



August 21, 2024

Dear SMU Community,

When Gail and I moved our family here in 1995 as I became SMU's 10th President, we were thrilled to join SMU and Dallas, two communities with so much energy and promise, it felt like a perfect match. And, it has been.

Therefore, it is with an incredible sense of gratitude to the SMU community, [I am announcing today](#) that the coming academic year, 2024-2025, will be my last to serve as the 10th President of Southern Methodist University (SMU). I have been blessed by remarkable health and energy, along with the consistent support of the Board of Trustees, my wife Gail, my family, and the SMU community. But as Trustee Ray Hunt occasionally notes, the calendar is the calendar, and it relentlessly moves forward. Therefore, it is best to transition out of the presidency when momentum is high, as it now is at SMU.

This united, 30-year partnership with the Board of Trustees and the University community has guided the remarkable development of SMU. Two successful initial campaigns (*A Time to Lead*, 1997-2002, and *Unbridled: The Second Century Campaign*, 2008-2015), began the momentum by providing funding for academic and athletic facilities, plus scholarships, academic programs, and endowed faculty positions. The recruitment and construction of the George W. Bush Presidential Center highlighted the University's Centennial Celebration 2011-2015. Fueling current progress, the \$1.5 billion *SMU Ignited* major gifts campaign (2021-2028), is 90% toward its goal. Our new membership in the Atlantic Coast Conference officially began July 1, 2024. In addition, major construction projects and significant enhancements of academic programs, many fueled by advanced

computing, have created a sense of institutional momentum that is palpable and nationally recognized.

With clear paths to success in completing these transformative projects, during the spring semester, Chair David Miller, Vice Chair Rich Templeton, and I reinitiated planning for the next phase of university leadership. These conversations informally began in 2022 with the election of David Miller as Chair and Rich Templeton as Vice Chair. Now in 2024, we and the Trusteeship Committee believe that the 2024-25 academic year is the ideal time for planning and implementing the next phase of university leadership. Chair Miller's four, one-year terms June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2026, will allow him to be Board Chair during the search (2024-2025) and during the next President's first year in office (2025-2026).

The Board and I are extremely grateful and proud of our shared success during the past 30 years brought about by the generosity of our supporters and the remarkably creative executive administrators, staff, and faculty at SMU. Also, there are no words to express the depth of my gratitude and affection for the students attending SMU over the past 30 years. Therefore, this transition process is being undertaken with my belief and that of the Board, that the future success of the University is best assured when leadership changes are made while there is continued positive momentum toward important, agreed-upon future goals. By assuming the office in 2025, the 11th President will also be able to contribute to the success of *SMU Ignited* which is scheduled to conclude in 2028.

Therefore, as the 10th President, I will transition from the Presidency of SMU whenever the 11th President and CEO of SMU takes office, likely on June 1, 2025. At that time, with Board approval, I will become President Emeritus of the University reporting to the President to continue full-time to support the development and external affairs of the University, including the *SMU Ignited* Campaign, as the new President and Board deem appropriate. After 30 years, the commitment of Gail and me to the

continued development of the University and the well-being of the faculty, staff, and students is unending.

There will be opportunities later to express more fully and personally my deep appreciation to the SMU community for the honor of serving as President for the last 30 years. We can better reflect on our work together toward the end of the spring semester. In the meantime, during the coming academic year, we still have much to accomplish toward the goals of the Strategic Plan, the *SMU Ignited* campaign, and our new membership in the ACC. So, it is important that we continue our work together during the 2024-2025 academic year to make SMU even greater.

With deep appreciation and devotion,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. Gerald Turner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

R. Gerald Turner
SMU President