



DEAN OF THE SIMMONS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT DALLAS, TX

Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX) invites applications, expressions of interest, and nominations of candidates in its search for the next Leon Simmons Endowed Dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. This role offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of one of the nation's top-ranked education and human development schools with the resources of a dynamic, private research university, immersed within a community deeply committed to innovation.

The SMU Simmons School offers a rare and compelling leadership opportunity, distinguished by its interdisciplinary scope across education, physiology, sport science, and dispute resolution. As a school deeply embedded in the vibrant Dallas-Fort Worth region and backed by SMU's institutional strength, Simmons is poised to accelerate its impact through innovative research, meaningful community partnerships, and a growing philanthropic base. Candidates will find a school building on strong momentum, with energy and ambition to shape the future of its fields. The University seeks a visionary leader who brings deep passion and expertise across education curricula and pedagogy, interdisciplinary research, and the translation of evidence-based practices into cutting-edge programs that advance learning, human development, and community impact. The next Dean of Simmons will take the lead of a highly respected institution with palpable momentum, an engaged community, and significant resources.

Setting

The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, one of the country's largest metropolitan areas and a blend of two formidable cities, provides a stellar setting for a leading research institution. The new Dean of Simmons will serve in a region noted for its optimistic and entrepreneurial approach, welcoming community, committed philanthropic culture, competitive cost of living with a high quality of life, and vast array of recreational opportunities. DFW lays claim to significant reputations in the fine and performing arts, a vibrant dining scene, and major league sports franchises. The region is home to more than 70 accredited colleges and universities, including five R1 Doctoral institutions, providing an intellectual engine for one of the nation's most robust economies. Moreover, North Texas's public school systems collectively educate more than 1.2 million students, and the Dallas Independent School District consists of 240 schools serving the needs of nearly 140,000 PK-12 students. Opportunities abound for cross-institutional engagement. Lastly and notably, over the last 10 years, DFW has become a highly attractive destination for corporate headquarters, with nearly 150 relocations to the region from across the U.S. and abroad. The Metroplex is a top location for Fortune 500 companies with 22 now calling DFW their home base.

About Southern Methodist University

[Southern Methodist University](#) (SMU) is a premier private, comprehensive, research university, known for its strong academic programs and vibrant campus life. Established in 1911 and founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, SMU serves more than 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students, offering a wide range of

undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees across various disciplines, including the arts, business, education, engineering, human development, the humanities, law, and theology.

SMU is home to the Cox School of Business, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, Dedman School of Law, Lyle School of Engineering, Meadows School of the Arts, Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, Perkins School of Theology, and the Simmons School of Education and Human Development. SMU's campus, situated in the heart of the dynamic [Dallas-Fort Worth region](#), provides students with access to a thriving metropolitan area, offering extensive opportunities for internships, career networking, and cultural experiences. The SMU Mustangs represent the University in NCAA Division I competition, with more than 17 varsity sports programs, and as of July 2024, the Mustangs proudly compete in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC).

The University is in an era of remarkable upward trajectory, including Carnegie R1 designation for top-tier research activity, a successful first year in the ACC, and conclusion of a record-setting, multi-year capital campaign. The University is pioneering advancements in data science, fostering groundbreaking research, and building strong partnerships with industry and academia. SMU's research initiatives include the state-of-the-art Pegasus Park, interdisciplinary research clusters, and more than 40 centers and institutes, positioning the campus at the forefront of research and innovation in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and beyond.

In 2021, SMU launched its public phase for its comprehensive capital campaign, [SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow](#), with a goal of raising \$1.5 billion, and has, to date, garnered more than \$1.64 billion in contributions from over 67,500 donors. SMU has also expanded its reach and reputation both nationally and globally, with first-year student applications increasing 59 percent for Fall 2025.

Mission

Southern Methodist University will create, expand, and impart knowledge through teaching, research, and service, shaping world changers who contribute to their communities and excel in their professions in a global society. Among its faculty, students, and staff, the University will cultivate principled thought, develop intellectual skills, and promote an environment emphasizing individual dignity and worth. SMU affirms its historical commitment to academic freedom and open inquiry, to moral and ethical values, and to its United Methodist heritage.

SMU Core Values: <https://www.smu.edu/aboutsmu/core-values>

Leadership

President Jay C. Hartzell assumed the presidency of SMU on June 1, 2025, becoming the University's 11th president in more than 110 years. President Hartzell is a nationally recognized economist and seasoned university leader. Before joining SMU, President Hartzell served as President of The University of Texas at Austin, where he oversaw all-time highs in applications, enrollment, graduation rates, research expenditures, and philanthropic support. Prior to that, President Hartzell served as UT Austin's Dean of the McCombs School of Business, one of the nation's largest and most prestigious business schools, where he served as a faculty member for more than 20 years. President Hartzell holds a Ph.D. in Finance from the University of Texas at Austin and a B.S. in Business Administration and Economics from Trinity University.

