

New York, Columbia University.
Los Angeles, Caltech.
Chicago, Northwestern.
Dallas-Fort-Worth, fill in the blank.

DFW is the 4th largest metroplex in the country, and growing quickly.
Surprisingly, it is the largest metroplex without a top-tier private university.
Our goal is to change that.

The first goal of the SMU strategic plan is:
“To Enhance The Academic Quality And Reputation Of The University”

The Senate fully intends to address this issue seriously, consistently, and wholeheartedly as we attend to business throughout the coming academic year. Our agenda includes the General Education Curriculum, the SACS re-affirmation, and the Capital Campaign, as well as the usual recurring items. As we deal with these issues, the Senate will strive to keep our focus on academic enhancement, and ensure that our actions align with our objectives, so that each of the small decisions we make, add coherently to produce a big change.

Our last meeting, featured a free book: “Hot, Flat, and Crowded” which outlines the economic, social, and technological challenges we face in the 21st century.

Perhaps an appropriate title this year would be Malcolm Gladwell’s
“The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference

I believe SMU is at a tipping point. With a push in the right place at the right time, we can ensure that SMU tips toward the national prominence we desire.

How do we set the process in motion?
I believe there are 3 key steps:

Step 1: Spread the word about SMU's academic achievements. Things are happening here. We've got to communicate this news more broadly to SMU's friends, alumni, our professional colleagues, and beyond.

Step 2: Make strategic investments to foster our areas of academic excellence. In lean years, this can be a challenge, but we must create a positive feedback cycle, so our current success will breed more success; this will fuel our Capital Campaign which will generate the student scholarships and endowed faculty chairs that will provide broader long-term support across the campus.

Step 3: Articulate the Vision. We need faculty to envision how new scholarships and endowed chairs will transform the campus, and then communicate this vision to potential donors.

These steps will push us over the tipping point toward greatness.
It is these things, when added coherently, that will make the big difference.

Let me elaborate on these steps, and the role of both the Senate, and the Faculty

An essential component of Goal #1, is SMU's ability to recruit, retain, and graduate, academically and creatively gifted students.

The students are central to everything we do here. They are our *raison d'etre*.

Thanks to Ron Moss and his team, we have an increasingly strong entering class of students. Our student SAT's have increased by about 100 points over the past decade. These students are more academically inclined, and they demand expanded opportunities for honors courses, internships, coops, undergraduate research experience, and the chance to work with faculty both inside and outside the classroom.

The revised General Educational Curriculum will update our core requirements for the 21st century so our talented students can acquire the knowledge base and critical thinking skills that will prepare them for a world that is "Hot, Flat, and Crowded."

These initiatives will place increased demands on our faculty and academic infrastructure; yet, it is imperative that we allocate the resources to attract, engage, and retain these outstanding students.

I would like to thank Christine Buchanan and her Admissions committee for the important role they played in this year's outstanding entering class. With their guidance, the Faculty Senate passed a resolution on transfer hours that will increase student retention, and encourage and facilitate student participation in international programs.

We also have to attract, engage, and retain, the outstanding faculty who teach them. It is their academic achievements and infectious enthusiasm that draw the students to study at SMU. Our faculty are the front door to the university.

To help us attract, engage, and retain, our outstanding faculty, I'm pleased to report that Jody Magliolo, Don Vandewalle, Hemang Desai have agreed to continue as chairs of their respective Senate finance committees.

This past year, SMU initiated our Capital Campaign, the 2nd Century, which is directed at people and programs. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The last capital campaign transformed this campus physically, to the extent that alumni get lost when they come back to visit campus. This current capital campaign has the opportunity to make an equally dramatic transformation academically.

Two of the three pillars of this capital campaign, focus on developing ongoing relations with our alumni, to keep them informed about news and achievements of SMU, and encourage them to reinvest in their institution.

This concept is inspired and far-sighted, and I congratulate Vice-President Cheves and his team for making this an integral part of the campaign. We want to form solid bonds with the students before they graduate, and maintain these ties into the future.

Faculty are also an integral part of this Capital Campaign. The Faculty & Staff kickoff is next

Thursday, September 3rd, and I hope you will attend.

We need your involvement, in a number of the areas that I outlined earlier.

First: Spread the word.

We must effectively communicate the many academic achievements that are taking place now at SMU. These accomplishments are the seeds that will grow into student scholarships, and endowed faculty chairs.

The web-based SMU Faculty Forum, is one repository for news of faculty accomplishments. Make use of the Faculty Forum. Send us your news. Overwhelm us. Make us expand it.

Next: Articulate the vision.

In a “bricks & mortar” campaign, we can show a potential donor an artist’s rendering of a building.

This campaign is about people and programs; it’s about you and the students. Here, we need you, the faculty, to help render the vision of how this campus will be transformed by new scholarships and endowed chairs. This past April, Dennis Foster sent the Faculty a letter inviting your ideas and input. Harold Stanley & Julie Wiksten co-chair the Faculty/Staff Campaign Steering Committee, and the divisional chairs will be introduced next week. We all welcome your contributions; send us more. If you want your vision to be part of this campaign, now is the time to act.

What makes right now so crucial?

Why is this the time to act if we want to be sure we tip SMU toward greatness?

Because a crisis is a terrible thing to waste.

