

THE GERALD AND GAIL TURNER SCHOLARS PROGRAM

FALL 2025

THE SCHOLAR SCOOP



NEW ERA, SAME VALUES

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY, ONE STEP AT A TIME





The Turners
OUR NAMESAKES



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PROGRAM DIRECTOR



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SENIOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS COUNSELOR



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ACADEMIC SUCCESS COUNSELOR



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M.S. COUNSELING 2026



Tulsi Ram Lohani
GRADUATE ASSISTANT
M.P.A. 2026



Aneiry Resendiz
FELLOW
CLASS OF 2026



Ja'niah Cooper
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
CLASS OF 2027



Megan Manning
UPPERCLASSMAN COORDINATOR
CLASS OF 2021



Erika Puente-Lopez
FIRST-YEARS' COORDINATOR
CLASS OF 2026

The Gerald and Gail Turner Scholars Program STAFF AND LEADERSHIP TEAM



20 SMU 25

**TURNER
SCHOLARS**

Southern Methodist University



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FIRST-YEARS' COORDINATOR
CLASS OF 2027



Pax
DOG-IN-RESIDENCE
PART-TIME PEER COUNSELOR



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PEER UPPERCASSMAN LIAISON
DESMAN COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES
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Chris Aghé
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Donovan De Jesus
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Yuritxi Rodriguez
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CLASS OF 2026



Andrew Briseño
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2027



Angela Escobedo
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Arianna Saravia
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Christian Luna
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Diana Maldonado
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Fatima Saad
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Hiram Tellez
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Isabella Blanchard
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2027



Journee Jones
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2026



Langston Hampton
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Li Duong
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Lily Miner
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Madelyn Fields
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2027



Natalia Rojas-Ochoa
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Quynh Tran
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2028



Ryan Resendiz
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2027



Xitlali Lopez
PEER COUNSELOR
CLASS OF 2027

EXPLORE. EMPOWER. EVOLVE.

ON THE COVERS

Hello Turner Scholar,

Happy New Year, and congratulations on finishing the Fall 2025 Semester! Whether this semester was your first, last, or somewhere in between, we're incredibly proud of you for making it through.

This semester, we have been focused on building our program, both internally and externally, by strengthening the essential elements that define it and enable us to support our Scholars to the fullest. Our cover story, penned by Spring 2024 Cohort member Karl Bodenheimer '27, shares just one example of how the Turner Scholars Program works diligently to serve our scholars.

As we look to the future, we are excited to welcome **twelve** new members to the Turner Scholar Family as part of the Spring 2026 mid-year cohort. We will have more information to share about them at the beginning of the new semester, and we can't wait to see what they bring to our program!

Thank you for your continued support of the Scholar Scoop and the Gerald and Gail Turner Scholars Program as a whole. We could not do this without you!

It's a great time to be a Turner Scholar! Pony Up!

Turner Scholars Leadership Team

EMPOWER, EXPLORE, EVOLVE

FRONT:

A trio of first-year Scholars at the Back-2-Class Bash.

BACK:

The Fall 2025 Cohort, and Turner Staff, celebrate the end of the Fall 2025 RISE Institute at Group Dynamix.



TURNER LEADERSHIP

ANEIRY RESENDIZ '26
PROGRAM FELLOW

JA'NIAH COOPER '27
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

MEGAN RUTH MANNING '27
UPPERCLASSMEN COORDINATOR

ERIKA PUENTE-LOPEZ '26
FIRST-YEAR COORDINATOR

MAX ENGELBRECHT '27
FIRST-YEAR COORDINATOR

MARIA RIOS '23 '27
GRADUATE ASSISTANT

TULSI RAM LOHANI '25 '27
GRADUATE ASSISTANT

**"SUCCESS IS THE SUM OF
SMALL EFFORTS REPEATED
DAY IN AND DAY OUT."**
– ROBERT COLLIER

FALL 2025 RISE INSTITUTE

READINESS, INTERDEPENDENCE, SUCCESS, & EXCELLENCE



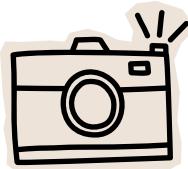
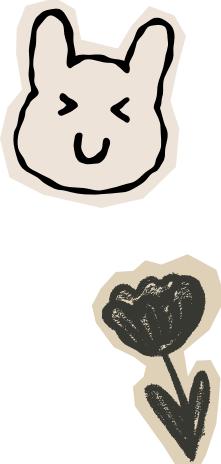


