, and her high standards for work and life. Loretta O'Reilly Hawkins was a member of the university staff for 37 years, from 1924 to 1961, during which time she held various roles, including assistant to President C.C. Selecman and President Umphrey Lee. Her retirement in 1961 was announced in a lead editorial in the Dallas Morning News entitled "Loretta's Leaving."

Mrs. Hawkins was a single parent who was devoted to both SMU and her family, working tirelessly through the depression (and a 66% pay cut for staff employees) to better the university, while also taking on part-time and evening work to support her family. She had an excellent reputation in the community and high standards of accomplishment in work, family, and the art of living. This award was endowed by Mr. Dallas E. Hawkins II, to honor his mother and her life as well as to benefit the university to which she was so dedicated.



LORETTA O'REILLY HAWKINS AWARD WINNER 2024

TaLibra Ferguson

Administrative Assistant, Dedman School of Law

TaLibra began her journey at SMU in the Law School as a temp in 2008. She worked with the law students on two journals, [The International Lawyer](#) and [Law and Business Review of the Americas](#). But later in 2008, she was hired on permanently to continue in this position. She later became a Faculty Admin Assistant as well as the Administrative Assistant for the International Law Review Association. An additional journal was added to her repertoire – the [SMU Law Review](#). She attended Richland College and received her Associates Degree and later earned her Bachelor's of Science in Psychology from UTD. She is the mother of two daughters whom she raised as a single mother. Her fondest memories of SMU are the Christmas parties they have in the Law School and the administrative appreciation lunches that were hosted at Mariano's. She says, "spending time at those functions outside the office with present coworkers and those who are no longer at SMU has been memorable over the years." TaLibra loves to travel, organize, cook, and write when she is not 'hooked' on her tv dramas and sports.



2024 - 2025

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2024 - 2025 EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Please join us for these upcoming events, presented just for you!

Details will be communicated closer to each event, so watch for SMUSA announcements or check out the Calendar of Events on our website for updates. www.smu.edu/smusu

October 25, 12:00 - 1:00pm

Book Club

[The Thursday Murder Club](#)

By: Richard Osman

November 2, Time TBD

SMU Homecoming Parade

November 11 - December 6

Holiday of Hope/Toys for Tickets

November 11, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Holiday Pop-Up Shop

Hughes-Trigg Ballrooms

We will have more events throughout the year.
Some will be online and some will be in person.

Invitations to events are sent through your SMU email account.
To manage your list subscription, please visit <https://mylists.smu.edu>

Join us on social media for information and updates!
We can be found on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
Tag us in your photos, #smustafflove!



UNIVERSITY HYMN

“Oh we see the Varsity, Varsity, Varsity
as she towers o’er the hill over there.
And our hearts are filled with joy, SMU, SMU,
Alma Mater, we’ll be true forever!”

SPECIAL THANKS

Zach Peterson

Announcer

Chris Regis

Senior Vice President for Business and Finance and
Chief Financial Officer
SMU Staff Association Advisor

GET INVOLVED

We would love to hear your ideas!
To volunteer to help with the planning or hosting
of one of our events, just send an email to smusa@smu.edu
or reach out to your Staff Advocacy Council Member in your area.

SMU[®] **Staff Association**