



Office of the President

TO: Crista DeLuzio, Faculty Co-Chair, President's Commission on the Status of Women
Rachel Mulry, Staff Co-Chair, President's Commission on the Status of Women

FROM: R. Gerald Turner, President

DATE: August 8, 2022

SUBJECT: Response to Recommendations in the 2021-2022 Report of the Commission

Attached is my response to the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women. These responses arise from my consultations with appropriate Executive Officers and our joint discussion on Monday, August 1.

Thank you once again for the essential advisory work undertaken by the Commission members to carry out the charge set forth in the Commission's charter. I find the work of the Commission valuable. Over the years, important improvements have resulted in part from the Commission's work and recommendations.

Again, thank you for your help in addressing the issues of concern to our female faculty, staff, and students. I commend you for the engagement shown this past year by the PCSW with Human Resources and with the Provost's Office, particularly Associate Provost Paige Ware.

On a more personal note, let me thank you both, Crystal and Rachel, for leading the President's Commission on the Status of Women in recent years. The work and the support of SMU that you undertook and the leadership you exemplified benefited the University.

Attachment: "Response to the Annual Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 2021-2022"

cc: Elizabeth Loba
Brad Cheves
Maria Dixon Hall
K.C. Mmeje
Chris Regis
Harold W. Stanley
Samantha Thomas
Paul Ward

Response to the Annual Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, 2021-2022

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPACT OF COVID ON WOMEN

1. Human Resources (HR) and the Moody Graduate School should monitor the proportion of women leaving SMU's employment (faculty, staff, graduate students). If the current trend continues--or becomes worse in terms of scale and/or gender disparity--we may see a serious contraction of the representation of women in our workforce. We recognize there are factors that confound monitoring this trend in a way that might expose the specific scope and nature of the problem. However, data collected by HR and the Moody Graduate School would likely provide a strong foundation for monitoring.

Keeping staff, faculty, and graduate students at SMU is an ongoing challenge. Helpful in that regard are Human Resources (HR) for staff and the Provost's Office for faculty and graduate students. The Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and Diversity Officers in the units have a significant role to play across the university. The CDO and the Associate Vice President of HR work to resolve academic administrative staff concerns identified by unit diversity officers.

HR regularly tracks staff turnover. In past years turnover has been in the 9-12% range. However, this past year, the overall university turnover rose to 16.7% (20.4% for staff, 8.5% for faculty).

While the overall 16.7% figure is higher than in past years, that level compares favorably with national figures reported as high as 50% for turnover, but the comparison is no grounds for complacency. HR continues to monitor terminations, determine reasons for terminations, and conduct exit interviews. Terminations involve retirement, taking another job, leaving the work force, and so on. Any patterns that suggest issues leading women to leave SMU would be flagged by HR for attention and follow-up with University leadership.

University-wide, of all full-time employees, more are women: 52.1%. Relative to proportionate shares, more women terminated this past year, but terminations are about in line with workforce characteristics:

- women make up 56.2% of SMU's overall, non-faculty, staff workforce
 - Of the 337 staff that terminated, 200 (59.3%) were women, 11 more than would be expected from a 56.2% proportionate share.
- women make up 41.3% of the full-time faculty
 - Of the 64 faculty that terminated, 29 (45.3%) were female, 3 more than would be expected from a 45.3% proportionate share.

The Office of the Provost similarly monitors faculty leaving SMU to determine, among other things, if patterns specific to women emerge. Current data on faculty will be made available to the PCSW in November 2022, after completion of the annual census of faculty. In addition, ongoing efforts to centralize data tracking and reporting of graduate students through the Moody School will strengthen reporting accuracy to monitor trends in graduate student enrollment among doctoral students.

The Chief Diversity Officer and Diversity Officers in academic units work to identify women faculty and faculty from underrepresented groups who are at risk for recruitment from other universities. Working with academic leadership, the CDO was able to assist in the retention of two women assistant professors. The associate and full professors SMU did not retain departed for the opportunities to lead major research centers in their research area. The CDO notes that 2020-21 faculty exit interviews with women faculty leaving SMU did not indicate a direct impact of COVID on the decision to leave SMU. Instead, those faculty cited three key considerations: opportunity for leadership, opportunity to work more directly with senior colleagues in the same disciplinary area, and dual career concerns.

2. HR, Business and Finance, and University leadership should take preemptive steps to retain women through systemic improvements and retention efforts. Many of the recommendations made by the PCSW in this report are aimed at making our university a more attractive workplace for women. These recommendations, and other retention practices, such as increasing pay to match inflation, may prove to be a less costly solution to impacts of “The Great Resignation.”

