



Athletics

February 7, 2025

Dear SMU Family:

It is with tremendous pride, heartfelt love, and yes, mixed emotions, that I share with you that I have made the decision that this academic year will be my last at SMU. After the honor of leading the Department of Athletics for thirteen years, it is time for a new challenge for me and for a new voice to lead the Mustangs, allowing President-Elect Hartzell to move forward with his own vision and leader as SMU moves forward in this new landscape of collegiate athletics.

When my wife, Allison, and I and our children, Trevor and Carly, arrived in Dallas in the summer of 2012, we knew very little about the SMU community or its people. But within days, we had found our home. Mustangs welcomed us with open arms, into their homes, into their students' lives and into the SMU Family. Since then, my affinity for this world-class university has only grown and while I know deep in my heart this is the right decision for me and for SMU Athletics, it is also a difficult one because of what SMU has come to mean to our family and, more importantly, because of the tremendous people who make up the university community.

While at SMU, I have had the honor to work alongside some of the most caring, passionate and dedicated athletics administrators in the country, who each and every day work

hard to help our student-athletes achieve their dreams. These leaders partner with incredible coaches who have elevated our athletic programs to thrive among the nation's elite, uplifted by amazing assistant coaches and support staff who are on the front lines. Our student-athletes proudly represent our university in competition, in the classroom and in the community, and many of my most fond memories from my time at SMU have been the simple interactions I have had with the young men and women who chose us. To all of those who have been a part of our journey, thank you.

Thank you also to President Turner, for his unwavering support of me and of athletics. During our time on the Hilltop, we have been the beneficiary of President Turner's bold vision, steady leadership and uncompromising values. He has transformed SMU into a national university with preeminent academics and athletics and deserves the credit for the institution's ascension. Our Board of Trustees, our faculty, our generous donors, our alumni and our fans have all played a role in any achievements we have collectively made.

I will leave SMU proud of our membership in the Atlantic Coast Conference; the impact of the First Week Society's unprecedented generosity; the opening of the Garry Weber End Zone Complex; the rise of our football program including appearing in the College Football Playoff; record crowds at Ford Stadium; a #18 ranking in the Learfield Director's Cup standings; the bright future of SMU Basketball; winning 46 team conference titles across 17 sports; the Life After Ball Program that assists our student-athletes in transitioning to careers; the incredible academic achievements of our student-athletes and the more than 1,600 degrees conferred on them since I arrived in Dallas; and the legacy of championship-caliber facilities.

When I interviewed for this job, President Turner shared that he wished for a nationally competitive athletics program on par with the quality of the university. Mission accomplished! Of course, there is always more we could have done and more that lies ahead but I am excited for what comes next for me and for SMU Athletics.

Thank you for allowing me and my family to be a part of the SMU Family – the Harts are Mustangs for life! I look forward to seeing many of you in the months ahead, as well as for my next chapter and the challenges ahead.

Go Mustangs!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Hart", with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Hart