Provost Rachel Davis Mersey joined SMU as Executive Vice President and Provost (EVPP) on June 1, 2025, leading the academic enterprise and scholarly direction across all colleges and degree-granting schools. Mersey previously served as EVPP at The University of Texas at Austin, overseeing a broad portfolio that included enrollment management and the University's billion-dollar research enterprise. Prior to becoming EVPP, Dr. Mersey was Dean of UT Austin's Moody College of Communication and previously served as faculty at

Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications, where she rose through the ranks to Professor and Associate Dean for Research. Provost Mersey holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an M.S. in editorial journalism from Northwestern University, and a B.A. with honors from Wake Forest University in communication and studio art.

The Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development

The Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development (Simmons) is a nationally recognized school combining teaching, research, and professional practice in the fields of education, applied physiology, sport management, and dispute resolution and is poised for a continued upward trajectory. The School has been a foundational part of SMU's academic enterprise since its founding, and in 2007 was renamed through a visionary endowing gift by Harold C. and Annette Caldwell Simmons, '57. The *U.S. News & World Report 2024* rankings place Simmons in the top tier of graduate schools of education, rating it in the top 11 private schools in the nation and top three public and private schools in Texas.

Educating more than 1,200 undergraduate, graduate, and advanced studies students, Simmons offers 20 degree and certification programs across bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and specialized credentials, with many students pursuing graduate and professional degrees. Simmons offers a central doctoral program, the [Ph.D. in Education](#), that includes faculty from across departments, ensuring interdisciplinary strength and specialization immersion.

Department of Applied Physiology and Sport Management

- B.S. in Applied Physiology and Health Management
- B.S. in Sport Management
- B.S. in Sport Performance Leadership
- M.S. in Sport Management
- M.S. in Health Promotion Management

Department of Counseling

- M.S. in Counseling (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health, School Counseling, Marriage, Couple & Family)

Department of Education Policy and Leadership

- M.Ed. in Education Leadership, PK-12
- M.Ed. in Higher Education
- Ed.D. in Education Leadership, PK-12
- Ed.D. in Higher Education
- Certifications: Principal

Department of Human-Centered Interdisciplinary Studies

- M.A. in Dispute Resolution
- M.L.S. (Master of Liberal Studies)
- D.L.S. (Doctor of Liberal Studies)
- Graduate Certificates and Concentrations: Dispute Resolution, Healthcare Collaboration, Advanced Graduate Study, Executive & Leadership Coaching

Department of Teaching & Learning

- B.S. in Teacher Education
- M.Ed. in Teaching & Learning
- M.Ed. with Teacher Preparation Program

- M.B.E. (Master of Bilingual Education)
- M.S. in Learning Sciences
- Graduate Specialization: ESL Education, Learning Therapy, Literary Studies, Mathematics Education, Special Education, STEM Education, Urban Education

The [Simmons Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#) is anchored on the vision: Catalyzing Discovery and Innovation. Through excellence in research, teaching, and community collaboration, Simmons is a catalyst for discovery and innovation that transforms communities and advances human potential.

The Department of Applied Physiology and Sport Management (APSM) is one of the largest and fastest-growing units within the Simmons School and a central contributor to SMU's undergraduate enrollment. As of Fall 2025 census, APSM enrolls 275 undergraduates, alongside 33 graduate students for a total of 308 students. These numbers place APSM among the largest undergraduate programs at SMU, making it a visible driver of student demand and academic engagement for the University. At the undergraduate level, the Applied Physiology and Health Management program is recognized as a STEM major, equipping students with a rigorous scientific foundation for careers and graduate study in medical and allied health-related fields. The Sport Management program is ranked No. 10 nationally among undergraduate programs, underscoring its strength and visibility, and the M.S. in Sport Management is ranked No. 21 globally in the *2025 SportBusiness Postgraduate* rankings. Simmons houses research labs with its APSM department supporting funded scientific investigations and promoting sound practice in the sport, health leadership, and management industries. The [Integrative Physiology Lab](#) is rapidly expanding with the goal of becoming one of the premiere applied physiology laboratories in the U.S., with over 3,000 square feet of space, the lab is home to a biochemistry laboratory, anthropometric suite, teaching area, research area, and controlled environmental room.

