



January 3, 2019

From the President's Desk



With the new year comes renewed resolve to build on our ever-strengthening mission as we enter the Spring 2019 semester. Of course, at UNT Dallas, our resolve is always strong. And two momentous occasions to close 2018 served as proof that we are creating indelible imprints throughout our southern Dallas communities.

In the period of one week in December, we celebrated another record-setting fall graduation class with some 375 students walking across the stage in front of a full house of family, friends and supporters at Inspiring Body of Christ Church. Just a few days earlier, we were thrilled to learn that we had earned reaffirmation of our accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Provost Betty Stewart put the important day in perspective, correctly stating that maintaining accreditation is a testament to the tireless work and dedication of our faculty, staff and students.

Moving into 2019, our momentum is very real as we come together to build DFW's emerging urban university. As a campus community, our growing university continues to enrich the lives of our students, strengthen our surrounding communities and improve society. We are getting closer to two transformational moments for our main campus and the College of Law. Within the next few months, the 136,000-square-foot Student Center will be ready to open, and the historic Old City Hall building in downtown Dallas will be completely renovated to serve as the new home of UNT Dallas College of Law.

Yes, our momentum is very real. Here's to you, and to an incredible 2019 ahead!

More memories made, dreams fulfilled and futures unleashed as we celebrated another record-setting commencement ceremony

UNT Dallas [celebrated the commencement of approximately 375 students](#) at its fall graduation ceremony on Dec. 14 at the Inspiring Body of Christ Church. President Bob Mong, now in his fourth year leading extraordinary growth at the university,

recognized this latest class of graduates for their hard work, excellence and resilience in pursuit of earning their degrees at UNT Dallas. For many in this class, as in the classes that preceded them, they are the first in their families to earn a college degree. And so, as has become tradition at UNT Dallas commencement ceremonies, the church's large auditorium overflowed with thousands of friends, family members and well-wishers who came to support and cheer their graduates as they triumphantly walked across the stage. It was truly another inspiring night.

More: [Go behind the scenes at graduation with our Benjamin Bullock](#)



Congratulations to the hardest working faculty and staff in higher education as UNT Dallas has its accreditation reaffirmed

The University of North Texas at Dallas earned reaffirmation of its accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges ([SACSCOC](#)). The accrediting organization made the announcement as part of its annual meetings held in mid-December in New Orleans. SACSCOC assures education quality for more than 800 institutions across 11 states. An institution must be reaffirmed five years after it gains Initial accreditation. UNT Dallas first received accreditation in 2013. "This is an important day, and maintaining accreditation comes as a testament to the tireless work and dedication of our faculty, staff and students," said Dr. Betty Stewart, UNT Dallas Provost. "To have our accreditation reaffirmed validates for our students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, partners and the communities we serve in the southern sector of Dallas, that UNT Dallas is committed to providing affordable, high-quality academic programs and superior student support services."

More: [Five years after earning our initial accreditation, we know our mission is real](#)



Massive achievement as Dr. Syeda Jesmin receives \$303,000 grant from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

UNT Dallas Associate Professor of Sociology Dr. Syeda Jesmin was awarded a three-year, \$303,000 grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The funding will support a comprehensive public health approach to improve mental health at UNT Dallas and surrounding communities. "Our goal is to increase awareness of UNT Dallas students, their families, faculty and staff members about suicide, depression, serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders that can lead to school failure; promote help-seeking behavior and reduce negative public attitudes; and improve the identification and treatment of at-risk students so they can successfully complete their studies," said Dr. Jesmin, the principal investigator of this project.

More: [Dr. Jesmin's students named the project "STRONG" \(Students & Teachers Reaching Out and Never Giving up\)](#)



Inaugural Blazer Bowl brought together colleagues, friends, fun, donations and one epic photograph

The Inaugural Blazer Bowl was a smashing success on Dec. 6 with a dozen bowling teams comprised of UNT Dallas staff and friends of the university competing for the ballyhooed Iron Kettle, a grand prize of truly mythical proportion that will come to forever signify this burgeoning event. Created by UNT Dallas' Office of Advancement to be part staff recognition and part fundraiser, the first edition of the Blazer Bowl, held at the AMF Lanes in DeSoto, raised more than \$3,100 that will go directly to the UNT Dallas Foundation. The Blazer Bowl overall winner, determined by total fundraising plus team bowling score, was the CyrusOne team, One Dream, which included Sarah Dubec, Amanda Epperson, Dawn Guehler and Greg Higgins. These friends of the university were backed by a generous donation from UNT Dallas Foundation board member James Guess, whose wife, Kellie Teal-Guess, is CyrusOne's executive vice president and chief people officer. And, by the way, please note the professional bowling form of President Bob Mong.

