

## **University Achievement Award**

Zahra Chowdhury

Samuel Rodick

Shriya Siddhartha

### **Juniors:**

Megan Appel

Yaw Boateng

Alex Chen

Tierney Clark

Kitty Eid

Penny Helwig

Brian Le

Mallory Lorant

Camille Nguyen

Ansh Patel

Tessa Peterson

Alexandra Reyes

Hunter Robinson

Sam Romney

Cooper Shapard

Isabella Thraikill

Luke Voinov

Tyler Welch

### **Seniors:**

Will Addington

Zahra Chowdhury

Ursula Chumley

Michael Cohen

Ebere Enefiele

Noah Giesen

Doug Glennon

Hannah Hoch

Lauren Jenkins

Luke Latham

Davis Lynn

Ria Mukherji

Grant Offner

Megha Reddy

Rachel Rodgers

William Schmitt

Saif Shah

Natalya Talih

Megan Watson

Avery White

## Robert Stewart Hyer Society

**26 April 2026**

### **Awardees:**

#### **University Achievement Award**

**Zahra Chowdhury** is a senior President's Scholar from Memphis, Tennessee, majoring in Economics, Public Policy, and Political Science with minors in Arabic and PPIA as a NexPoint Tower Scholar. Passionate about criminal justice reform and public service, Zahra serves as the strategic director of the Human Rights Council and was a Maguire Public Service Fellow and a Cooper McElvaney Peace & Justice Fellow. During her time on the Hilltop, Zahra has interned at the Texas Muslim Women's Foundation, Lone Star Justice Alliance, and the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center. On campus, Zahra serves as the Student Representative to the Board of Trustees on the Academic Affairs Committee, the chair of CORE, vice president of Kappa Delta Chi Sorority, and as an editor for the Dialogue, the University's undergraduate political science journal, which she helped revive. After graduation, Zahra will continue her Arabic study this summer in Morocco through the State Department's Critical Language Scholarship, after which she will serve as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Indonesia.

**Samuel Rodick** is a senior from Albany, New York studying history and political science, with minors in general anthropology, human rights, classical studies, and public policy and international affairs. He is also a NexPoint Tower Scholar, a Dedman College Scholar, and a member of the University Honors Program. He also works as a resident assistant in Armstrong Commons and as a student worker at the Center for Presidential History. As a junior elected last year, Samuel was this year's Senior Orator at yesterday's Phi Beta Kappa Induction Ceremony. This fall he will be attending Harvard University Law School, with the hope of specializing in voting rights and constitutional law.

**Shriya Siddhartha** is a senior Biochemistry major with minors in Neuroscience, Public Policy and International Affairs and is an aspiring physician-scientist. She is a Goldwater Scholar, Dedman College Scholar, a NexPoint Tower Scholar, a Hamilton and Richter Fellow, a Cooper-McElvaney Fellow, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa last year as a junior. Shriya recently received a Fulbright award to teach English in Spain. After completing the Fulbright, she will matriculate to the University of Pittsburgh's Physician-Scientist Training Program, where she will continue to conduct research on the pathophysiology of neurodegenerative diseases while exploring the political-economic factors underlying global healthcare disparities.

## Seniors

**Will Addington** is a senior from Dorset, VT majoring in Finance with an Alternative Assets Specialization, with minors in Music, Japanese, and Economics. In his time at SMU he has been involved with the Rugby Club, President's Scholars program, and Boulevard Investment Group. He will be working in NYC as a Private Equity Analyst at Brown Brothers Harriman after graduation.

**Zahra Chowdhury** [*See University Achievement Award Bio*]

**Ursula Chumley** is a senior double majoring in Psychology and English, with a minor in Cognitive Science. At SMU, she serves as a research assistant in the MAPL Lab, where she studies the relationship between emotion, memory, and cognitive processes across the adult lifespan. She is also deeply engaged with the SMU creative writing community, with a particular focus on poetics. In memory of her father, she plans to pursue graduate study in psychology to support individuals and families affected by an Alzheimer's diagnosis.