august



Jesus with friends at the “Canes n’ Competition” September Community Dinner

“The trivia game itself was funny and engaging, and my team was able to win, so it boosted my mood as well, and gave a fun time for everyone else involved, I’m sure.” - Jesus Ramirez



Anushka, Kalkidan, & Samantha at Slime & Sweets (hosted by PCs Fatima, Isabella, and Journee!)

“I was able to relax and enjoy my time with friends and PCs.”

“This type of environment made it easier to better connect with the group of people there. I would most definitely go to this event again.”

“We made slime and had delicious sweets while making new friends.”

- Samantha, Kalkidan, and Anushka



Mattania with a friend at ASA’s 2025 Ngoma Night



“This was definitely a fusion of African cultures and food. The food was great, consisting of all types of cuisine from jollof to injera. The people were also so kind and welcoming as well!” - Mattania Biniam



Krshiv with a group of friends at the HOLA Kickoff

“It was great, I was able to meet members of the club and other Turner scholars. The food was nice, and socializing with other students helped make the campus more like home.”

- Krshiv Sathiaseelan

September

event credits



Sara and fellow Turner Scholars snap a photo at the Back-2-Class Bash

"This event was beneficial and meaningful for me because I was able to connect with other Turner Scholars and meet new people. Through this event, I was able to be introduced to the Peer Counselors and Academic Success Counselors."

- Sara Sabir



A group of Turner Scholars at the Back-2-Class Bash

"It was a good time to get familiar with everybody in the program. The food was amazing, and the sliders were dope."

"It was nice to go with my friends."

"I felt great about the event as an introduction to SMU with my friends."

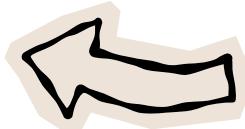
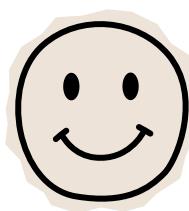
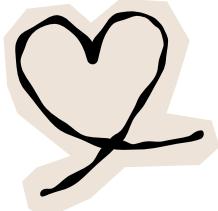
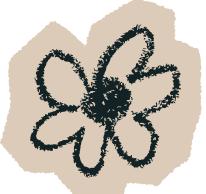
- Ethan, Ben, and Mattania



Soha poses alongside a friend at MSA's "Sisters Arts and Crafts."

"This event was the first MSA meeting I had gone to. It was a good experience to be able to meet new people. I enjoyed making bracelets while chatting."

- Soha Syed



SLIME, SWEETS, & SENTIMENTS!

The inside scoop on the *sweetest* PC event of the semester

PC Fatima Saad ('28)



“Stress Less with Slime and Sweets” was a wonderful kickoff event led by Fatima Saad, Journee Jones, and Isabella Blanchard. Across the 2029 cohort, we had over 40 students attend, alongside a few other PCs! This turnout was more than expected, but we were thrilled to have each student there, connecting with one another.

The main goal of our event was to give the freshmen an outlet and a fun space to relax amidst the transition into their first semester. And who doesn’t love a free sweet treat? We had JD’s Chippery for all of our scholars, safe to say there wasn’t a single cookie left by the end.

For many students, this was their first time making slime, while others were seasoned pros. With an activity as playful and low-pressure as this, it was easy for students to strike up conversations even with people they had never spoken to before. Throughout the room you could hear people comparing their slimes, laughing about the mess they were making, or mixing their creations together just to see what would happen. Some students shared fun facts about themselves, like how a few had slime businesses during middle school!

