

August 17, 2023

SMU Faculty and Staff,

Thank you for the roles you play to support and promote the success of our students. As we approach the start of another academic year, I want to share some exciting organizational updates from the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success (SAES) and make you aware of some resources that have been curated to support student academic success, retention and degree completion.

SAES strives to offer impactful services that benefit all Mustangs, that are available without interruption, and are responsive to the changing needs of SMU's student body. In response to this goal, SAES reorganized and expanded its staff. Please reference our new SAES Organization Charts, attached to this email, to see how we have implemented these changes. Additionally, an updated copy will always be available online on [our leadership page](#).

With our new staff members and reinvigorated departments, we have had the opportunity to compile a comprehensive list of all resources, programs, and initiatives we make available to support students. You can find the comprehensive list in booklet form and attached to this email as well. This booklet is meant to serve as a guide to our area and map you and your students to supports they can utilize during their time at SMU. Each resource, program, and initiative contains summary information and a weblink to further explore the subject.

We hope that over the course of the year, you will feel confident sending your students to us for academic enrichment and support, knowing that we have a full staff to address students' needs, and a diverse range of programs that can meet students wherever they are in their academic journey. SAES is also available to answer any questions you may have about our offerings. Please explore our newly designed website at [smu.edu/saes](http://smu.edu/saes) to learn more and reach out to anyone on our leadership team to gain clarity. While on this page, you can also choose to receive a weekly digest of SAES news and announcements posts [from our blog](#), created to document change in staff or programs, updates to the common curriculum, and celebrations of student and staff achievements and experiences.

We hope you have a smooth start to the fall semester.

Sincerely,



**Sheri Kunovich, Ph.D.**  
Associate Provost  
Student Academic Engagement and Success



# STUDENT ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT & SUCCESS

Student Academic Engagement & Success (SAES) is an area within the Office of the Provost. We work to ensure SMU students are aware of academic opportunities and campus support systems to empower their academic success and enrich their experiences inside and outside the classroom. SAES develops programs that function under three themes: academic initiatives, academic enrichment, and academic support. Learn more about these themes and their programs below and in the following pages.

## ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

Academic initiatives are the collaborative efforts SMU has in place to help students meet their graduation goals.

## ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT

Academic enrichment programs provide students with distinctive coursework, funded opportunities to work with faculty on research and creative projects, and co-curricular experiences that enrich the SMU curriculum.

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Academic support resources are available to all students to ensure success in the classroom, to provide guidance on degree completion, and to inform and support students applying for national fellowships and awards.



## ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

### SMU in Four

[smu.edu/smuinfour](http://smu.edu/smuinfour)

SMU in Four – SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) – is the University's comprehensive approach to improving SMU's retention and four-year graduation rates. The QEP advances student academic success through its most essential form: progress toward degree. The strategies build upon existing University practices to improve our early alert systems, academic advising, and first-year gateway courses. SMU hopes to improve graduation outcomes by closing the remaining racial and socio-economic gaps in 4-year graduation rates across all majors.



### First Generation Initiative

[smu.edu/firstgen](http://smu.edu/firstgen)

First Generation Initiative (FGI) was established in 2019 to ensure academic success for first-generation SMU students — those who are the first in their family to attend a postsecondary institution. Students receive support through programs and resources designed specifically to enhance their SMU experience. Some of our signature programs include Welcome (Back) Reception, First-Gen Fest, Senior Reception and First-Gen Proud Allies (a faculty/staff supportive group who hail from different departments on campus, identifiable by a First-Gen Proud Ally logo. By 2026,



## ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT

### University Honors Program

[smu.edu/uhp](http://smu.edu/uhp)

The University Honors Program (UHP) prepares SMU's most academically ambitious undergraduate students for their future by emphasizing a broad-based education in the humanities and sciences, and fostering a culture of intellectual curiosity. First-year students are invited to join the UHP after admission to SMU. Continuing students may apply after completing their first year of study. UHP courses have small enrollments in order to provide a supportive environment where students and faculty can establish close relationships. Honors students receive personalized mentoring for developing research proposals and national fellowship applications.



### Hilltop Scholars Program

[smu.edu/hsp](http://smu.edu/hsp)

Students who have demonstrated high academic achievement and an interest in service and leadership on their applications to SMU may be invited to join the Hilltop Scholars Program (HSP). This one-year program offers select courses, social and cultural events, and programming to maximize the students' experience on campus. HSP gives SMU's incoming students the chance to shine early in their college careers and helps prepare them for campus leadership positions.