**Michael Cohen** is a senior Hunt Leadership Scholar from Atlanta, GA, studying Finance in the Cox School of Business. Outside of the Hunt Leadership Scholars program, Michael studies in the BBA Scholars and University Honors Programs. He is also involved in the EnCap Investments & LCM Group Alternative Asset Management Center (ALTs Program). He thoroughly enjoyed his time working and studying abroad in London after his sophomore year. He recently finished his term as Treasurer of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and as Director of Consulting for TAMID, where he previously served as President. Following graduation, he is heading back home to Atlanta to work as an Investment Banking Analyst for Croft & Bender.

**Ebere Emefiele** is on the Pre-Law track majoring in Human Rights and Sociology. Throughout her years, she has served on numerous leadership boards. She served in the Association of Black Students as the freshman chair, secretary, and vice president. She served as the Black student body representative for the Black Unity Forum. She served as Dedman Senator, an undergraduate researcher for the Deason Center in SMU Dedman Law, the fundraising chair for Hilltop LULAC, events coordinator for the Human Rights Council, and vice president of Mortar Board. She is a member of Phi Alpha Delta: Pre-Law Fraternity, Pre-Law Scholars, Alpha Chi National College Honor Society, McNair Scholar, and Phi Beta Kappa. Her end goal is to attend law school and be on the JD/MBA track

**Noah Giesen** is a Finance major from Chicago and will be pursuing an investment banking career in William Blair's Technology Group, based in Chicago. Additionally, Noah serves as the Chief Operating Officer of the Boulevard Investment Group and is a Don Jackson Fellow for the Alternative Asset Management Center.

**Doug Glennon** is originally from Naples, Florida. This May, he will be graduating from Cox with a BBA in Finance (Energy Management Specialization) in addition to a minor in History. Here at SMU, Doug was a Vice President in the Spindletop Energy Investment Fund, a member of the Alternative Asset Management Program, University Honors Program, Sigma Nu Fraternity, and diehard fan of SMU football. Additionally, he completed three internships in both accounting and finance each summer across Dallas and Houston. After graduation, he is looking forward to beginning his role as an Investment Banking Analyst in Houston at Tudor, Pickering, Holt & Co. this upcoming July.

**Hannah Hoch** is a finance student with specializations in alternative asset management and entrepreneurship. She is also a student athlete on the university's division I equestrian team, where she has been a starting athlete all four years and earned two NCAA national championship titles. On campus, she has had the honor of serving as a Don Jackson Fellow for the Alternative Asset Management Center and as Chief Recruitment Officer for the Boulevard Investment Group. After graduation she will begin her career as an investment banking analyst at Centerview Partners in New York City.

**Lauren Jenkins** is completing Bachelor of Science degrees in Applied Math and Economics with financial applications, and she is receiving the John Robert McCaw award in Mathematics and the Josef Hadar award in Economics this year. Lauren was also honored to receive the Richter International Fellowship upon her choice to study abroad in Oxford and Rome and Paris the summer after her freshman year. Outside of classes, she enjoyed participating in the Bridwell Armentrout Scholars Reading Group, served as the president of the Alpha Kappa Psi business fraternity, and led education for the quantitative trading club, Traders@SMU. After graduation, Lauren is moving to New York City to be a Risk Management analyst for Morgan Stanley.

**Luke Latham** is a senior studying Finance and French. He is a member of the ALTs program, a goalie for the SMU hockey team, and a Teaching Assistant for Advanced Corporate Finance. After graduation, he will join Texas Capital as a Leveraged Finance Investment Banking Analyst.

**Davis Lynn** is an Accounting, Computer Science, and Data Science major from Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He is a Residential Assistant in MHPS Commons, a TA for Finance, Management, and Accounting Courses, as well as a member of the RA Advisory Board and the Computer Science Advisory Board. He intends to stay at SMU for his Master's in Accounting and work in Tax Technology after graduation. In Davis' free time, he enjoys wake surfing, finding new local restaurants, and traveling.