The highlight of the event truly was watching the students connect with one another. You could see friendships forming in real time, students leaning over to help fix sticky slime, students laughing at students with sticky slime, or bonding over completely unrelated interests that came up. Another special moment was watching friendships from past Turner events continue to grow. It showed how quickly a sense of community can develop when students consistently show up.

The atmosphere was chaotic, but in the best way possible. The room was full of laughter and music, with Journee and Fatima running around activating everyone's slime. Throughout the event, we overheard multiple students saying they hadn't made slime since they were kids, and how refreshing and fun it felt to revisit something so simple and nostalgic. By the end of the event, we were left with a surprisingly easy clean up and so many photos that captured how fun the event was! A scholar who attended the event said, "I liked this event because I was able to make slime with my friends, as well as make new friends. This event was special to me because it didn't feel like something that was academic, but an event where I could forget about stress and laugh with friends. I would definitely do it again because it was an overall fun event and made me feel like a kid again when I would always make slime." Which is exactly what we hoped to accomplish with this event!



OCTOBER

EVENT CREDITS



"I enjoyed coloring and the candy!
I also got a temporary tattoo!"

- **Nina Jones** on the Turner Scholarween Mash
(Hosted by PCs Angela, Arianna, and Diana!)



"I felt welcomed at this event, and learned about how much a community can come together to celebrate these fun and exciting events. I was with some friends from Crum Commons, and it was special since this was the biggest event I'd attended this semester. I would go again in a heartbeat."

- **Joel Flores** on The Great Cosmic Crumpkin



"I absolutely loved Tracy. She is such a smart and well educated lady."
"I'm so happy my sorority offered this as an opportunity to learn about a powerful woman and use her as an example for us all."

"I would definitely go to this again. It was so much fun to not only hear Walker's stories but also meet her alongside my sisters"

- **Nikki, Renata, & Mackenzie** on the DG Lectureship



"The experience was a lot of fun, especially since my friends were able to attend as well! It was also a nice way to close out Hispanic Heritage Month. I'm also really glad that I won as well, that was cool."

- Alyssa Hernandez on Lotería in the Library



It was very fun!!! I enjoyed it so much, and I hope that there will be more events like this in the future.

- Rachel Ki on Midnight Market



"It was fun meeting new people, including those applying to the Turner Scholars program next spring. I also loved playing the mini games for raffle tickets. My favorite game was the m&m one. Overall, it was a good time."

- Haris Dosani on the "One Minute, One Community" Dinner

A Frighteningly Good Time!



Personal takeaways from the Turner Scholarween Mash

PC Angela Escobedo ('28)

When October comes around, you will see plenty of pumpkins, ghosts, candy, and spooky things that get you into the Halloween spirit. The spookiest moments of all are the upcoming midterms, homework, and projects. PCs Arianna, Diana, and I thought hard about ways to spook these fears out. We thought the best way would be to take a break and have some fun with friends, joining in different activities and enjoying candy and sweet treats. From here, the Turner Scholarween Mash was created!

We were so excited to share this news with the scholars, but we first had some preparation and planning to do. We took our time to plan the activities and products needed to execute our event, as well as to divide the tasks that needed to take place. As the date was getting closer, we were ready to share the news with everyone. We received great feedback, expected several attendees, and were all grateful for the responses and anticipation. It is also important to note that we had the support and guidance while planning our events from Pro-Staff and the leadership team; thank you for all you do!



Going back to event planning, soon after our products arrived, we began to see the vision come true. After this, we were able to meet occasionally to prepare for setting up the room for the event, reviewing the itinerary, and our assigned tasks. We went over our preparations multiple times to ensure scholars had everything ready to go and enjoyed their time at the event. Next thing we knew, it was the day of the event! Arianna showcased a day in her life on Instagram leading up to the event to get the scholars excited and to help them get to know PC Arianna.

Both Diana and I were prepping the decorations for the event and getting our Halloween costumes ready. Once we arrived, we were ready to set up. The setup went smoothly, and with the help of Coordinator Erika, we had the event ready to go for our scholars. Scholars arrived and were guided through the event's multiple activities, encouraged to grab candy, and to take photos at our spooky photo booth station. We continued to engage with students as they arrived and kept them interested in other activities. Overall, most students seemed to find the coloring pages most amusing. Followed by the candy & fake tattoo stations.



