

Jay Hartzell named next President of SMU

Following an extensive national search, the SMU Board of Trustees named Jay Hartzell the 11th SMU president, effective June 1, 2025.



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DALLAS ([SMU](#)) – The SMU Board of Trustees unanimously voted Tuesday to name Jay Hartzell the next president of SMU, effective June 1, 2025.

Dr. Hartzell, a national leader in business education and real estate finance, is currently the 30th president of The University of Texas at Austin. He previously served as the dean of the McCombs School of Business and has been a UT Austin faculty member since 2001.

“I am honored to serve as the next president of an exceptional institution like SMU in one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing cities in the nation, and excited to see how I can make the greatest impact as a leader,” Dr. Hartzell said. “SMU’s stellar – and rising – national reputation, decades of extraordinary internal and external leadership, strong board of trustees, accomplished alumni, and impressively strong and diverse students and faculty made this an opportunity that Kara and I could not pass up. I look forward to building upon the University’s remarkable momentum and leading SMU into its next era.”

During his last five academic years as president of UT Austin, Dr. Hartzell oversaw all-time highs in applications, enrollment, graduation rates, research expenditures and philanthropic support. He advanced new, innovative academic programs and increased impact in key research areas, including advanced computing, energy and artificial intelligence.

“Dr. Hartzell is a well-respected academician and higher education leader with a strong track record of accomplishments that make him the ideal candidate to build upon the tremendous energy and momentum we are experiencing here on the Hilltop,” said David B. Miller, ’72, ’73, chair of the SMU Board of Trustees and co-chair of the Presidential Search Committee. “His leadership at UT Austin and commitment to advancing programs across diverse disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, arts, education, business, law, student life, and intercollegiate athletics, make him an excellent choice as SMU’s eleventh president. He also understands the vital role Texas and its universities play in the nation’s vibrant economy. The Board of Trustees looks forward to welcoming him, his wife, Kara, and their family to the Hilltop and Dallas.”

Before becoming president of UT Austin, he served as the 12th dean of the McCombs School of Business, one of the nation’s largest and most prestigious business schools. By the end of his tenure, all 13 of McCombs’ undergraduate business specialties ranked in the top ten nationally. As dean of McCombs, he launched the Goff Real Estate Labs, elevated the Canfield Business Honors program and opened Rowling Hall, the home of UT’s MBA program. He also created significant partnerships with other colleges and schools across the UT campus, including the Dell Medical School, the College of Fine Arts, the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Natural Sciences and the Moody College of Communication.

Dr. Hartzell was named president in September 2020 by The University of Texas System Board of Regents. In 2022, President Hartzell launched Change Starts Here, a 10-year strategic plan to make UT Austin the world’s highest-impact public research university. He also launched a capital campaign that is tied for the largest ever undertaken by a public university.

Under President Hartzell’s leadership, UT Austin has enrolled the largest, strongest, and most diverse student body in its history and set all-time highs for graduation rates. Through Dell Medical School and UT Austin’s robust health-related ecosystem, he established the university as a top-tier academic medical center. He implemented a real estate strategy that enhances the student, business and wider community experience, starting with the construction and opening of Moody Center, Austin’s premier entertainment venue and the home of Longhorn basketball. UT Austin’s athletic enterprise has contributed to student life and the academic mission in new ways under his leadership, and Dr. Hartzell made the decision to move the university to the Southeastern Conference starting in 2024.

Dr. Hartzell’s research centers on real estate finance, corporate finance, and corporate governance. He has published articles in top journals, such as the Journal of Finance, Journal of Financial Economics, Real Estate Economics, and The Review of Financial Studies. He serves on the boards of MGIC Investment Corporation (NYSE: MTG) and Austin Habitat for Humanity.

He has also been a board member for Texas Exes and the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association. Outside academia, he gained professional experience as a consultant with Hewitt Associates.

The SMU Board of Trustees partnered with Isaacson, Miller, a firm specializing in higher education leadership, to conduct a national search for the University’s next president following Dr. R. Gerald Turner’s decision to transition after 30 years to President Emeritus. The 15-member search committee, co-chaired by Miller and Board Vice Chair Richard K. Templeton, included representatives from across the campus community and was guided by input from students, faculty, staff, alumni and supporters through listening sessions and online feedback.

“The Board expresses its gratitude to the presidential search committee and the SMU community for their participation and perspectives, which have been key to our selection process,” Templeton said. “This is a unique leadership opportunity to oversee several impactful accomplishments in the coming years and lead SMU at an exciting time in its history. The Board looks forward to working with Dr. Hartzell and supporting his efforts to enhance education and research vital to the success and growth of Dallas and the region.”

SMU is a dynamic university in the heart of Dallas, enrolling over 12,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs across eight schools. It operates with an \$861 million budget and a \$2.2 billion endowment. The University attracts a highly accomplished and diverse student body, with nearly 70% of first-year students benefiting from scholarships or grants.

SMU’s research expenditures exceed \$50 million annually. With 148 endowed faculty positions and 168 major academic initiatives, SMU is advancing its mission to become a premier research university with global impact.

The University competes in 17 intercollegiate sports and is a proud new member of the Atlantic Coast Conference, aligning with the nation’s most prestigious academic institutions. The campus provides a pedestrian-friendly, best-in-class student and residential campus experience and features many renovated and state-of-the-art facilities. The current major gifts campaign, SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow (2021-2028) has reached 93% of its \$1.5 billion goal, raising more than \$1.387 billion to date.

“As SMU continues into its second century, it is important to identify a leader who can follow in the footsteps of Gerald Turner and former presidents who also made an indelible mark on our University community, including Umphrey Lee and Willis M. Tate,” said Ray L. Hunt, ’65, a search committee member, former Board chair and longtime trustee. “Dr. Hartzell is that person, and SMU’s future is secure in his hands.”

Beginning this summer, SMU President R. Gerald Turner will transition to the full-time role of president emeritus after leading the University for three decades, supporting the new president and the University’s development and external affairs.

“With Dr. Hartzell taking the reins, I am confident that SMU will continue building on a generation of remarkable success,” Dr. Turner said. “Gail and I are excited to support Jay and Kara to continue SMU’s prominence and impact at the national level.”

Dr. Hartzell holds a B.S. in business administration and economics from Trinity University and a Ph.D. in finance from UT Austin. He is married to Kara Hartzell, a licensed clinical social worker with a private practice in Austin, and they have two adult children. His formal installation as SMU’s 11th president is tentatively scheduled for next fall.

For the latest updates on SMU’s presidential transition, visit our dedicated information hub, smu.edu/presidentsearch.

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SMU is the nationally ranked global research university in the dynamic city of Dallas. SMU’s alumni, faculty and more than 12,000 students in eight degree-granting schools demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit as they lead change in their professions, communities and the world.

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