**Ria Mukherji** is a graduating senior studying Computer Science and Data Science with a minor in English. She is beyond grateful for the wide array of opportunities SMU has given her to explore everything from virtual reality research to studying Medieval culture abroad in Italy with her UHP class. During her time here, she served on student advisory boards and worked as a TA, while also meeting some of the most interesting and unforgettable campus characters. SMU's environment pushed her to discover her passions for poetry, trivia, and free food events (a critical part of the SMU experience). In the future, she hopes to do academic research, and she is thrilled to begin her Master's in Business Analytics at MIT this fall.

**Grant Offner** is a Senior from Saint Simons Island, Georgia, who will be graduating with a degree in Finance and Minors in Math and Physics this May. During Grant's time at SMU, he has served as President of The Big Event, Vice President of Programming for the Student Foundation, Service Chair for Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity, and as a founder of Hilltop Investment in Healthcare. Grant has been recognized for his commitment to the SMU and Dallas community through his receipt of the Do Good for Dallas Award and attendance at The Allstate Foundation's National Youth Service Summit. Following graduation, Grant will be working as a Private Equity Analyst at Mountain Capital Partners.

**Megha Reddy** is a senior from Parker, Texas double majoring in Finance and Data Science with a minor in History. She is an SMU Distinguished Scholar, a BBA Scholar, and is a part of the University Honors Program. She was also recently inducted into the Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society and the Alpha Chi National Honor Society. During her time at SMU, she served as both a research assistant and teaching assistant for the Finance department as well as a member of the executive team for the BBA Women in Business Organization. Upon graduation, she will join American Airlines as a Financial Analyst and continue pursuing her career in Corporate Finance.

**Rachel Rodgers** is a Creative Advertising major with minors in Photography and Graphic Design, and is also enrolled in the accelerated 4+1 Master's program in Advertising. She is an Engaged Learning Fellow (ELF) and multi-award-winning creative, earning several American Advertising Awards (ADDYs) and SMU Portfolio Night Awards, and will present her Carter BloodCare campaign at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR). Rachel has gained agency experience through four different advertising internships, such as The LOOMIS Agency and MasonBaronet, previously served as President of the SMU Chess Club, and is a Chemistry Teaching Assistant for the third consecutive year.

**William Schmitt** is completing his BFA in Theatre (Acting) with a minor in educational studies. As an Engaged Learning Fellow and Spaht Family Immersion Fund Grant recipient, he conducted six weeks of fieldwork in Northern India investigating the application of principles of Indian sound healing and silence to U.S. theatre performance. He created an original play based on his research that he performed at Meadows School of the Arts and then in Delhi, India in Spring 2026. He was also selected as one of five faculty-nominated SMU representatives to present at the ACC Meeting of the Minds Undergraduate Research Conference in April 2026. Schmitt is a Meadows Scholar, Hilltop Scholar, and recipient of The Partner's Award from the Division of Theatre for exemplary peer support. As an incoming Fulbright Scholar to Thailand, he plans to continue integrating research, intercultural exchange, and theatre performance into his professional work.

**Saif Shah** is a senior pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Biology as a Dedman College Scholar and member of the University Honors Program. He conducted research in the Anxiety and Depression Research Center, where he completed an honors thesis examining the relationship between stress mindset, sleep, and mental health in undergraduate students. Saif is the founder and president of Active Minds at SMU, current Secretary of the Muslim Student Association, and previously served as a Resident Assistant in Ware Commons. Following graduation, he plans to attend medical school and pursue a career integrating clinical practice with mental health advocacy and research.