Simmons maintains a robust, active faculty featuring nearly 60 tenure-track professors, clinical faculty, endowed chairs, and educators with national visibility. [Simmons faculty](#) are committed to pursuing evidence-based solutions that improve and impact lives, with more than 70 percent of tenured professors engaging in funded research, attracting more than \$90 million in external funding. The School advances evidence-based, interdisciplinary research, particularly in the areas of mathematics education, learning sciences, psychometrics, policy and leadership, exercise physiology, health, coaching, and sport management. Per capita, Simmons faculty are consistently SMU's most research-engaged, currently championing more than 82 active research projects, and their research and academic programs demonstrate a clear and [direct impact on the community](#).

Simmons is home to signature initiatives including the [Dr. Elba and Domingo Garcia West Dallas STEM School](#) partnership, a collaboration between the Toyota USA Foundation, Dallas Independent School District, and Simmons, which helped to open a PreK-8th grade STEM-focused school in West Dallas in 2021. Centers and institutes across Simmons include the College Access Programs, The Budd Center: Involving Communities in Education, the Institute for Leadership Impact, the Center for Family Counseling, the Addy Foundation Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE), all hallmarks of evidence-based innovation grounded in local and global impact. The [Center for Technology-Enhanced Immersive Learning \(TEIL\)](#) brings together faculty and researchers who specialize in the intersection of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality, artificial intelligence (AI), simulations, and game-based learning for dynamic research initiatives to reimagine how people learn. SMU is an officially recognized as an Exercise is Medicine On-Campus (EIM-OC) institution, with the Simmons APSM department housing the community-engaged initiative, currently holding Silver-level status, demonstrating the School's commitment to experiential learning and community impact and underscoring Simmons' distinctiveness as one of the few schools of education nationally that bridges health sciences, physiology, sport, and leadership with traditional education disciplines.

Philanthropic Support

Simmons has distinguished itself through exceptional philanthropic momentum, translating donor generosity into transformative impact. Under the umbrella of SMU's landmark *SMU Ignited* campaign, Simmons has secured over [\\$42 million in donor gifts](#) aimed at advancing its mission in education, human development, and community impact. The Simmons School's fundraising success is not measured solely in dollars raised but in the profound impact those resources make possible. Donor gifts have underwritten endowed chairs and fellowships that attract and retain nationally recognized faculty, ensuring that students learn from leading voices in education and human development and reinforcing its capacity to expand access, strengthen academic excellence, and foster partnerships that advance educational opportunity across Texas and beyond. In every instance, donor commitment has aligned seamlessly with Simmons' mission, ensuring that philanthropic success translates into lasting contributions to education, human development, and social impact.

Accreditation

SMU, including Simmons, is regionally accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC). Simmons' educator preparation programs are certified through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) via the State Board for Educator Certification. Simmons holds accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) for their Master of Science in Counseling, and the Learning Therapy Program is accredited by the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC).

For more information about SMU, please visit: www.smu.edu

The Role of Dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development

Reporting to the Provost, the Leon Simmons Endowed Dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development serves as the chief academic officer for the School. The Dean oversees academic programs, faculty appointments, and research initiatives; facilitates budgetary and institutional planning; engages with community partnerships and initiatives; and maintains the School's high academic standards. The Dean oversees a talented team of leaders including the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Associate Dean for Research and Outreach, Assistant Dean for Technology and Innovation, and five Department Chairs. The Dean is responsible for an annual operating budget of \$35 million.

The new Dean of Simmons will have the opportunity to lead a dynamic enterprise, leveraging its existing strengths and implementing a forward-thinking vision to magnify Simmons' offerings in a rapidly changing educational and technological landscape. The ideal Dean will be an advocate and promoter of innovative pedagogies, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary programs, and experiential learning opportunities that prepare students for dynamic career paths.

Responsibilities of the Dean

- Provide strategic leadership and vision to Simmons, aligning with the University's overall strategic plan, mission, and goals, by fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement;
- Enhance the strong culture of research and scholarship within the School, supporting faculty research and promoting the School's research centers and initiatives;
- Oversee the development, implementation, and scaling of academic programs, including undergraduate and graduate degree programs, certificates, and other educational offerings;
- Develop and implement enrollment strategies aligned with institutional mission and market demand, using data analytics to track trends and inform decisions;

