

## 2026 UT Southwestern Pinnacle Award Recipients

April 27, 2026

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am pleased to write today to announce the recipients of the 2026 UT Southwestern Pinnacle Awards – individuals and teams whose exceptional contributions reflect the very best of our institution.

As UT Southwestern's highest honor for staff, the Pinnacle Awards recognize those whose work advances our mission in education, research, and clinical care. Now in its second year, this program continues to highlight the extraordinary people who shape and strengthen our institution.

We look forward to celebrating these outstanding colleagues at the awards ceremony on **June 17** at 4 p.m. in the Tom and Lula Gooch Auditorium, followed by a reception on McDermott Plaza. Additional details, including registration information, are [available on our website](#).

I am grateful to everyone who submitted nominations this year, reflecting the deep appreciation across our community for the contributions of our colleagues. I also extend my sincere thanks to the Pinnacle Awards Selection Committee for their thoughtful and thorough work in helping us recognize these exceptional individuals.

Please join me in congratulating this year's recipients, whose achievements inspire us all and strengthen our shared commitment to our mission and to supporting each other.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.  
President  
UT Southwestern Medical Center

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#### **Distinguished Service Award**

Honors an outstanding individual who has built a distinguished track record of success throughout their career at UTSW by consistently going above and beyond to further our mission to educate, discover, and heal by living out the UT Southwestern core values in their everyday work.

**Jose "Joe" Flores**, Automotive Mechanic  
Fleet Maintenance Operations – Facilities, Business Affairs

#### **Spirit of UT Southwestern Award**

Recognizes an employee who serves as a role model and brand ambassador for UT Southwestern through their loyalty, advocacy, service, mentorship, enthusiasm, and camaraderie, both within the UTSW internal community and beyond.

**Darren Fleming**, Senior Regulatory Associate  
Clinical Research Office – Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center,  
Academic Affairs

**Pinnacle Award for Excellence**

Recognizes an employee who most contributes to UT Southwestern's commitment to the highest standards of clinical excellence, educational distinction, research integrity, or administrative quality in all they do. They are unequivocal in their commitment to ongoing improvement through a project or initiative that has a positive and significant impact on their function, department, or the institution overall.

**Hugo Lopez**, Automation Integration Specialist  
Central Data Acquisition System and Controls – Utilities, Business Affairs

**Pinnacle Award for Innovation**

Recognizes an employee or team who created or contributed to development of a new technology or scientific discovery, launched or improved products or services, simplified complex tasks and processes, or creatively solved problems in service of our mission.

**Chelsea Landon**, Director, Health System Emerging Strategies  
Health System Strategy & Business Development, Health System Affairs

**Pinnacle Award for Teamwork**

Recognizes a team that embodies the spirit of collaboration by integrating different perspectives to achieve a common goal. This award honors those who look beyond their own functions to gather input from stakeholders, ensuring that integrity and excellence are at the forefront of every process improvement and service delivered.

**Office of Student Financial Aid**  
Office of the Provost – Academic Affairs

**Pinnacle Award for Compassion**

Recognizes an employee who embodies the values of UT Southwestern and has gone above and beyond to foster an environment of exemplary service in which internal colleagues or patients are treated with respect, dignity, and kindness in every encounter, every day.

**Priscilla Olivares**, Clinic Staff Assistant III  
Ambulatory Clinic – Bariatrics, Texas Health Dallas, Health System Affairs