After the event, we were able to reflect and rest on our process in making the event possible. Even though we were spooked out from our own midterms and homework, and felt we could've been more present if chosen a date when we were free from midterms, we felt proud and happy about creating an event where students got the chance to take a break and enjoy a bit of the Halloween spirit. Arianna, Diana, and I felt grateful for the scholars and staff who attended and made the event possible!



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER EVENT CREDITS



"I loved attending the fall dance concert as it was a very diverse show. What made this special is that I am a dance major myself, but was not able to participate, so watching the upperclassmen perform gave me something to look forward to. I would definitely go again as the show kept me engaged the entire time."

- Carra Collins on the 2025 Meadows Fall Dance Concert



"The Cowboys' networking experience was absolutely amazing. Not only did we get to tour the Cowboys' facility, but we also got to hear from people who work there and in the sports world. I learned a lot about the importance of time management and networking."

- Salyce Winters on the Dallas Cowboys Networking event



"The event was so much fun and was a nice getaway from studying to relax. I also really liked the goodies, especially the eye mask!"

- Alyssa Hernandez on "Tis the Finals Season"
(Hosted by PCs Andrew, Lily, and Ryan!)



"I had a good time with everyone there. We talked about the finals season, and we were given really great advice. We also played really fun games and got a whole bunch of free stuff."

- Joliet Okoronkwo on "Tis the Finals Season"
(Hosted by PCs Andrew, Lily, and Ryan!)



"I liked this event because I got to meet new people while being with some of my friends. It was nice to learn some more tips for studying and how to become an academic weapon for next semester. I also enjoyed the food provided, and yes, I would attend an event like this again."

- Maria Bedoy on the **"Fuel for Finals" Community Dinner**



"The event was exciting because I have a lot of first-gen friends, so I became more aware and understanding towards them. Cynthia Gudiel's stories were valuable because they made me aware of what first-generation students typically experience. Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet some new friends and connect with people I had never met before, making for a great social networking event."

- Adam Jakab on **The 2025 Evolve Speaker Series**



"I watched the performances by myself for about 30 minutes, but then I met up with some BSM people. It was so fun to catch up with everyone! I ended up staying the whole time. We waited in line for hot chocolate while talking about theology, and it made the time spent in the cold go faster."

- Zoe Napolitano on the **Festival of Lights**



"I had a lot of fun at this event. The food here was pretty good, and the atmosphere was nice. Taking pictures with Santa and his reindeer was the best part."

- Cedrick Stubblefield on **Let It Crowd**

Fall Semester Reflection + PC Event Takeaways

PC Arianna Saravia ('28)



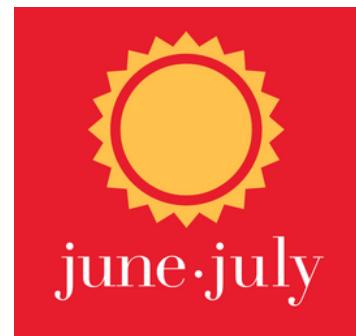
Thank you to everyone for such an amazing fall semester! In my first semester as a Peer Counselor, I've truly learned from those around me how to better serve in this role and to work with our wonderful team to enhance the Turner experience for all of our scholars. Supporting first-year students brings a lot of fulfillment to my days and lets me see the impact I'm making through simple conversations. It's thanks to this that I've also become a Mustang/PREP mentor, helping PREP students who need extra guidance and support through their pre-health journey. Additionally, I've taken on roles, such as Secretary of MAPS and First-Generation Senator of Student Senate, that have allowed me to connect with and serve alongside other student leaders to meaningfully impact the lives of students.

I'd like to thank all of my fellow PCs, but especially Diana and Angela, for collaborating with me on our October PC event, the Turner Scholarween Mash! This was a huge success, and I'm proud of the work we put into making this event as fun as it was. Moving forward, I hope to continue this momentum in future programming and work towards creating fun events like this again! Heading into the new year, I hope everyone can pause and reflect on what they've accomplished this semester and be proud of themselves. It's a great time to be a Turner Scholar! Happy Holidays!!