SMU has not experienced the “Great Resignation” to the extent that some other universities and employers have and actively monitors staff and faculty turnover to identify any emerging issues quickly.

SMU takes significant proactive steps to retain staff. We seek to maintain a very competitive salary structure, reviewing salaries bi-annually to ensure SMU salaries keep pace with the market. Some positions are reviewed more frequently if any difficulty recruiting and/or retaining staff arises. Even during the pandemic and at other times of stress, SMU has provided annual compensation increases to staff, even when other universities and employers were reducing staff, foregoing compensation increases, or cutting benefits.

SMU’s comprehensive benefit offerings continue to attract and retain employees. According to the 2021 Kaiser Family Foundation Health Benefits survey, on average 77% of employees participate in their employer’s health plan. At SMU, 86% of employees participate in the health plan. The plans offered continue to be affordable and heavily subsidized by the University, and offer a broad network of doctors and facilities.

As I noted in my email to the University of April 29, 2022, HR completed a comprehensive benefits benchmark survey in the spring of 2022. This survey compared SMU’s benefit offerings to 12 aspirational or cohort peer schools and five major DFW employers, finding that SMU offers a broad and competitive benefit package. Key areas where SMU’s benefits stood out favorably were retirement matching, Emeriti retiree health plan, life insurance policies, and tuition benefits. Some areas identified and addressed for enhancement were Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), long-term disability monthly benefit, and the holiday schedule. Acting on the findings of the benchmark report, these enhancements were made to SMU’s benefit offerings:

- Addition of one floating holiday per year for staff
- Increasing the long-term disability benefit from \$7,500 monthly maximum to a monthly maximum of \$15,000
- A new long-term care option to add at open enrollment is being worked up by HR
- EAP visits have been expanded to five visits from the current three

Moreover, SMU has been considering ways to enhance tuition benefits. We're at work on that and expect to announce more about that early this fall.

SERVICE WORKLOAD OF FACULTY AND STAFF

3. Provost Paige Ware and her team should continue to collaborate with the PCSW to analyze and make recommendations based upon the data gathered from the faculty survey on workload policies and service responsibilities.

Associate Provost Ware informs me that she reached out to the PCSW to inquire about interest in helping to analyze the survey from late spring 2022. Three PCSW members offered to support the analysis. This group received a draft of the survey results on June 6, 2022, and a draft of the full report circulated in mid-July and a final draft in early August. This report will generate recommendations for Phase Two in 2022-2023 which is likely to involve more nuanced input and information-gathering at the department and school level (see Recommendation #5 below).

In a related undertaking, the Chief Diversity Officer, in response to the Black Unity Forum Action Plan, is implementing the first Biennial University Climate Survey, working with OIT, HR, and the Provost's Office, and utilizing best practices from both corporate and non-profit organizations. The goal is to obtain a greater understanding of the 'experience' of SMU for individuals across various work units, ranks, positions, lengths of service, and key demographics. This survey should occur in spring 2023. When the PCSW meets with the CDO in the year ahead, I encourage you to make this one of the several topics discussed.

4. We emphasize our position that the workload policies documents be utilized only for the purposes of ensuring clarity, transparency, and gender and racial equity in faculty workloads.

Let me share with you this statement from the Provost's Office in response to this recommendation:

The core intention of the workload procedures documents has been to ensure transparency and equity in how the standard university workload policy manifests in each of the 41 departments within 5 schools and the other 2 schools not structured by department. Research, teaching, and service expectations in individual contracted in-load across the university are more varied than standardized due to several conditions:

- the nature of each discipline,
- the historical context in which workload has been distributed,
- the culture and leadership within units, and
- the unevenly distributed resources across departments (e.g., faculty:staff:student ratios, student credit-hour requirements, growth/decline in majors/minors, etc.).

The first-year goal of the workload procedures initiative was to gain a better understanding of the variations in conditions by requiring each unit to describe what counts as parameters for this distributed workload. This greater understanding will be a first step toward ensuring clarity, equity, and transparency, but not a sufficient step. More remains to be done.

The next phases will be designed to gather faculty input (through the survey referenced in the response to Recommendation #3) on the perceived clarity and transparency of these documents and the extent to which workload seems to be distributed and acknowledged across departments or schools. Based on the analysis of the faculty survey in summer 2022, the Provost's Office will collaborate with the deans to determine the best means for moving toward greater clarity, transparency, and equity.

5. Deans and department chairs should inventory and solicit faculty feedback about specific college and departmental level service activities, similar to the efforts carried out by the Provost's Office regarding university-level service. The PCSW should receive access to any data gathered along these lines.