- Build and maintain effective relationships with key stakeholders, including administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni, community partners, and donors, to advance the School's mission and goals;
- Develop and manage the School's budget, ensuring effective allocation of resources to support academic programs, research initiatives, and community partnerships;
- Recruit, retain, and develop high-quality faculty and staff, providing and supporting opportunities for growth and promotion;
- Promote and market the School's programs and services to external audiences, including prospective students, community partners, and donors across the Dallas region, Texas, and nationally;
- Collaborate with other schools and colleges within the University to advance interdisciplinary research and education initiatives; and
- Stay informed and engaged with trends and developments across education and human development and use this knowledge to inform strategic decision-making to advance the School to ensure nimbleness and adaptability

Opportunities and Challenges for the Dean of Simmons

Bring visionary and strategic leadership to further strengthen Simmons: The new Dean will have the opportunity to develop and implement an innovative vision for Simmons and be a leader of collaboration and action who will foster continued momentum across programs, research, scholarship, community engagements, and student outcomes. The Dean will stay attuned to evolving trends and best practices in Simmons' core disciplines, evolving curricular content and pedagogy to meet new and persistent needs.

Sustain and advance Simmons' academic enterprise: The Dean will foster the School's excellence in research and teaching by ensuring key human capital, technology, financial, and facility needs are optimized. The Dean will be a partner, mentor, and advocate for scholarship and research initiatives across grant development, foundation engagements, government, industry, and community partnerships. The School's world-renowned faculty and outstanding scholarship will be highlighted by the Dean to recruit exceptional new faculty and create opportunities for them to flourish and contribute to SMU and beyond. The Dean will engage faculty and senior leadership in dialogue to identify and implement innovations and strategic improvements that ensure the education at Simmons remains competitive, relevant, with a broad and global reach, and prioritizes the greatest potential of success for all graduates.

Serve as an engaged and transparent leader, committed to the well-being of the Simmons community: As an intellectually curious academic leader, the Dean will foster a true community of teacher-scholar-mentors and encourage interaction and innovation among faculty members, as well as between faculty, staff, and students. The Dean will build a culture of trust and shared responsibility through transparent communication, compassionate leadership, and data-informed decision-making that supports both faculty and staff development as well as program effectiveness.

Recruit and retain high-quality faculty and academic staff while promoting a community of belonging: The School's continued growth in excellence will require an ongoing focus on the recruitment, retention, and development of talented faculty and staff at various stages of their careers, and the Dean will play a crucial role in this work. The Dean will encourage best practices in hiring and ensure those highly qualified faculty and staff hires are provided opportunities for growth and promotion. By championing best-practice hiring procedures, policies, and professional development opportunities that recognize varied strengths and experiences, the Dean will ensure that Simmons remains a highly attractive and supportive environment for educators and academic professionals.

Steward and grow resources with care: The Dean will manage institutional resources strategically and responsibly, ensuring that academic priorities are supported through transparent planning, conscientious budgeting, and sustainable investments in people, programs, and infrastructure. Embracing and capitalizing on Simmons' recognized excellence, the Dean will proactively engage in fundraising through local, regional, national, and international entities, including alumni, foundations, corporations, government agencies, and the broader community. Student scholarships, endowed faculty positions, academic initiatives, and research projects are all exciting avenues through which the Dean may attract resources to Simmons.

Champion students' educational success, well-being, and vocational readiness: The next Dean will be an advocate for the well-being of all Simmons students and prioritize graduates' outcomes in the face of post-pandemic stresses, complex domestic and world events, and a shifting economic marketplace. The Dean will ensure the support needed for faculty and staff to guide efforts and the availability of resources directed to wellness needs, effective advising, career services, and financial aid, to promote a thriving student body. As a champion of student success, the next Dean will lead initiatives that ensure all Simmons students are supported across the spectrum of their needs. Through partnerships across campus, the Dean's Office will foster collaborations to enhance students' experiences, ensuring all students are afforded meaningful engagements throughout their time at SMU and Simmons.

Identify new possibilities for interdisciplinary and inter-professional scholarship and programs: The next Dean will engage the faculty to think creatively about how to provide unique and transformative educational experiences that leverage SMU's offerings in its broad array of colleges and schools. There is ample opportunity to reimagine existing programs and launch new programs that meet the increasingly interdisciplinary desires of today's students. Opportunities for program development, pedagogy, and research that cross divisional boundaries abound at SMU and are among its most attractive features – ripe for exploration.

Extend and deepen Simmons' reach in the Dallas region and beyond: Simmons benefits tremendously from its location in Dallas, TX and specifically its proximity to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. With growing populations, new industries taking root, and businesses expanding, opportunities are limitless for the next Dean to build new and deepen existing relationships within the community. Simmons has well-established partnerships with area K-12 schools, nonprofits, corporate entities, regional colleges and universities, and national and international consortia. There is room for the next Dean to identify new ways to partner externally while also championing the distinctiveness of a Simmons education.

