

New Texas Tech University System Student Regent Steeley Smith Talks Passions, Priorities as Leader

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By Mateo Rosiles

From a passion for wanting to help people throughout her life, Steeley Smith from the Hill Country city of Mason is set to be the voice and advocate for over 60,000 students from around Texas and the nation.

Appointed by Texas Gov. Gregg Abbott on Jun 13 as the new student regent to the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents, Smith will represent every student across the five component institutions in the system.

Born in Mason, a community of about 2,000 people between San Angelo and San Antonio, Smith was raised in the agriculture industry.

"I started when I was about 5 years old, rodeoing competitively and that was a very, very big part of my life just growing up," she said.

"Whenever I got into high school, I was interested in different things — theater, debate (and) FFA."

Earning several state-wide accolades in debate and golf, Smith set her eyes on college - and she had a choice to make.

Although she comes from a family full of Red Raider fans, Smith is a first-generation student. At first, she wanted to be "rebellious," so she

looked at other colleges first. Still, she decided to give Texas Tech a chance.

"As soon as I went on my tour at Texas Tech — it just felt right at home," she said. "I felt connected to my fellow students like my tour guides and all of the students that we were able to talk to and all of the professors that I was able to talk to. I felt like it was the perfect fit for me."

And it would be a perfect fit for Smith, with Tech leaders echoing their confidence in her as a Red Raider.

"Steeley is driven, ambitious and hard-working – all characteristics that will serve her well as the student regent," said Texas Tech President [Lawrence Schovanec](#). "I am pleased she has been appointed to the Board and expect she will find much success representing the viewpoints of our diverse student bodies."

Schovanec said in a news release from the system, that Smith has been actively involved at Tech from the start and has a lot of experience and a wealth of knowledge that she brings to the table.

Smith is currently working on her third degree from the university — a master's in agribusiness from the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources.

She previously earned her bachelor's in agricultural communications from the Davis College in 2021 and her master's in media & mass communications from the College of Media & Communications in 2022. During her time there, Smith has been a part of numerous organizations including the Mortar Board Honor Society and the Texas Tech Terry Scholars while also receiving distinction as a "Top 10 Freshmen" her first year at Tech.

She also served as the advertising sales manager for *The Agriculturalist* — a student-led publication designed to give students real-world experience to help build their portfolio.

For Smith, she took the opportunity she was given and ran with it, leading her to win national awards for a feature she wrote.

"I wrote about how COVID and how our farmers and ranchers weren't able to actually go to the Capitol and lobby in person for themselves," she said.

As a 7th generation rancher, Smith said a farmer's or rancher's relationship with their elected officials is vital to their livelihoods.

Goals as a Texas Tech System student regent

Now, as student regent, she serves as the storyteller and advocate for the system's entire student body.

The thing she wants to advocate for during her tenure — increasing mental resources on every institution's campus.

"Midwestern State, just recently changed their counseling center from eight to five to 24/7. And I thought that was awesome," she said. "The Tech System is already doing great things in that area so I hope to kind of continue to push that momentum forward.

Smith said she knows that for some students, they will be at the most vulnerable point of their lives when they first step foot on campus, with some being in a new city, state, or even country.

She hopes to make those students and every student feel safe and at home at Texas Tech. Smith will be sworn in and sit in on her first board meeting in Lubbock on Aug. 10 and 11.

"I just want to make sure that as a university system, we are able to make sure that we are helping our students become the best version of themselves that they can be," she said. "I'm excited to get to play a part in that because Tech has done that for me."