

SMU Luminary Awards Celebrate Educational Innovations

BY PATRICK KOBLER • JAN 21, 2016

The Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University will hold its **2016 Simmons Luminary Awards** this evening. The event will recognize Dallas ISD's all-male magnet school **Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy** and its principal **Nakia Douglas**, the nonprofit advocacy organization **Raise Your Hand Texas**, and **All Stars Project, Inc.**, for their commitment to improving people's lives by demonstrating that a relevant and effective education requires innovation at all levels.

"The purpose of the awards is to honor individuals and organizations that use evidence to make educational decisions," says David Chard, dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. "In the past, recipients have been pioneers of using evidence to make policy, to lead schools, to create children's programming, to lead nonprofits, among other things."

The Simmons School has a unique ability to thread theory and research with hands-on practice of education and human development. Its faculty, is highly regarded for its research, while Dean Chard has received numerous national recognitions. One of his many accomplishments was his appointment by President Obama to the Board of Directors for the National Board for Education.

For Chard, who was named dean in 2007, the Simmons School's modern approach to preparing teachers and educational leaders is represented in the Luminary Awards.

"SMU Simmons focuses on building educators and education leaders who use evidence to make decisions," Chard says. "In the sense that innovators use evidence rather than tradition or superstition to make decisions, all of our recipients tend to be innovators."

Dallas Innovates will be attending the Luminary Awards this evening and sharing photos and updates via social media. Follow along and share your thoughts on DFW's approach to education using #DallasInnovatesEdu. And keep reading for a profile on all of the recipients, more of Dean Chard's thoughts on how the Luminary Awards celebrates innovation in education, and a video highlighting how the Simmons School is "Changing Minds."

BARACK OBAMA MALE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY AND NAKIA DOUGLAS – LOCAL HONOREE

The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy and its principal, Nakia Douglas, will be recognized as the 2016



local Luminary Award recipient. The DISD all-male, magnet school opened in 2011 and has since grown to serve 470 students in grades 6—12.

"We focus on the holistic development of our young men: intellectual, moral, physical, social, and emotional skills for tomorrow. This enables our young men to become mentally strong as they encounter issues at and away from our campus," says Douglas, who is a Dallas native and DISD graduate. "The transferable tools ensure that they will be knowledgeable, conscientious, and successful leaders, husbands, and fathers in the future."

As founding principal, Douglas has set the tone for the unique public school in southern Dallas. At BOMLA, students dress in navy blazers and slacks, take college preparatory courses like Latin and calculus, and develop their leadership skills.

"Nakia Douglas, the Principal of Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy, traveled around the world and the U.S. to look at models of strong single sex educational institutions and brought the best ideas of what worked back to Dallas to start this school," Chard says.

Douglas' leadership has been recognized with numerous awards including the 2015 DISD Magnet Principal of the Year Award. In addition, he has been named the KERA American Graduate Champion and a DISD exemplary principal. "To guide and to witness the growth of our young men and campus; a recognition of this magnitude further validates our efforts and the impact it is having to redefine what public education can look like for students throughout our city, state, and country," Douglas says.

Every member of Barack Obama's first graduating class in 2015 now attends college, and are representing DISD's first and only all-male school at more than 50 universities

and colleges, across five states. Combined, the class of 2015 earned \$2.9 million in scholarships.

“The results speak for themselves,” says Chard. “Barack Obama is nurturing young men who excel.”

RAISE YOUR HAND TEXAS—REGIONAL HONOREE

Raise Your Hand Texas is this year’s regional recipient of the Luminary Award. The nonprofit education advocacy organization is dedicated to strengthening public schools across Texas by sponsoring education research, training for school leaders, and educational advocacy at the Texas Legislature.

“They have made a tremendous difference in their support of school leaders and have advanced our state’s policies on early childhood education and accountability,” Chard says.

The use of meaningful student and school data to inform decisions is foundational to educational progress in the modern era. This year’s Luminary Awards magnify that theme, making Raise Your Hand Texas a suitable guest of honor for the event.

“Raise Your Hand Texas employs a team of people who pay attention to the evidence and work with people who understand the evidence and then use that evidence to make sound education decisions,” Chard says.

The nonprofit is committed to evidence-based education and support of researchers analyzing topics such as successful innovation in schools, the best use of educator data, and how to turn around chronically low-performing schools.

“Raise Your Hand Texas is unique because of our investments spanning research, programs, and advocacy,” says Dr. David Anthony, CEO of Raise Your Hand Texas. “Our leadership development, school turnaround, and innovation programs serve to inform our policy work.”

Raise Your Hand Texas partners with and supports leading education schools, such as Rice University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, to provide executive coaching for principals and other school leadership positions. It also supports the Teaching Trust, which partners with SMU’s Simmons School to prepare leaders in urban schools.

“Our work is far from over, and improving public schools for all students takes educators, parents, legislators, advocacy organizations, industry representatives, and many other stakeholder groups,” Anthony says. “We take this [award] as further confirmation that a quality education is critical to ensure all children get a fair shot at success in school and in life, and to create the most opportunity for all Texans.”

Wallace Jefferson, former Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court, will accept the regional Luminary award for Raise Your Hand Texas.

ALL STARS PROJECT, INC. NATIONAL HONOREE

Founded in 1981 by philosopher Dr. Fred Newman and developmental psychologist Dr. Lenora Fulani, the **All Stars Project** combats poverty in inner-city neighborhoods by providing unique after-school opportunities. This year’s national recipient of the Luminary Award builds the confidence and leadership skills of its students through programs such as performance workshops, bridge building with other community groups, and leadership training programs, which match students with corporate professionals to provide mentoring and internships.

“**The All Stars Project** is innovative in that they have identified key challenges that children in low-income communities face, and looked for innovative ways to help children overcome those challenges,” Chard says. “For example, their Operation Conversations: Cops and Kids program introduces New York City police officers to children in high crime communities and puts them into fun, but uncomfortable, situations so that they can get to know one another as people.”

Gabrielle Kurlander leads the **All Stars Project**. Under her leadership as President and CEO, the organization has become a national advocate for the use of after-school development to fight poverty.

The **All Stars Project** expanded to Dallas in 2014. Since then, its Dallas All Stars’ chapter has become part of Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings’ Anti-Poverty Task Force. More than 20,000 young people participate in All Stars programs each year in six cities, including Dallas.

“Like our partners at the Simmons School, we challenge tradition. We recognize that there needs to be a fundamental paradigm shift away from remedial approaches in after-school—that creativity and diversity are at the heart of after-school development and what inner city young people and poor communities across the country need to experience growth and development,” Kurlander says.