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR BREAKS WITH SMU INTERSESSIONS!

Intersessions allow you to take additional courses outside of the Fall and Spring semesters on the Dallas campus in a smaller class setting.

Complete one course in as few as 8 class days in Jan Term or in just 11 class days in May, and June-July Terms. During the June and July sessions, you can complete up to four courses (14 credit hours) offered in either 22 or 11-class-day formats. Some online courses are also available in Jan Term and Summer, each lasting approximately one month.



Students can choose from approximately 350 courses that fulfill Common Curriculum (CC), major, minor, or prerequisite requirements. Whether catching up, graduating early, or aligning coursework with your holiday plans, summer work, or internships, Intersessions empowers students to shape their academic journey with increased versatility.

Seize the opportunity to tailor your education to your schedule and goals. Taking advantage of January, May, and Summer terms not only offers a pathway to graduation but also provides a dynamic approach to learning that complements your individual needs and aspirations at SMU!

SMU Intersessions



THE 2025

EVOLVE

TURNER x FGI SPEAKER SERIES

EVOLVE LECTURE SERIES

CYNTHIA GUDIEL '14, '20

RESILIENT.

Ja'niah Cooper, Communications Director



Thank you to everyone who joined us for the second annual Turner Scholars Evolve Lecture Series, featuring our Distinguished First-Gen Alumni Lecture. This initiative works diligently to highlight and support the incredible contributions of first-generation students at SMU, during their time here and beyond.

Our 2025 keynote speaker, Cynthia Gudiel '14, '20, shared an inspirational and empowering account of her journey as a first-generation college student. During her time at SMU, Cynthia refused to let obstacles stand in the way of her paving her own path to success. When faced with problems that seemed impossible to conquer, she relied on her faith, reverence for her family and past, and desire to make the world a better place to get her through.

Cynthia, a Dallas native, is deeply passionate about education and economic equity. She holds bachelor's degrees in Business Administration and Markets & Culture, as well as a master's degree in Education Policy and Leadership, all from SMU.

Cynthia's career has been marked by a commitment to empowering others. She began her professional journey as an immigration paralegal. She then transitioned into School Operations Management and continued to refine her project management skills. Cynthia has also worked as a College Access Manager, overseeing a team of advisors who supported hundreds of high school students across the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Later, Cynthia found her true calling in education. She founded Volar, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving first-generation students by providing individualized advising and support in navigating the path to and through higher education.

She now balances raising two toddler boys, occasional consulting work, and running Volar. She hopes to earn her Ph.D. one day and continue her research in higher education and equity. Outside of her professional pursuits, Cynthia finds joy in outdoor runs, baking for fun, and jamming to praise-and-worship music.

Missed the lecture, or want to know more? Connect with Cynthia on LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cynthiagudiel/>

TOKYO, TEXAS, AND TURNER

Karl Bodenheimer ('27)

It was an extremely hot summer in August 2023, and the scorching Texas heat roared throughout the air. I remember hopping into an Uber with my dad as I visited Southern Methodist University for the first time. Squirrels were jumping from tree to tree, and rabbits were dashing from one bush to another. I always thought of the green trees along the boulevard as the ones from *Forrest Gump*, and thinking that I would study for four years of my life in a place far from home felt surreal. It was really nerve-racking to think about this moment, because I knew I would spend almost a whole semester without my family.

While I was a bit anxious meeting people for the first time and stepping out of my comfort zone, I am still grateful to be a part of the Turner Scholars program. I remember the Peer Counselors during the RISE event welcomed me with open arms, and I got to meet new friends who demonstrated hospitality. We bowled and go-karted at Andretti's, and I still remember to this day how fun and engaging the whole event was. At that moment, I knew that I wanted to stay here longer than where I was from.

Not only did the Turner Scholars program welcome me with open arms, but the community also encourages us to get to know one another at a personal level. The mandatory peer counselor meetings made me feel connected, and I remember having fun conversations with Aileen and Habibulla. We discussed a lot about future careers, Marvel superheroes, and video games. I knew that I was not alone here on campus, and that the community here would always be here for me.