The Provost's Office anticipates that the analysis of the survey mentioned in response to Recommendation #3, as well as the follow-up discussions, will resonate with this recommendation and support the deans and department chairs in conducting similar efforts. Associate Provost Ware has engaged with the PCSW on the evolution of workload policies and service responsibilities and looks forward to continuing that engagement.

6. Academic leadership should acknowledge the service performed by non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty. Such acknowledgement should be recognized through contract language and/or specific criteria and guidelines regarding raises and promotions.

In February 2022, SMU changed its policy on contracts for non-tenure track faculty, such that the length of contracts can extend for up to five years (in contrast to the prior one- to three-year contract lengths). Contained within the SMU policy is the requirement that all areas have explicit and published guidelines for how NTT faculty can be promoted. The Provost's Office has asked all schools to provide these guidelines centrally so that through Box the guidelines can be accessible to all faculty. Although there is not a hard deadline due to concerns expressed by both faculty and academic leadership about the time required to develop these guidelines, the extension of a five-year contract can only be made once clear, transparent promotion guidelines are in place to advance equity and transparency about how NTT faculty can be promoted toward increasingly longer contracts and associated merit increases.

7. HR should create a staff survey similar to the faculty survey. HR should develop a document for supervisors that establishes guidelines for assigning, tracking, and rewarding staff service. We recommend that HR collaborate with the PCSW to create the survey, analyze the results, and develop the service guideline for supervisors.

Recognize that faculty and staff have very different job descriptions. The survey that worked well for faculty workloads faces a more varied and challenging prospect with the wide range of staff roles. SMU staff all have job

descriptions that should accurately reflect the duties assigned. Managers and staff are strongly encouraged to keep job descriptions current and accurate. Each manager should ensure the workload assigned to each staff member is appropriate. If a work load is determined to be too heavy on one staff member, then the appropriate manager should address the situation. The survey conducted for faculty does not fit staff since many staff do not have specifics to measure such as credit hours taught, research conducted, and so forth. Staff workload is reflected within a job description and measured by managers.

I encourage you to discuss this further with Sheri Starkey in HR and Chris Regis as VP for Business and Finance in your meetings in the year ahead.

SMU has enhanced the recognition of outstanding staff service. Several years ago, a committee reviewed staff recognition programs leading to a Staff Recognition Initiative to improve an annual University-wide comprehensive Staff Recognition program while also encouraging recognition at school and unit levels. SMU increased its service award program budget by 40% to implement the new service award program.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

8. HR should audit Performance Management processes to identify the various modes of performance evaluation (my.SMU, memorandums, etc.) and schedule of reviews and feedback. While we support allowing flexibility for managers to assess performance and conduct reviews as they see fit for their respective areas, the purpose of the audit is to encourage all managers to complete annual performance reviews and provide feedback to all employees.

Since I came to SMU as President in 1995, SMU has utilized many varieties of performance management ranging from very prescriptive to somewhat prescriptive to not very prescriptive. A few years ago, discussion of this very issue led to the determination that freedom to conduct staff performance evaluations at the local level, in a way that was specific and productive to each area, is the most helpful to managers and staff. HR provides support for all managers throughout the performance management process. HR will enhance the communication around performance evaluations to remind managers to

complete a meaningful process for their staff. I will remind each member of the President's Executive Council (PEC) to encourage managers within their areas to complete a meaningful process for their staff.

9. SMU should promote increased partnership and support from HR, the Women and LGBT Center, the SMU Women's Group, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and other areas to provide additional opportunities for mentorship programs, professional development, small group discussions, and focused workshops aimed at fostering the career advancement of female faculty and staff. We recommend allocating funds to support women's networking, special events, and conference attendance.

This recommendation speaks to issues about which several areas at SMU have been working and plan to do more. I look to the PCSW to consider such work and plans as you engage with these units in the year ahead and advise me on where we are making progress and where we still have opportunities to improve.

For instance, HR partners with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion as well as the Office of Institutional Access and Equity to offer training and other professional development opportunities for all staff. These three partners welcome discussion with the groups listed in the recommendation, the PCSW, and others about additional opportunities to identify, develop, and implement new professional and leadership development courses.

In 2022–2023, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will develop a framework for the establishment of employee affinity groups (EAG). Similar to SMU's aspirational peers, these EAGs will entail 1) designated employee leaders committed to two years of working and leading the group; 2) ten or more members to be considered viable; and 3) a senior leader sponsor.