**Natalya Talih** is a senior double majoring in Political Science and International Studies, with a minor in Russian Area Studies. During her time at SMU, she has been a Hamilton Undergraduate Research Scholar and research assistant exploring 21st-century comparative authoritarianism, and has also served as Treasurer for the Society for Russian Studies and the French Club. She was selected for the 2025 Philip H. Solomon Award in World Languages in Russian and 2026 Franklin Balch Award recipient for the top graduating senior in International Studies. Her post-graduation plans include taking a gap year and applying to law school in the upcoming cycle.

**Megan Watson** is a senior at Meadows School of the Arts, earning dual degrees in Public Relations and Strategic Communications and Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, with a minor in History. As a Distinguished Scholar and University Honors Program member, she has been honored with the Outstanding Academic Achievement Award in CCPA, the Outstanding Student Award in CCPA Nonprofit and Arts Leadership, and has been selected as this year's CCPA Commencement Marshal. On campus, Megan serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief of Hilltopics, where she revived SMU's only honors publication, a Resident Assistant for Loyd Commons, and as the President of SMU's Speech and Debate program. She is deeply committed to nonprofit engagement and looks forward to carrying the lessons from her time at SMU into her professional career.

**Avery White** will receive a B.S. in Biological Sciences, a B.S. in Health and Society, and a B.A. in Religious Studies with a specialization in Religion and Culture, along with a minor in Chemistry. She has been recognized with the Do Good for Dallas Award, the Religious Studies Department Writing Award, inducted into Alpha Epsilon Delta, and named a nominee for the SMU Mothers and Dads Club Outstanding Senior Award. Over the past four years, she has served as a student ambassador, worked as an undergraduate research assistant in the MAPL Lab, and held leadership roles across campus, including Assistant Executive Director of The Big Event, alongside involvement in Pre-Dental Society, MEDLIFE, Alpha Chi Omega's Couture philanthropy committee, and four years as SMU's mascot, Peruna, including serving as mascot captain her senior year. In July, she will begin dental school at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine, where she plans to pursue a DMD and MPH with the intention of specializing after graduation.

## Juniors

**Megan Appel** is a junior studying Electrical Engineering with minors in Mathematics and Computer Science. She is a Hunt Leadership Scholar, a Lyle Engineering Scholar, recipient of the Sally Blum Memorial Prize in Engineering, and a member of Tau Beta Pi, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Eta Kappa Nu, and Mortar Board honor societies. On campus, Megan serves as President of SMU's chapter of Society of Women Engineers, is actively involved in both local and international Engineers Without Borders projects, works as a Resident Assistant in Upper Division Housing, and serves on the Vice President of Student Affairs Student Advisory Board. She has also completed extensive undergraduate research, contributed to published papers, and gained industry experience through internships. After graduation, Megan plans to pursue her master's degree through Lyle's 4+1 program and continue working in circuitry design in industry.

**Yaw Boateng** is a Computer Engineering student with minors in Computer Science, Data Science, and Math. He is active in campus leadership through the SMU CIO Student Advisory Board, NSBE, and the SMU Entrepreneurship Varsity Team. After graduation, Yaw plans to pursue software engineering and entrepreneurship, building technology that expands access to opportunities and improves how people learn and work.

**Alex Chen** is a current junior majoring in Accounting with minors in Chinese and Psychology. Besides focusing on his studies, he seeks to constantly expand his horizons and outreach through leadership with several student organizations such as Chinese Language Club and Mustang Chess Club, as well as serving as a peer leader through Engage Dallas. Following completion of his undergraduate degree, he is considering pursuing either an MSF or MSA degree, and also perhaps an MBA later down the line. This summer, he will be participating in the International Leadership Foundation's (ILF) Civic Fellowship, a unique pathway which will hopefully open many doors for him in the future!

**Tierney Clark** is a triple-major in Computer Science, Data Science, and Dance Performance. Along with dancing in SMU Meadows performances, she also supports productions as an assistant lighting designer and programmer. This summer she will be interning in data analytics and cybersecurity for Ballet Austin.

