



I began by reviewing SMU's "Road to R1" and underscored that attaining this goal required thousands of contributions, big and small, from hundreds of faculty, staff, and students. I emphasized the importance of achieving – and sustaining – R1 status for SMU and for our community and previewed some of the marketing collateral we will use (locally and nationally) to celebrate our accomplishment. Then I gave updates on key leadership appointments, including introducing Janarthanan (Janan) Jayawickramarajah, the next Elisabeth Martin Armstrong dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, and Bryan P. Stone, the next Leighton K. Farrell Dean of the Perkins School of Theology. I also announced the five-year reappointment of Holly Jeffcoat as dean of SMU Libraries and concluded with updates on our remaining dean search in the Cox School of Business (more information on which can be found below).

Full Board of Trustees

In this morning's meeting, I shared a consolidated version of my presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs with the full Board.

Update: Cox School of Business Dean Search

This week, the search committee and campus stakeholders had on-campus interviews with our first finalist. The campus visit for our second finalist is scheduled for next week. If all goes according to plan, we hope to announce the next dean of the Cox School of Business sometime this spring.

Thank you to the search committee members for agreeing to participate in this important search, and thank you to Jason P. Nance, Judge James Noel Dean of Dedman School of Law, for serving as the search committee chair.

Opportunity for Internal Appointment: Assistant Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success

We are pleased to announce an open call for an internal appointment to a new position, [Assistant Provost of Student Academic Engagement and Success](#), reporting to the Associate Provost for Student

Reminder: SMU Employee Climate Survey

Faculty and staff who have not already completed the 2025 SMU Employee Climate Survey are encouraged to do so before it closes at the end of the month. The survey is anonymous, takes less than 10 minutes to complete, and provides valuable insights to help further enhance our workplace environment.

To access the survey link and learn more, visit www.smu.edu/climate-survey. For questions, please contact climatesurvey@smu.edu. Thank you for your participation!

Academic Excellence

First-year and senior students are invited to complete the National Survey of Student Engagement

The [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) is disseminated to first-year and senior students at SMU every three years. Administered via a partnership between the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success, NSSE is a nationwide, large-scale survey instrument that aims to estimate how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

NSSE is happening now. Survey collection began this past Monday, February 17, and will run until the Monday of Spring Break (March 17). SMU faculty and staff are highly encouraged to share this opportunity with their students, who can learn more, determine their eligibility, respond to the survey, and be entered to win prizes by [clicking this link](#).

If you have any questions, contact the director for student affairs assessment and analytics, Dr. Kim Nelson Pryor, at sa-assess@smu.edu.

Academic Development of Student-Athletes (ADSA) announces student-athletes academic achievements

The Academic Development of Student-Athletes (ADSA) office is dedicated to providing academic counseling to help student-athletes make informed decisions about their degree and major selection, plan their semester courses, and maintain their NCAA eligibility.

For the fall 2024 term, SMU's student-athletes and ADSA have set a high bar for academic excellence:

164 students (36% of athletes) earned a perfect 4.00 term GPA.

216 students (48%) achieved a term GPA above 3.50.

329 students (73%) finished the term with a GPA higher than 3.00.

18 student-athletes (4%) maintained a 4.00 cumulative GPA over their collegiate career.

Women's Cross-Country had a stellar 3.836 term GPA (3.775 cumulative GPA), making them the highest-performing team overall.

Men's Tennis earned the highest term GPA for a men's athletic team with a 3.562, paired with a 3.587 cumulative GPA.

Congratulations to our student-athletes for their hard work and dedication both on the field and in the classroom and to the ADSA staff who support our student-athletes in all their academic endeavors.

Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Robert C. Womack Chair in Engineering selected as a senior member of the National Academy of Inventors (NAI)

Professor MinJun Kim, Robert C. Womack chair in Engineering at the Lyle School of Engineering, has been selected as a senior member in the National Academy of Inventors (NAI). Professor Kim was selected by the Senior Member Advisory Committee and Board of Directors of the NAI for the Class of 2025 Senior Members in recognition of his remarkable achievements as an academic inventor and leader in his field.

The formal induction will occur at the 14th NAI Annual Conference on June 23–26, 2025, in Atlanta, Georgia, where Professor Kim will receive a Senior Member certificate, NAI pin, and Senior Member challenge coin presented by representatives from the NAI and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences faculty member and an

Professor Fredrick Olness, department of physics at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, as a member of an international team of physicists, has achieved a groundbreaking milestone in nuclear physics by [unifying two distinct approaches to describing atomic nuclei](#).

Atomic nuclei are the core of every atom, defining its identity and shaping its behavior. Better

SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE) hosts Cybersecurity Workforce Panel

SMU Global, Online, and Continuing Education (GOCE) recently hosted a dynamic Cybersecurity Workforce Panel Discussion as part of the [Tech Titans Cybersecurity Forum](#), bringing together a mix of 76 student and local industry partner attendees.

The discussion featured expert panelists Ian Schneller, chief information security officer for Health Care Service Corporation; Erin Edwards, senior cybersecurity consultant for Google/Mandiant; and Dr. Kasi Periyasamy, program director for Lyle School of Engineering's master in cybersecurity. The event was moderated by Terry Teague, senior director of admissions and corporate partnerships for GOCE.

The panel explored the growing cybersecurity talent gap, barriers to entry into the field, and innovative solutions to attract more students into cybersecurity careers. Attendees engaged in thought-provoking conversations on bridging education and industry needs, the role of certifications vs. degrees, and how to prepare the next generation of cyber professionals.

Events like this continue to foster collaboration between academia and industry, reinforcing SMU's commitment to shaping world changers for the future.

Congratulations to the winners of the 2025 Big iDeas Business Plan Competition

The Office of Engaged Learning held its annual Big iDeas Business Plan Competition on Friday, February 14, where student teams have four minutes to pitch their business plan to a panel of expert judges. The teams compete for \$5,000 of seed funding to invest in their business idea. This year, 11 student teams competed.

Congratulations to the five winning teams of the 2025 Big iDeas Business Plan Competition:

TimioNews: Justus Woods, Abbie Ellermeier, and Josh Baier

LectureLogger: Jude Lugo

Sandra: Wade Hunter

Dorm Room Cleans, Inc.: Amar Khoja and Jonathan Zanzuri

InternSurf: Benjamin Omoregbe

Special thanks to the competition judges: Carson Gibbons, founder of DallasMeetup; Jenica Oliver, chief marketing officer at Blueprint Marketing Group; Michael Kelly, chief strategy officer at Mozee; and Dr. Sara Rana, venture, corporate and investor relations at Capital Factory.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