The Provost's Office will continue work in this area ("Emerging Leaders") as well as launch four new initiatives:

- The Provost's Office hosts an annual "Emerging Leaders" seminar series that offers ten weekly lunches focused on leadership development for cohorts of SMU faculty. Careful attention has been given to maintain proportionately more women in these cohorts than in the faculty at SMU.

- The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has identified mentorship as key under the new leadership of Karen Thomas. Mentoring opportunities, largely designed and implemented thus far at the unit level (typically, departmental), mean that a system-wide focus by CTE on mentorship should make an important contribution. CTE will focus mentorship around the key pillar of classroom instruction.
- The Office of Faculty Success will launch a new series, “Springboard,” for faculty to gather monthly to discuss strategies for faculty success. These monthly gatherings will focus on topics generated by the National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development. All interested new faculty will be eligible.
- In addition, the Provost’s Office will hold conversations with deans to discuss the potential augmentation of conference attendance for women as a strategic investment of annual, non-recurring performance-based funding distributed each year by the Provost’s Office.
- Also, in 2022–2023, the Office of Faculty Success within the Provost’s Office will launch a new faculty series with four events each semester, “Tour SMU,” in which new, first-year faculty will be invited to a featured event at each of the seven schools and the Guildhall. Current faculty will be encouraged to join these events as a way to enhance community engagement among the broader faculty.

10. SMU should create a cross-functional, collaborative committee to oversee improvements to communication efforts from HR, campus departments and the Women and LGBT Center to managers, department chairs, and employees regarding benefits, professional development opportunities, and employment policies and procedures.

Messaging and communicating effectively within today’s university is a major, ongoing challenge as we are reminded repeatedly and learn anew in unexpected ways. I am not yet persuaded that adding another layer, even if collaboration is the intention, would make a helpful difference. Despite that conclusion, I welcome your ideas and suggestions about how this university might communicate better, internally and externally.

As we discussed, a major challenge is that communications often go unread or ignored. Communicating too often makes that worse, but communicating too little can lead to even bigger problems.

Let me note some of the communication processes SMU seeks to use to advantage.

HR currently uses three main communication vehicles and partners closely with other campus departments such as Marketing and Communications (MARCOM) to develop messaging using 1) HR Headlines, 2) BenefitsU, or 3) Manager Headlines to regularly communicate policy updates, professional development/training opportunities, important Benefit updates, and deadlines. As appropriate, HR welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with other offices.

In the Provost's Office, the Provost's weekly newsletter has improved communications. Also, Associate Provost Ware is making known the resources and training opportunities specific for faculty, hosting monthly, hour-long, optional "Mid-Month Discussions" for the 41 department chairs at SMU since spring 2021. This will continue. Publicizing resources and training opportunities and co-hosting them with other units will be undertaken this academic year. To date, such optional workshops have been co-hosted with HR, DASS/Student Affairs, and academic leadership (for example, panels of chairs). The previously mentioned initiative, "Springboard," will be another example of promising outreach.

Today, websites are a critical means of communication. As we seek to bring websites associated with various offices and programs to the level of our aspirational peers, take the Office of Faculty Success website as an example. This website recently underwent redesign. Ongoing efforts will be made to improve its accessibility and usefulness based on user feedback (<https://www.smu.edu/Provost/ProvostOffice/PoliciesResources/Faculty-Success>).

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

11. HR should review the maternity leave policy for staff. Staff policies should not differentiate between vaginal and cesarean deliveries.

HR informs me that they will review maternity leave policy and make an appropriate proposal to the Vice President for Business and Finance as an initial step toward revision of this policy. Any such policy change requires PEC deliberation and approval. At the time the paid parental and maternity leave policy was implemented, the research behind these benefits and policies differentiated recovery time between the two delivery methods.

12. HR should review staff vacation leave. Some staff vacation leave is less than that at nearby peer institutions such as Texas Christian University and Baylor University. We recommend staff in Group IV of SMU's Schedule of Annual Vacation Accrual Rates receive the same benefits as staff in Group V. This would increase the minimum vacation leave from 10 to 15 days. The wait period that keeps new staff from using accrued vacation time should be reconsidered.

The recent benchmark survey revealed that SMU's vacation accrual for staff is in line with other employers. Note that the results from the benefits benchmark survey indicated most aspirational and cohort peer universities begin accruals with 10–12 days for service ranging from 0–5 years. Accruals increased with years of service. There were a few that began accrual at 15 days while one in particular (TCU) gave 22 days with no increase due to years in service. The DFW corporate employers included in the benchmark study have personal time off (PTO) banks that combines vacation and sick leave. Those PTO accruals ranged from 16-20 days.