**Kitty Eid** is a Junior from Colorado Springs, majoring in political science and economics, with minors in Cognitive Science, Ethics, Public Policy and International Affairs, French, and having a lot of minors. My study of political science has been greatly enhanced through participation in the Tower Scholars Program and my research position. She has published research regarding how social media encourages democratic backsliding in the journal *Social Sciences*, and she has since turned her attention to how democratic backsliding obstructs environmental policies. College was her plan B, with plan A being to get shredded and be the first person to win 9 Mr. Olympia titles. She feels pretty confident in saying that, with the help of her family, friends, and incredible professors, she is set up for a fantastic fall back if the Arnold Schwarzenegger thing doesn't work out-- but fingers crossed.

**Penny Helwig** is a junior pursuing a major in Psychology with minors in Biomedical Anthropology and Music Industry Practices. In addition to the Hyer Society, she is a member of the Mortar Board Honor Society, Alpha Chi National Honor Society, Psi Chi International Honor Society, SMU's Mustang Mentor Program, and has received the Philip H. Solomon Award in World Languages and Literatures for American Sign Language. She stays involved in her community by working with Dallas Children's Advocacy Center as a Circle of Hope Member, the Nexus Recovery Center's Young Supporters Council, Americans For Ibogaine's Founders Circle, JS Helwig & Son for its Annual Christmas Event benefitting REACH Child Placing Agency, and volunteering at Jewish Family Services. After graduation, Penny plans to pursue a PhD in Clinical or Counseling Psychology with the aspiration to own a private psychotherapy practice specializing in adults with complex trauma.

**Brian Le** is a Biology major on the pre-med track, minoring in Psychology. On campus, he is part of the Turner Scholars Program, and is also President of the Vietnamese Student Association and Vice President of Alpha Epsilon Delta. He is passionate in healthcare and plans to dedicate his life to the medical field, with plenty of experiences in research and volunteering. His most recent experience was a medical mission trip where he set up multiple clinics in rural Vietnam. This summer he will be working at Texas Presbyterian Hospital and continuing his work in a research lab at SMU.

**Mallory Lorant** is a junior double-majoring in Philosophy and Corporate Communication and Public Affairs, while double-minoring in Spanish and Law and Legal Reasoning. She maintains a 3.98 GPA and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, the University Honors Program, and Dedman College Scholars, where she serves as Vice President. On campus, she is President of Delta Gamma and a tutor at the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center, and she has also represented SMU through selective academic programs like Hilltop on the Hill in Washington, D.C. She has completed over 3,600 hours of service, including founding ELEVATE, an initiative focused on domestic violence awareness - work that has directly influenced her plans to attend law school and pursue a career in family law specializing in domestic violence and child advocacy.

**Camille Nguyen** is a double major in Finance and Health & Society with a minor in Public Policy and International Affairs through the Tower Scholars Program. This year, she has been deeply involved in the Caswell Leadership Fellows Program, where she leads a heart health, CPR, and AED training initiative called Heart to Heart that has reached more than 800 students across Dallas and at SMU. In addition to her fellowship, she works as a research assistant, an SMU Student Ambassador, and a student worker in the Office of the Senior Vice President for Student Affairs. As a heart disease survivor, she aspires to become a health lawyer and health policymaker, shaping a more equitable and accessible healthcare system.

**Ansh Patel** is a mechanical engineering student with a specialization in entrepreneurship and a strong interest in the energy sector. At SMU, he has been involved in laser research under Dr. Willis and Dr. Salehi, while also participating in the Maguire Energy Club. Outside of academics, Ansh speaks Italian, is a member of the Italian Club at SMU, and plays tennis, basketball, and golf. This summer, he will be working as an engineering intern for Energy Transfer, where he hopes to continue building his experience in the energy industry.

