

# Student Support Services hosts annual event



Photo By Julian Ortiz

Dr. Deema ed Silva, director of WSU Student Support Services speaks at the SSS student recognition banquet Thursday evening at the Marcus Welcome Center.

## *Banquet recognizes academic stars*

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Amid a room full of balloon bouquets topped with stars, aspiring, accelerating and accomplished stars of the Student Support Services program were recognized in the Time Capsule of

the Marcus Welcome Center on Thursday evening for the SSS 32nd Annual Student Awards and Recognition Banquet.

SSS, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, provides support for students from families with incomes under \$28,000 where

neither parent graduated from college. Students in the TRIO Support Services program are more than twice as likely to remain in college as those students from similar backgrounds who do not choose to participate in the program.

"This evening belongs

to my students, who have overcome the myriad of barriers to achieve academic success," said Director of SSS, Deema de Silva. "This is your evening. Please enjoy it."

Highlights of the evening included recognition of Frankie Brown, director of human resources and WSU employee for more than 30 years, as the SSS-WSU Administrator of the Year.

"I am humbled by this recognition," Brown said.

Dai Phan, a maxillofacial prosthodontist in Columbia, South Carolina who tutored at WSU's SSS more than 20 years ago, addressed the audience with an inspirational message.

Phan specializes in prosthetic reconstruction. Phan studied uninterrupted for 16 years—including four years at WSU—to achieve his current level of success. He still fondly recalls his days as a tutor at WSU.

"There are things that you don't forget ... like your first kiss, your first boyfriend, your first love," Phan said. "It stays with you for the rest of your life. As long as I live, I will truly cherish the memorable experience."

Phan also shared his passion for education,

appropriate comments for an organization funded by a Pell grant from the United States Department of Education.

"In this world, there are many levels of achievement, many levels of success. But the bottom line is that education is the foundation. It provides the building blocks for success," Phan said. "To be educated means that you've unlocked your potential to allow yourself to become the best person that you can be."

Phan gained United States citizenship in August 1985 and still believes that America exists as the land of opportunity.

"There is one thing you can do for yourself, the others around you and your country. Succeed! Do your best academically. Make yourself a productive citizen by giving back to others what you have learned and living by example. Aim high and push yourself to achieve that advanced degree."

How high should one aim? According to Sen. Pat Roberts, the stars are the limits. Mel Thompson read aloud a letter from Roberts.

"By embracing grades, GPA and graduation, your

program has built a strong foundation for the future for every student. To everyone in the program, success is the only option. The TRIO program is the blueprint for a lifetime of success," Roberts said. "Each of you has become the standard bearer for the your family. What an honor and a privilege that is. Claim it and seize the moment. Set your sights high and let the Kansas motto be yours: Ad Astra Per Astra: To the stars through difficulties."

In the words of James Rhatigan, a consultant for the WSU Foundation, "This is very inspiring stuff, and we're not making it up. These are real stories of real people who kicked the odds in the face and went on to achieve. We can all be real proud of them."

### ONLINE

For a more in-depth look at Student Support Services, go to [www.thesunflower.com](http://www.thesunflower.com)