Further elevate the School's visibility and recognition: As Simmons' primary ambassador, the next Dean will enthusiastically communicate chief elements of the School's storied past, exciting present, and promising future to a range of audiences. Though the School is highly regarded among its counterparts, Simmons' differentiators deserve wider public recognition. The Dean's role will be crucial in defining and communicating the School's myriad strengths as well as the accomplishments of its people to prospective students, families, donors, peers at other colleges and universities, and additional influential constituents. Simmons' next Dean will also be knowledgeable about issues impacting its key disciplines statewide and nationally and be able to identify ways to involve the School in those dialogues in a manner that will strengthen its recognition and appeal.

Desired Attributes and Characteristics for the Dean of Simmons

SMU and Simmons seek an accomplished strategic visionary leader who will inspire students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners. The idea candidate will bring a forward-looking ethos and a passionate approach to articulate Simmons' unique value proposition and galvanize continued momentum, engagements,

and investments. The candidate of choice will bring a highly relational approach, outstanding communication skills, self-confidence balanced with humility, integrity of the highest order, a strong work ethic, superb fiscal stewardship, an entrepreneurial and dynamic spirit, genuine passion for advancing education, and a clear understanding of the importance and value of education and human development in today's higher education landscape and in the marketplace. The successful candidate will demonstrate strong people leadership capacity; model the University's teaching, research, and service mission; and foster an open and collaborative environment for members of Simmons and the greater campus community.

A terminal doctoral degree in a relevant discipline across education or human development is required, along with a distinguished record of research, teaching, creative work, and academic leadership. Experience in an R1 environment is highly preferred.

In addition to these qualities, the ideal candidate will demonstrate the following desired attributes:

- Respect and enthusiasm for SMU's mission and an ability and willingness to contribute actively to it;
- Eagerness and passion to develop, articulate, advocate, and implement a clear vision for the future of Simmons, which will be in concert with the University's strategic plan;
- Keen understanding of the current and changing landscape of higher education and the trends across education and human development disciplines;
- Successful experience with fundraising coupled with the enthusiasm to engage authentically with donors, alumni, community leaders, foundations, corporations, non-profits, cultural entities, and other external partners;
- An entrepreneurial spirit, with demonstrated experience in the development and execution of impactful external partnerships;
- A collaborative leadership style, energized by working fruitfully with faculty, staff, administration, and University leadership;
- A genuine, enthusiastic, and motivational leadership approach that promotes mentoring, community, professional development, and creativity;
- A collaborative and transparent leadership ethos, with a commitment to, and respect for, shared governance and consensus building;
- A student-centered approach that will employ learning strategies that address the needs of a comprehensive student population;
- Commitment to addressing societal challenges through the application of data driven solutions;
- An entrepreneurial and engaged approach to leadership, and a bedrock belief in the power of higher education to positively impact the world;
- A proven ability to make difficult decisions, resolve conflicts, and provide reconciliation in a transparent and compassionate manner; and
- Energetic, optimistic, and hardy leadership qualities combined with a desire to provide respected, long-term leadership.

Compensation and Benefits

This is a full-time position that will be performed on site in Texas. Salary will be commensurate with experience and accompanied by a generous benefits package.

Contact

Nominations and applications should be submitted electronically as soon as possible. The Simmons Dean Search Committee will begin to evaluate applications in October 2025. Although applications will be welcomed until the

time a new Dean is selected, candidates should submit materials by Saturday, November 1st, 2025, to ensure full consideration. DSG Storbeck has been exclusively retained for this engagement, led by Julie Tea, Managing Director, and Kate Phillips, Senior Associate. Submit a compelling cover letter and CV/resume by filling out the firm's Talent Profile at [SMU Simmons Dean](#). For nominations and inquiries, please contact: SMUSimmonsDean@storbecksearch.com. *All inquiries are strictly confidential.*

Equal Opportunity

SMU will not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, education activity, or admissions on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. SMU's commitment to equal opportunity includes nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The Executive Director for Access and Equity/Title IX Coordinator is designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies, including the prohibition of sex discrimination under Title IX. The Executive Director/Title IX Coordinator may be reached at the Perkins Administration Building, Room 204, 6425 Boaz Lane, Dallas, TX 75205, 214-768-3601, accessequity@smu.edu.

DSG Storbeck Statement

***This leadership profile is not exhaustive and may be subject to change. While every effort has been made to confirm information at the date of publication, the accuracy or completeness of the information provided herein cannot be guaranteed.*