

Good afternoon. It has been a good year for SMU. This fall we welcomed 1300 new students, 300 transfer students, and 3 dozen new faculty to campus. We launched the Bush Library and Institute, opened the new Prothro Hall, and celebrated a renovated Meadows Museum Plaza.

The Senate and its associated committees have also had a busy and productive semester; I'll touch on a few of our accomplishments, and I'll refer you to the written report in your program for more highlights. But first, let me thank all the members of the faculty who contributed to these accomplishments. We know this work is over and above your regular duties, and we appreciate your dedication to improving SMU.

Last Fall I asked you to share your good news through the Faculty Forum; not only was the response overwhelming, but the achievements are truly outstanding. For this, I thank you. You have received impressive accolades, awards, and fellowships. For example, one of our colleagues was selected by President Obama as the head of the regional EPA office. While faculty retention is a key ingredient in advancing the university goals, we're happy to make an exception in this particular case. And there's no end in sight to the progress. Not only are our grant applications up, but our grant awards have also increased.

SMU is advancing. While we often feel that change can't happen fast enough, it can be useful to pause and reflect on where we've been and how much we have accomplished, so we can better appreciate the importance of the day-to-day tasks that will carry us to the next level.

We just celebrated the beginning not only of a new year, but of a new decade. Looking back over the previous decade, we see some encouraging progress. The number of applications to SMU has doubled, and our acceptance rate has improved from about 90% to a much more competitive 50%. The SAT scores of our incoming students have increased nearly 100 points. And the number of teaching faculty has increased from just under 500 in 1998, to 653 this year. Our student body is more diverse both ethnically and geographically, and they are looking for more challenges in their curriculum.

The SMU campus has also undergone a dramatic physical transformation which will advance our academic objectives. I invite you to stand next to the fountain in front of the Blanton building, close your eyes, and try to remember what that part of campus looked like 10 years ago. Back then, you would be standing in an unpaved parking lot overlooking the picturesque Bradfield computer center and the Engineering portable buildings—today, it is quite different. This transformation was due (in large part) to our previous capital campaign “A Time to Lead,” and the generosity of our friends and alumni.

It is now the current capital campaign “The Second Century” that will enable SMU to fully realize the dream that President Hyer envisioned a hundred years ago when he selected Harvard crimson and Yale blue as the school colors in order to associate SMU with the high standards of the ivy league universities.

These aspirations are worth remembering as we reflect on the importance of what we do as educators, and the true value of an SMU education; this is especially pertinent at a time when politicians are calling for a “stripped-down” 3-year college degree, or others are moving to an on-line virtual college experience. While those experiences may be sufficient for others, an SMU degree offers a life-changing experience.

The college years are a time for self-discovery. The environment at SMU allows our students to develop the ability to communicate effectively, be innovative and creative, and acquire critical thinking and analytic reasoning skills.

The half-life of knowledge these days is about 5 years! This is why we aim not just to fill our students' heads with facts and figures, but rather to help them develop the skills that will enable them to adapt, innovate, and excel, both today and tomorrow.

I believe Galileo summed it up succinctly when he said: “You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him to discover it within himself.”

And for a century, SMU students have been doing just that; taking their talents and knowledge, nurtured at SMU, and going out into the world to live, not just THE good life, but A good life.

SMU is the beneficiary of their success as these alumni generously reinvest to help a new generation of students. We must also thank our predecessors, our Emeriti Faculty, as it was their educational investment in our alumni that made this possible. We must do our best to honor their example of stewardship toward this institution so that we continue these traditions into our second century.

President Hyer understood this when looked to the example of Charlemagne and the University of Paris. Hyer said: “In ordering the establishment of an institution to learn what is right in all the relations of life, Charlemagne himself may not have realized how right he was.” Charlemagne instituted a series of educational reforms that were “... but little more than an incident in a long busy life whose chief activities were directed to the establishment of an empire of such strength and stability that it should furnish a throne for his descendants forever. His empire perished with him—his university is immortal.”

It is in this sense that what we do in the classroom transcends the here and now. It is passing on the accumulated wisdom to the next generation.

That’s what it’s all about. That is why, as educators, we have such an important role in the future; ... why we are willing to dedicate ourselves to our fields, and to investing in our students. It is in that sense, that what we do here is immortal.

Our top priority is “Goal One” of the Strategic Plan: “To enhance the academic quality and stature of the University.” The mechanism to implement this goal is the Second Century Capital Campaign: The reason? Because educating the next generation is the most important thing we can do.

To help SMU stay connected to our alumni, the Development Office will be organizing a new event entitled “Inside SMU” which will host academic updates from the various schools. I thank Brad Cheves, Pam Conlin, Stacey Paddock, and the Development staff for providing the chance to showcase some of our faculty achievements. I strongly encourage you to participate, and I hope this event becomes an annual academic celebration.

Speaking of celebrations, Christmas came early to SMU this past year when, after a quarter-century, the football team won a bowl game. While the media has labeled this: “the miracle on Mockingbird,” this achievement was not handed to the team on a silver platter. Behind the scenes, there was a commitment of resources and determination, followed by discipline and hard work.

And it’s the same with our academic goals. If we commit our time, talent, and resources, then President Hyer’s dream of a highly respected and prominent institution is within our grasp.

So where can SMU be in a year, in decade, in our second century? We want to be able to live up to our colors so that SMU provides our students, and the metroplex, with the finest educational opportunities.

Today, it has been satisfying to review our past accomplishments, and reflect on the journey that has brought us here. Tomorrow, we’ll continue this journey, one step at a time. These steps will involve the GEC, SACS, and

the QEP. It will involve our participation and priorities in the Capital Campaign.

As reflected in our written report, the Faculty Senate has been mindful of our motivation and goals, and we will continue to be so. We welcome and encourage your thoughts, suggestions, and participation.

Again, I would like to thank the members of the administration for their leadership, the faculty for their support, the Senate committee members for their service, and all of the above for maintaining our focus on the priorities as we continue on SMU's journey into the Second Century.

Thank you.

*Acknowledgements: I thank Ted Campbell for providing President Robert Hyer article "The Purposes and Ideals of a University" from which the quote is taken. I also thank Marcia Cooper for valuable suggestions.*