**Tessa Peterson** is a junior double-majoring in Political Science and Psychology, with minors in Russian and Public Policy and International Affairs as a NexPoint Tower Scholar. She is in the University Honors Program, Phi Beta Kappa, Pre-Law Scholars, and Dedman College Scholars. She is the incoming Student Representative to the Board of Trustees for Academic Affairs, and she currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of *The Dialogue*, a Justice in the Student Senate Judicial Branch, and a Student Ambassador. She has conducted research on global migration policy through the Hamilton Undergraduate Research Fellowship, family dynamics in the Family Health and Development Lab, and the Irish Revolution through the Richter Fellowship. She is interested in attending law school and pursuing a career in national security law and foreign policy.

**Alexandra Reyes** is a junior from San Antonio, Texas, majoring in Geophysics and Biochemistry, with minors in Mathematics and Physics. She is a DoD SMART Scholar, Dedman College Scholar, and McNair Scholar; she also conducts undergraduate research as an Engaged Learning Fellow. At SMU, Alexandra spends much of her time playing trumpet in the Mustang Band and planning events with her club, Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), as Co-President. After graduation, she will work for the Naval Oceanographic Office and plans to pursue a PhD in Astrobiology, with the goal of working for NASA.

**Hunter Robinson** is a chemistry major with a minor in physics and is part of the University Honors and Dedman Scholars Programs, as well as a member of Mortar Board and Alpha Chi National College Honor Society. She is actively involved in STEM outreach through WISE, working with fourth- and fifth-grade girls to promote interest in science. Her research in protein biochemistry with Dr. Zoltowski has contributed to her interest in environmental and planetary chemistry. Following graduation, she plans to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry.

**Sam Romney** is a junior from Orlando, Florida, majoring in Finance with a specialization in Alternative Asset Management and Mathematics, with a minor in Chinese. He is a member of the University Honors Program, Phi Beta Kappa, and Beta Gamma Sigma. Outside of class, he serves as a Teaching Assistant for Intro to Financial Accounting and is a member of the Cox Undergraduate Advisory Council. After graduation, he plans to pursue a career in the investment industry.

**Cooper Shapard** is an Electrical and Computer Engineering junior on track to graduate this spring with a B.S. and next spring with an M.S. in Quantum Engineering. He has served as the President of the IEEE branch at SMU, student researcher at the Darwin Deason Institute of Cybersecurity, RA in Crum Commons, Teaching Assistant for three ECE courses, and founded a nonprofit dental health organization through Lead@SMU. Outside of class, he enjoys entrepreneurship, speed typing, and playing piano. Cooper will be working for his fourth Engineering internship this summer and plans to pursue a career in developing quantum computing hardware.

**Isabella Thrailkill** is majoring in Biology, Spanish, and Human Rights Public Policy, with a minor in Public Policy and International Affairs. She is a Dedman College Scholar and a NexPoint Tower Scholar, as well as the recipient of Phi Beta Kappa, the Rubottom Foreign Service award, Organic Chemistry Achievement award, and the Organic Chemistry Lab award. She is a research assistant in Zoltowski Lab, an intern at Migration Policy Institute, an RA in Loyd Commons, a student worker at the Dedman College Dean's Office, as well as the Vice President of K-pop Club and President of the Dedman College Scholars Program. Following college, she plans to attend law school.

**Luke Voinov** is a student leader with FOCUS and an Associate Editor for the Journal of Undergraduate Research. He is researching a brain model for Hamilton Scholars and is the TA for Circuit Analysis. In his spare time, he loves to build random circuits and blow tomato plants up.

**Tyler Welch** is a junior from Katy, TX with majors in Sport Management and Journalism and minors in Statistical Science and History. He is a Hunt Scholar, and was the recipient of the John L. Freehafer award his sophomore year as well as a regular recipient of Honor Roll with High Distinction honors. He serves as the President of Sports Business Society, Vice President of Programming of Student Foundation, Sports Editor for The Daily Campus, RA for Boaz Commons, and next year will be a Student Affairs Representative to the SMU Board of Trustees. After SMU, Tyler hopes to become a baseball reporter and commentator.