### Rotunda Scholars Program

[smu.edu/rotundascholars](http://smu.edu/rotundascholars)

The Rotunda Scholars Program is a scholars program that aims to help historically underserved first-year students achieve early success at SMU by promoting academic achievement, leadership, and personal excellence. Program benefits include early move-in with extended orientation programs; an academic peer support program, required academic counseling and study hall; and periodic co-curricular engagement opportunities focused on community-building and experiencing the city of Dallas. Every student comes to college with different academic and lived experiences so Rotunda aims to help students have an equitable and empowering first year and beyond.



## Mustang Scholars Program

[smu.edu/mustangscholars](http://smu.edu/mustangscholars)

Beginning in 2010, the Mustang Scholars Program has supported Dallas County students by awarding scholarships that combine with other awards to guarantee all SMU tuition and fees are met. The Mustang Scholars Program develops students by offering an intimate cohort experience with semi-structured programs throughout scholars' four years on the hilltop.



## President's Scholars Program

[smu.edu/ps](http://smu.edu/ps)

Since its founding in 1982, The President's Scholars Program (PS) has provided a world of opportunity to some of the nation's brightest students, who in turn, enrich the University environment with their intellectual vitality, diverse talents, and campus involvement. Recipients receive a full-tuition and fees scholarship, full-funding for a summer and an academic semester abroad, and a Campus Community Award which includes on-campus housing and dining. Awarded to approximately 20 incoming first-year students through a highly competitive selection process, including an on-campus interview.



## Big iDeas

[smu.edu/bigideas](http://smu.edu/bigideas)

Big Ideas produces workshops and mentoring to help entrepreneurs refine skills and propel companies forward. The Big iDeas pitch competition, held every fall semester during Family Weekend, awards \$1,000 in funding to multiple winning student pitches. The annual Big iDeas Business Plan Competition, held in the spring semester, awards \$5,000 in seed funding to undergraduate students.



## Engaged Learning Fellowships

[smu.edu/elf](http://smu.edu/elf)

Engaged Learning Fellowships (ELF) allow undergraduate students to design and pursue capstone-level research, service, and creative activity. Students awarded an ELF receive up to \$2,500 to fund their project, faculty support through Mustang Mentors, and opportunities to share their work with the public. Students project titles are listed on their transcript and in commencement booklet.



## Mustang Mentors

[smu.edu/mustangmentors](http://smu.edu/mustangmentors)

Coming Spring 2024, Mustang Mentors will be re-launched to support university efforts to provide a mentoring platform to interested Mustangs.



## Journal of Undergraduate Research

[scholar.smu.edu/jour](http://scholar.smu.edu/jour)

Journal of Undergraduate Research publishes original work by SMU's undergraduates. Through a rigorous editing process, including double-blind peer and faculty review, the Journal's student editorial board ensures that each paper is of the highest quality. The Journal acknowledges authors' achievements with both a digital and print edition. The digital edition is hosted on SMU Scholar, and each paper receives a DOI identifier that allows other researchers to find and cite it. The print edition is distributed not only to authors and mentors, but also to students, faculty, and staff across the University.



## Undergraduate Research Assistantships

[smu.edu/ura](http://smu.edu/ura)

Undergraduate Research Assistants (URA) are students who work as part of a team on a research project with an SMU faculty member. Students may be involved in any number of different types of projects, but they all have one thing in common: they're working to advance the knowledge base of their field by conducting original research. URA simultaneously provides support for research productive faculty and gives undergraduate students the opportunity to learn and be mentored as they assist professors with their research efforts.



## Summer Research Intensive

[smu.edu/sri](http://smu.edu/sri)

The Summer Research Intensive program is a deep dive into research and professional development. SRI invites approximately 30 students to work as Undergraduate Research Assistants on faculty members' current projects. Students work 20-30 hours per week through the summer and attend weekly workshops, faculty lectures, and discussions. SRI culminates in a Three Minute "Thesis" presentation competition.



## ACADEMIC SUPPORT

## University Advising Center

[smu.edu/uac](http://smu.edu/uac)

Every pre-major and transfer student is assigned a University Advising Center (UAC) academic advisor who they work with from orientation to major declaration. Advising conversations include course choices, career goals, long term (4-year) academic plans, major declaration, and academic struggles and successes. Currently, there are 13 generalist advisors in the UAC, each with advisee loads of approximately 250-300 students. Within the UAC, specific advisors have advising specialties/liaison roles including: honors, pre-health, transfer students, Rotunda/Prelude, international students, and athletes. The UAC also oversees pre-professional advising for pre-health and pre-law students from their first through senior years, as well as alumni who are interested in a health or law profession. At any given time, there are upwards of 500-600 students being served in each area.



## Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center

[smu.edu/alec](http://smu.edu/alec)

Located in the heart of campus and near most of our Residential Commons, the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (A-LEC), offers academic assistance and services to SMU students at no additional expense. Services include subject specific tutoring by peers, graduate assistants and retired faculty. Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies, the Writing Center, Academic Counseling, and Peer Tutoring are all located in the A-LEC. We offer part-time employment, with an emphasis on recruiting students who are eligible for Federal Work Study.



## Writing Center

[smu.edu/writingcenter](http://smu.edu/writingcenter)

The Writing Center staff assists students with writing, reading, and presentation assignments. We offer one-on-one tutorials by appointment as well as drop-in consultations. The Writing Center supports students across all disciplines and at all levels of their coursework. In addition to the full-time staff, trained graduate students and peer tutors are readily available on weekends and in the evenings.



## Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies

[smu.edu/dass](http://smu.edu/dass)

The Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS) team is housed in the A-LEC. DASS is the campus resource for students with different types of disabling conditions to access services. DASS focuses on identifying and removing barriers to the often-marginalized population of students with disabilities and encouraging an inclusive and equitable setting. DASS goes beyond accommodations to provide academic coaching and support for the population of students with learning disabilities, ADHD, and autism.



## Academic Success Counseling

[smu.edu/academiccounseling](http://smu.edu/academiccounseling)

While some students enjoy a workshop setting with other students, others prefer a more personalized meeting to discuss learning strategies. Learning specialists schedule one-on-one meetings with students to develop learning skill, strategies such as time management, test preparation, handling test anxiety, note taking and utilizing campus resources.



## Academic Development of Student Athletes

[smu.edu/adsa](http://smu.edu/adsa)

The Academic Development of Student-Athletes (ADSA) supports all NCAA Varsity sports at SMU. ADSA provides personalized intervention techniques and offers academic tools intended to help student athletes develop personally, professionally, and academically while they represent SMU through athletic competition. ADSA offers tutoring, reading and writing intervention, academic counseling, and reinforces executive functioning skills while educating student-athletes, athletic staff, and other campus partners on NCAA rules and regulations specific to student-athlete academic success.



## ADSA Content Specialists

[smu.edu/SASP/workshops](http://smu.edu/SASP/workshops)

Students work one-on-one with learning specialists or in small groups to develop and enhance the skills necessary for academic success. These full-time professionals are trained in skill development, such as reading, writing, academic coaching, or have a specialization in a certain disciplines, such as math, computer science, chemistry, and more.



## A-LEC Peer Tutoring

[smu.edu/tutoring](http://smu.edu/tutoring)

Tutoring is a resource for all students to complement and support direct contact with professors. Tutors are available for most first and second year courses, as well as advanced courses. No appointment is needed! Tutors are referred to us by professors and have earned A's in the courses they tutor.



## Office of General Education

[smu.edu/gened](http://smu.edu/gened)

The Office of General Education (OGE or GenEd) provides campus-wide leadership in undergraduate education and administers the general education policy that has been enacted by the Council of General Education. The essence of SMU's educational philosophy is that intellectual and professional excellence rises from the solid foundation of a liberal arts education. Therefore, general education and graduation requirements students fulfill through the course of their undergraduate study provides an intellectual foundation consisting of the broad outlines of human knowledge, providing a context for discipline-specific study and a framework for a future of lifelong learning.



## Office of National Student Fellowships

[smu.edu/nationalfellowships](http://smu.edu/nationalfellowships)

SMU's Office of National Student Fellowships helps SMU undergraduate and graduate students apply for external, nationally-competitive fellowships, scholarships and awards such as the Rhodes, Marshall, Fulbright, Mitchell, Truman, Goldwater, Udall, Guggenheim, and many others. Fellowships are funding granted by both public and private organizations for graduate school, internships, study abroad, and other learning opportunities. Fellows demonstrate strong interest and preparation in their fields, and apply to fund a specific goal, often in a specific location.



## Office of Student Success & Retention

[smu.edu/ssr](http://smu.edu/ssr)

The Student Success and Retention Office (SSR) is dedicated to helping SMU undergraduates achieve success from their first day through graduation. SSR staff connects students to campus resources and helps them navigate barriers and challenges that may arise. SSR utilizes a mix of one-on-one student meetings, check-ins, and collaborations with campus offices to provide students with a network of support.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**SMU** Student Academic  
Engagement & Success