Moreover, the Turner Scholars program offers many opportunities, such as reading groups, to further expand your perspective on the world.

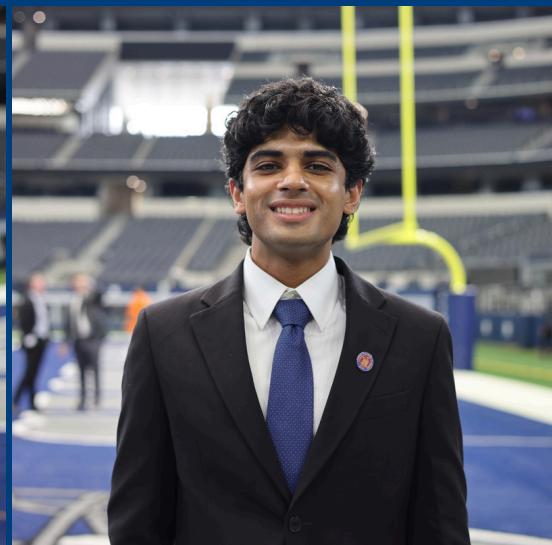
Recently, we read a novel called *Infectious Generosity* by Chris Anderson, and the group discussions challenged my view on whether intention or impact is more important when conducting generous activities. By having these interesting philosophical discussions, the Turner Scholars program enables each student to walk away with a unique mind. They help you push your boundaries into new areas and gain a holistic view of the world. I believe that without this program, I would not be nearly as open-minded.

"I believe that without this program, I would not be nearly as open-minded."

Given that I am from Tokyo, it was really challenging for me to adapt to a remarkably different environment. It was such a culture shock for me at first, and I remember contemplating transferring to a different college. However, the love and support the Turner Scholars Program showed not only to me, but also to other students, was redeeming. Their hospitality made me want to stay at SMU, and I am continually grateful for the meaningful relationships I have created with the leadership and students here in this community.



DALLAS SITE





COWBOYS VISIT



FROM ROTUNDA TO TURNER: WHAT A RIDE!

ACADEMIC SUCCESS COUNSELOR - SUE BIERMAN

I have been working with these scholars since the program's new inception in 2019 and have loved every minute. The best thing that happened at first was hiring Nikole Juarez (then Melgarejo) as our inaugural success counselor. She hit the ground running and has been out in front ever since. From establishing a solid first-year program to help our Rotunda students adapt to SMU and Dallas to creating leadership opportunities for our students, Nikole has been, and will continue to be, the heart of this program.

I was lucky to tag along and get to know the first years, and mostly the student leaders whom I worked with when I had to fill in when Nikole went on maternity leave. Our students are simply incredible – the student staff offers ideas every year to keep the program new and creative, while also addressing the needs of our unique scholars.

These identified needs included providing a technology package for all incoming students so they had the materials needed to succeed in any major.

Before we could sit back and tweak the program every year, we expanded to a four-year program. Nikole was promoted and we were lucky to have Bri Morales with her excellent skills as both a GA for First Gen Initiative AND as a student in the masters counseling program, join our group. The fellow, PCs, coordinators, and communication director were joined by PULs and an upperclassman coordinator. As we expanded, in came Ke Webster. With her wealth of experience working with students, she hit the ground running to plan the second, third- and fourth-year requirements and programs. We partnered with Student Senate to reallocate a little used scholarship to provide a fund that would help Rotunda Scholars go abroad, go to Taos, help with financial emergencies and academic costs.



Sue, Nikole, Ke, and Bri at the 2025 Turner Gala

It made more sense for Rotunda to join the other scholar groups, so we expanded our location with first year students remaining in ACE and other students housed in the Scholars' Den. We also wanted to open any open positions from the 150 first year cohort midyear to students who wanted to join.

