

Remembering Dr. David Payne

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The Bearkat community is mourning the loss of Dr. David Payne who served as Vice President for Academic Affairs at Sam Houston State University starting in 1997. From 2004 to 2011, he served as Provost and VP of Academic Affairs.

During Payne's administration, the university increased the quality and breadth of offerings in undergraduate and graduate programs. Sam Houston State experienced two major organizational changes creating the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of Fine Arts and Mass Communication (known today as the College of Arts and Media).

Payne's unwavering stance on the importance of quality instruction manifested into an approximate 44 percent increase in the number of tenure/tenure track faculty at SHSU during his time. His dedication made a lasting impact on the university, with his establishment of the Office of Student Success Initiatives, the Office of International Programs, and the Professional and Academic Center for Excellence.

Under his leadership and commitment to civic duty, SHSU moved to a Carnegie Doctoral Research classification status and was awarded a Carnegie Community Engaged classification. Payne also played a vital role in establishing Sam Houston State's involvement in the American Democracy Project, a network of 250 state colleges that equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to be engaged members of their communities.

According to Joyce McCauley, executive director of SHSU's Center for Community Engagement, an important testament to Payne's work is the university award bearing his name and presented each year to select SHSU faculty members.

"Dr. Payne's style of leadership grew our democratic campus environment. He was sincerely interested in connecting the strengths of the university community with the strengths of the local community for the mutual benefit of both," McCauley said. "To that end, President Hoyt recognized his valuable work and established the fourth University Award for Excellence in his honor - the David Payne Award for Academic Community Engagement."

Payne leaves behind a strong objective academic culture that he established and that continues to raise the bar on academic programs and services at Sam Houston State University. His rigorous expectation for academic quality will continue to enhance student and faculty experiences for years to come.