One possible option about the waiting period is make the waiting period consistent with 90-day probation period for staff. HR informs me that they will evaluate this option and, if appropriate, propose to the Vice President for Business and Finance that the wait period for new staff change from 6 months to 90 days. This is an initial step toward revision of this policy involving PEC discussion and decision.

13. We affirm the focus on employee mental health expressed in President Turner’s letter “Important information about your compensation and benefits” sent April 29, 2022. We recommend this be made explicit in University Policy 7.15 by adding mental health as an acceptable use of accrued medical leave. This would provide additional encouragement for employees to use the offered therapy sessions.

While not expressly stated, mental health is covered under the Medical Leave policy as well as the SMU health plan. HR informs me that they will evaluate updating policy language and, if appropriate, make such a proposal to the Vice President for Business and Finance, leading to PEC discussion and decision.

14. Payroll should assure non-essential staff in advance of inclement weather that Business Interruption Pay will be provided in case of university closure.

University Policy 9.12 was updated March 14, 2022 and provides the assurance that is being requested. <https://www.smu.edu/Policy/9-Police-and-Public-Safety/9-12-University-Operations-Affected-by-Emergency-Conditions>

15. HR should provide current managers additional information, training, and guidance regarding flexible work arrangements.

HR looks to incorporate information on this topic into existing management training such “Introduction to HR” as well as include the information in other communications. This information resides on the HR website under <https://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/HR/Resources/WorkLifeResources>.

The commission would like to restate our support of the following recommendations from the 2020–2021 report:

16. [unnumbered in report, lines 136-138] We strongly encourage the Staff Association to facilitate a staff Town Hall meeting at least twice annually to provide increased communication with the upper administration. Although the Staff Association indicated there would be a town hall scheduled this year, it did not occur.

There was a Town Hall for all faculty and staff on August 5, 2021 in McFarlin Auditorium but it was not well attended by staff. This is an issue the Staff Association will discuss going forward.

17. [unnumbered in report, lines 139-140] We strongly encourage the efforts of HR in the development and review of career streams to provide clarity for staff advancement.

Development for staff is a priority for HR and several initiatives are currently underway.

In response to the SMU Strategic Plan and the Black Unity Forum (BUF) goals:

- HR continues to work with SMU's Office of Diversity and Inclusion to support training opportunities, enhance the CIQ training experience, and consult with Diversity Officers to provide resources in response to stated needs.
- HR created a career streams or ladders proposal, consisting of five career streams or ladders including Executive, Management, Professional, Administrative and Operational Support, and Safety and Skilled Trades. HR is working with Accounting & Fiscal Services as well as Facilities Planning & Management to complete career streams and paths for the remaining job families by the end of May 2023.
- To provide employees a framework and clear understanding of the career path for current and future roles, HR finalized service agreement to implement new software aimed to improve consistency in job titles and responsibilities across the University. Implementation began spring 2022. This project is anticipated to run through calendar year 2022.
- HR continues to refine and expand the SMU Manager Orientation Program to include more strategic processes for manager development so that SMU managers are better prepared for their roles as new managers, managers of individual contributors, and managers of those who manage individual contributors.

18. [unnumbered in report, line 141-142] We strongly encourage SMU to support the initiatives of The Period Project and take concrete steps to improve menstrual equity on campus.

Student Government, working through the Office of Facilities Planning and Management, has allocated \$6,115 in funding for a pilot program. Three

dispensers and products will be installed in three Hughes-Trigg women's restrooms this fall semester (pending availability of dispensers). Facilities will supply the labor to install the units and ABM, SMU's custodial partner, will manage product refills. At the end of six months the program will be reviewed to guide further consideration as a long-term program.

19. [not included in the Commission's recent report] Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program

Concrete progress has been made on the Commission's recommendations from prior years that SMU begin the SANE Program on campus. Dr. K.C. Mmeje has reported that an executive agreement with The Turning Point has been concluded. Effective July 1, 2022, SANE nurse exams are available at the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center. This new service will be publicized appropriately and extensively in various ways. In partnership with The Turning Point, a SANE nurse and advocate will be available on demand within 30 minutes to the Health Center. The SMU Police Department, the Health Center staff, and The Turning Point Rape Crisis Center have developed protocols to ensure coordination between all agencies involved in sexual assault cases to increase the efficacy of response and to minimize survivor traumatization.

Students who have experienced sexual assault may request emergency examination by calling The Turning Point's 24-hour hotline, the Health Center, or the SMU Police. Those utilizing this service have the choice of whether or not they wish to report. Students continue to have the option to seek services off campus at the Texas Health Presbyterian Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center (DARCC) and may now go directly to The Turning Point Rape Crisis Center in Plano (Courtney's SAFE Place).