So where do I come in? I was lucky to oversee Rotunda when the group was under the Student Academic Success Programs, along with DASS, A-LEC, Student Athlete Academic Support, and Academic Skill Development. I fell in love with the group's students, its mission, and the idea of expansion. When I retired in 2024, I had already established a close relationship with Nikole after years of being colleagues. So, when she, Dr. Doyle, and Dr. Kunovich asked if I wanted to work part-time with Rotunda, I jumped at the chance!

In the first year in my role as Success Counselor, I saw Dr. and Mrs. Turner request to also guide the Rotundas as they became the Turner Scholars. I saw specific events and activities develop for 2nd-, 3rd-, and soon-to-be 4th-year scholars. I continue to see an almost 600-member community continue to be one of high academic achievement, obtain campus leadership positions, and remain a group that is compassionate to each other.

I may be 100 years old, but I STILL get to be involved with Turner Scholars – I'm a lucky woman!



Sue hands awards to several Scholars at the 2025 Turner Gala

REFLECTIONS FROM A PUL

PUL Kaila Belt ('27)

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Kaila Belt. I am a junior currently double-majoring in Journalism and Applied Physiology and Health Management. I am also a PUL for Simmons this year! This is my third year in the Turner Scholars Program, and I have truly enjoyed every moment!

I joined the program with the Spring 2024 cohort. It's only right to acknowledge my awesome roommate, who encouraged me to apply during my freshman year! As a freshman, I was shy and hesitant to get involved in the program, but the more events I attended, the more at home I felt. The student leadership at the time made it really easy to feel welcome, even though I came into the program later than some of my peers. They are ultimately the reason that I decided to join the student leadership team!

Fast forward to sophomore year, and I had the incredible opportunity to serve as a PC for the program! I had so much fun meeting with all of the first years and building connections with each of them. I had the opportunity to learn more about being a mentor and stepping into leadership positions well. Now, as a junior, I am a PUL, and so far, I have enjoyed it. Being a PUL has been an interesting transition for me!



As a PC, I spent the bulk of my time making sure first-year students were integrating into SMU well. Now, as a PUL, my primary focus is career readiness. Complete transparency, I didn't know if I would be able to truly help my students because I'm still learning about my own career pathways. It's taking me some time to decide what I want to do career-wise. However, this position has allowed me to learn from my students! It's truly inspiring to meet with sophomores who are laser-focused and know what they want post-grad. They are hungry for success, and their drive pushes me to show up better every day. I'm so thankful for the students in my caseload because they have been extremely patient with me as I learn the ropes of this new position.

As I look forward to the Spring semester, I am excited for new opportunities to grow and learn more as a PUL! For now, I hope everyone has a restful winter break, and I can't wait to see your smiling faces in January!

THE COORDINATOR'S CORNER

First Year's Coordinator Max Engelbrecht ('27)

In my time at SMU, I have been taught that community is something we build intentionally. Something as small as a shared meal or conversation can have such an impact on someone else; these micro-interactions make individuals feel present and valued within a community. Over this fall semester, I have planned three community dinners for our first-year scholars, each with the aim of reminding them of the community we share. During the last three community dinners, I have witnessed so many genuine, spontaneous encounters happening between first-year scholars and staff members alike. Seeing scholars arrive at an event alone and shy, only to leave with a smile and a newfound friend, is simply magical. Knowing that these interactions shape the spirit of the Turner Scholars Community, it is a privilege to create events where scholars can come together to support one another and grow.

It is easy to measure the impact of large accomplishments; however, it is small daily growth that leads to noticeable change, from the time a scholar first joins the program during RISE through the time they walk across the stage with a diploma in hand. Being in a mentorship role, I can recognize this growth in countless scholars, showing me just what impact things like a well-timed icebreaker, a warm welcome at the door, or a thoughtfully planned activity have in making a scholar feel connected and at home within the program.



We look forward to welcoming our scholars back after winter break at our February Community Dinner! The event will feature a multidisciplinary panel of professors who will join our scholars for dinner to offer insights on life, academics, and community building, informed by their experiences from the other side of the lectern.

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WISHES YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR!





IT'S A GREAT TIME TO BE A TURNER SCHOLAR!

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