The current economic crisis presents us with unique challenges, but also unique opportunities. The academic landscape is undergoing a seismic upheaval, and a new and different hierarchy will emerge from this transition.

In normal times, universities might shift a few slots in the rankings each year; these are not normal times; we expect some big shifts.

As part of stimulus plans, at both the Federal and State level, there are more NEW resources available, than ever before.

Collectively, this is a set of opportunities we will not see again in our lifetime.

SMU is in a strong position, especially compared to our peers.

While our enrollment was a bit lower than we would like, our student retention rates were excellent. SMU’s endowment spending policy buffers some market fluctuations. Last year we instituted preemptive fiscal constraints to provide a more stable funding profile, although there may be some lean years in the future depending on the economic outlook.

Fortunately, it appears that North Texas is on relatively firmer economic ground than most regions of the country.

Plus, SMU has already launched our Capital Campaign, and although the economy has been a challenge, sooner or later it will turn around. And when it does, we'll be first in line.

This means that while other institutions are retrenching and retreating, SMU can focus on our goal of enhanced academic quality.

And this me to the final point: We must make strategic investments so our faculty can continue to excel in their fields, thereby drawing the academic accolades that strengthen our reputation with both our peers and future students.

Last spring we celebrated Professor David Meltzer's election to the National Academy of Sciences. What is particularly notable about Prof. Meltzer's achievement is that he is "home grown." He did his work at SMU. We provided the academic environment that allowed him to perform at the top of his field.

Across campus, there are others at various stages of their careers, whose research and creative activities are at the forefront of their field.

We must protect their academic environment.

We need to ensure our faculty have the tools, and incentives, to compete at the top-most level, because their achievements are the seeds that will grow, into student scholarships, and endowed faculty chairs.

Such a strategic investment is particularly challenging in the face of this economic climate, but it is very worthwhile. Recall that President Lincoln established the National Academy of Sciences in March of 1863 in the midst of the Civil War, and just a few months before the battle of Gettysburg. It takes courage to make a contrarian investment, but the payoff can be enormous.

And, these investments not only validate our commitment to "Strengthening Scholarly Research And Creative Achievement," but they are compounded by the multiplier effect, because it sends a clear message across our campus, that we want you to finish that book chapter, or publish that paper, or take that arts commission, or submit that proposal.

Not only do we want you to, we will support you, acknowledge you, and reward you for those achievements.

And once that takes place, "the momentum for change becomes unstoppable." It becomes a tidal wave

And then, stand back and watch that wave tip SMU to the national prominence we desire.

How might we determine our priorities where a strategic investment can yield the greatest impact?

As much as I dread the paperwork of the SACS reaffirmation, this review, with its focus on quantitative learning outcomes of our students, provides us a chance to step back and examine which university activities effectively promote our academic goals, and reevaluate (and possibly reduce) those that are tangential to the university mission.

Such an analysis is doubly important, in an economic climate, where students are concerned about tuition expenses, and the return on their educational investment.

To help realize these goals, we have an exceptional group of faculty, who serve the university on the Senate, and its associated committees. I've already mentioned a few of the Senate committees, and I'd like to give you a brief update on the others.

Alan Brown chaired the Academic Policies Committee this past year. Under the guidance of this committee, the Faculty Senate passed a resolution on Concurrent Appointments with the Bush Institute, which provides a framework for collaboration between the institute and SMU. Beth Newman will chair the Committee this year, and the committee will continue with this work, and also review the new on-line course evaluations.

Doug Reinelt will succeed James Collins, as Chair of the Calendar Committee. I'm please to report that the committee has developed a 5-year series of academic calendars which will provide stability and predictability for the long-term planning process.

Ken Springer will continue as chair of the Faculty Ethics and Tenure Committee. The committee will be working on a number of initiatives, to facilitate the uniform application of university policies across campus.

John Buynak has agreed to continue as Chair of the Library committee. I thank John and his committee for their efforts, and the Provost for his financial support, of this critical resource.

Ted Campbell has agreed to serve as interim-Chair of the Information Technology Committee, and they will continue to monitor developments including the newly formed, university-wide, IT Advisory Council.

Dan Orlovsky returns from a well deserved sabbatical to chair the Athletics Policies Committee, and we are grateful to Matthew Wilson who chaired the committee during Dan's leave.

Thomas Osang will continue as Chair of the Student Policies Committee. The committee works to support the recommendations of the First Year Experience Task Force, the Honors Task Force, and the International Task Force.

Tom Coan will succeed John Buynak as Chair of the Committee on Research. This committee will be working to ensure we have an environment that promotes scholarly research and creative achievement.

Bill Bridge will Chair the Committee on Committees, and I thank his committee for their hard work this summer, filling out the various Senate rosters.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Honorary Degrees committee, which is chaired by "He who must not be named."

Let me also thank you, the faculty, for your help in this endeavor, as we work together to

#1) spread the word about our accomplishments,

#2) support continued academic excellence, and

#3) articulate the vision, of where we are going, and how we get there.

And, please don't hesitate to provide the senate and its committees with your thoughts and ideas so we can best pursue our goal of making SMU the top-tier institution in Dallas-Forth-Worth, the 4th largest, and fastest growing, metroplex in the country.

I would like to sincerely thank the members of the Senate, their associated committees, the Administration, the staff, and the faculty.

It will be an honor working with you this year.