More: [President Mong's team, the Fire Ballers, took home the first-place trophy.](#)



Another reason why UNT Dallas is a special place: Spanish in the Community course utilizes students to teach aspiring U.S. citizens

Founders Hall Room 101 was packed on Dec. 4 with smiling faces and tears of pride as 30 legal residents, all aspiring United States citizens, received their "Spanish in the Community" course graduation certificates. Taught by UNT Dallas students, the course prepares immigrants to pass the U.S. naturalization test and interview with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. This free, twice-a-week night course is a unique offering in North Texas, and is so important to those who choose to take it that some often forgo overtime opportunities at work to attend each class. Friends and family were invited to attend the ceremony, leading to a happily cheering crowd of some 100. "There was a lot of emotion in that room last night," said Dr. Mara Vaughn, professor of Spanish and Education. "One of the participants told me that he could never imagine that a course like that ever existed. He stated that the enthusiasm of our instructors motivated him to keep on coming after a hard day at work. Another participant shared that at the beginning she could not believe that the whole course and materials were free of charge. I am so proud of being a part of such a wonderful team of students, instructors and supporters. I rested last night full of joy. I believe UNT Dallas programs such as ours are truly making a difference in our community."

More: [Check out Al Día Dallas reporter Javier Giribet's report after attending the graduation ceremony](#)



UNT Dallas has nine among first 100 recipients of Charles Butt Scholarship for Aspiring Teachers; each tells their story

We are so proud of our nine students who are among the first 100 recipients of the Charles Butt Scholarship for Aspiring Teachers! Each has committed to teaching in a high-needs Texas public school or in hard-to-fill subject areas. These students view teaching as a calling, and each has a different reason why they want to teach. Each told their stories in the video below:

More: [Each scholarship recipient tells in their own words why for them teaching is a calling](#)



#UNTD News & Campus Updates

Law School Lauded for Virtual Reality: The [ABA Journal](#) put a very deserving spotlight on our own Jennifer Wondracek, director of legal educational technology, for her super-innovative use of virtual reality in the classroom to stage a crime scene. And that's only the beginning. The plan for the future is re-creating actual crime scenes for our criminal law classes. Virtual reality technology has the potential to transform the law school experience. "We are at the beginning of what I think is going to be a revolution in the way we train our students," Wondracek says in the article. "We are right at the edge with virtual reality technology in both the law-school setting and the legal profession."

Speaking of the Law School, We Welcome an Addition: Congratulations to Victor McGlothin, who leaves the UNT Dallas Office of Advancement, to become the law school's new Director of Integrated Marketing & Communications. He began his new post on Jan. 2. An author, filmmaker and experienced communications professional with a strong background in multimedia content and customer service, McGlothin will lead the strategic marketing and communications efforts for the first and only public law school in Dallas as part of the UNT Dallas Marketing & Communications team.

Outstanding Dr. Lacy Interview: If you haven't already read the powerful and insightful interview of our own Dr. Constance Lacy, Dean of the School of Human Services, please take a moment to do so. The [interview appears in Voyage Dallas](#) and Dr. Lacy explains her own voyage from Eastfield College to becoming UNT's very first Harry S. Truman Scholar, to the wonderful work she is doing now at UNT Dallas. Thank you, Dr. Lacy.

Staff Recognition Town Hall Was Big Success: It was wonderful to see a full house of UNT Dallas staff at our end-of-year Staff Recognition Town Hall in Founders Hall. It was a pleasure to present certificates of appreciation and pass along our sincere gratitude to so many -- from our hard-working custodial staff to our ever-present library staff to those who volunteered for great causes in our neighboring southern Dallas communities -- who make UNT Dallas a unique and special place. And a special thank you to Dr. Barbara Abercrombie, UNT System's new Chief of Human Capital Officer, for her inspirational talk to get the luncheon started.

Congratulations to Dr. Friesen: Our assistant dean of the School of Business, Dr. Daniel Friesen, had his article "[A Model of Sam Loyd's Outwitting the Weighing Machine](#)" published in a recent edition of [Business Management Dynamics](#). The article was a real mind-melter as it explored alternative solution methods for the puzzle, "Outwitting the Weighing Machine," by Sam Loyd -- an American chess player, puzzle author and recreational mathematician who died in 1911 -- by using Excel Solver and LINGO for this and other challenging problems. Dr. Friesen and co-author [Dr. Mike Patterson](#), a professor at Midwestern State University's Dillard College of Business Administration, are former colleagues at the Wichita Falls institution, and have collaborated on journal articles for a dozen years.

Our Grads Celebrate With The Mavs: We would like to thank the Dallas Mavericks and CEO Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall for their continued support of UNT Dallas. For a second time this semester, they treated dozens of our students to a game in a suite complete with food and beverages, and even the opportunity to slap high-fives with Mavs players before the game. [Thirty of our Fall 2018 graduates](#), along with a handful of staff and faculty, hopped on the Mavs/Fox Sports Southwest bus, were whisked to the American Airlines Center and then enjoyed a Mavs victory over the Orlando Magic.