



SMU

Office of the Provost

August 21, 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff:

These weekly updates will serve as a tool to keep you informed and engaged with SMU's Academic Affairs division as, together, we work toward a safe and healthy reopening in fall 2020. If you have suggestions for what we should include in future communications, please send your ideas to this [email address](#). Previous newsletters are available [here](#). Today's update falls into four categories: 1) Virtual Town Hall Follow-Ups, 2) Fall 2020, 3) Mythbuster, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Town Hall Follow-Ups

- **Faculty/Staff Town Hall August 20 recap** – President Turner invited all faculty and staff to a virtual Town Hall on Thursday, August 20, to address issues and questions leading up to next week's official first day of classes for many of our students. Chris Regis, Vice President for Business and Finance, and Dr. Robert W. Haley, Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Division of Epidemiology in the Internal Medicine Department at UT Southwestern Medical Center, joined President Turner and me as hosts for this event. Click [here](#) for a replay.
- **August Commencement recap** – The August 15 Commencement ceremony was a remarkable accomplishment and a tribute to the ability of our University's faculty, staff and students to produce a world-class event under such trying circumstances. President Turner and I repeatedly heard from students and their guests how much it meant to be able to celebrate their degree accomplishments at Commencement. The same commitment to safety and personal responsibility that was required to host this year's Commencement ceremony will be required of all community members throughout our return to campus activity this fall.
- **Update from faculty child care working group** – Over the last three weeks, the working group took a number of steps to address faculty concerns about child care issues this fall:

- Developed and disseminated a survey to understand faculty concerns and needs
 - Developed concrete options for faculty who indicated on the survey that they had immediate concerns in finding child care solutions (chairs were offered options for supporting flexibility, such as extending contingency plans for COVID-19-related illness to include child care issues)
 - Generated a list of short-term and long-range challenges to continue addressing concerns outlined in the survey results
 - Created a social media sharing site via Facebook, the preferred mode based on survey results, for helping faculty and staff connect.
- **Rapid curbside COVID-19 testing for employees now available at Expressway Tower** – SMU employees and families can now receive no-cost, rapid drive-through testing for COVID-19 at Expressway Tower, 6116 North Central Expressway, on the East Campus. The University covers 100% of the cost and no insurance paperwork is needed for those who have SMU health benefits. Telemedicine appointments and drive-through testing may be scheduled for this location Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Fall 2020

- **Fall 2020 readiness** – Last week, my office partnered with staff from Marketing and Communications (Marcomm) and OIT to produce a [video](#) highlighting the ways that SMU has prepared for both SMUFlex and Virtual teaching this semester. The video’s main focus is on the “look and feel” of innovative SMU teaching in both SMUFlex and Virtual modes, coupled with a welcoming, personalized message to students from our wonderful faculty.

After months of deliberations and planning, we are at last ready for Fall 2020. This accomplishment would not be possible without the tremendous efforts and dedication of our faculty, staff and students. Thank you so very much for all you have done, and will continue to do, to promote and maintain a safe and healthy environment for our entire SMU community.

- **Faculty excellence** – As of August 16, 1,154 full-time and adjunct instructors are teaching this fall across all undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree-seeking and noncredit programs. Of these, 806 are teaching with in-person contact, most regularly in the SMUFlex modality, and 348 are teaching in the Virtual modality. Faculty members teaching

through both modes have spent countless hours this spring and summer retooling content and learning about new tools and technology to support their efforts. Faculty teaching virtually have also committed, at minimum, 20-25 hours to detailed training and development activities. We would not be in the position we are now without our tremendous faculty. Students will continue to receive the highest caliber classroom instruction, whether through SMUFlex or Virtual learning, because of the investments made by our faculty to prepare for Fall 2020.

- **Staff commitment** – The outpouring of support and commitment of our dedicated staff in preparing for Fall 2020 cannot be adequately captured within the pages of this newsletter! From converting SMU’s ground-based new student orientation program to virtual, to developing optimization software to manage the fall scheduling of classes and Zoom Spaces, SMU staff members have found new and innovative ways to go above and beyond the call of duty.
- **Student engagement** – Also, as of August 16, there are 6,718 undergraduate students enrolled for the Fall 2020 semester. Of these, 1,065 undergraduates have requested to be fully remote this fall, and the remainder will live on/around the campus. The overwhelming majority of students enrolled for the fall have a combination of SMUFlex and Virtual courses, with first- and second-year students having more Virtual courses on average than third- and fourth-year students.
- **Zoom Space preparation and reservation system** – SMU’s Zoom Space reservation system went live for students on August 19. The following [website](#) provides additional information to guide students through the reservation process, as well as guidelines for how to use the spaces from Academic Technology Services [here](#). There are currently 502 Zoom Spaces available to undergraduate and graduate students across campus. We will closely monitor student demand and will be able to add more seating in Zoom Spaces if necessary, but that will mean increasing the capacity of our larger rooms from three to six. While we can safely do this while maintaining physical distancing, this may negatively impact user experience.
- **Red/Blue rotation schedule** – The University’s official [Red/Blue calendar](#) is now available for print/download. To help clarify questions that are surfacing about the Red/Blue schedule, Associate Provosts Sheri Kunovich and Paige Ware have developed a list of [FAQs](#) for faculty and students, and the OIT weekly newsletter from Academic Technology Services has collected a number of rich resources [here](#).

- **Classroom technology update** – OIT has been refreshing the [classroom project page](#) throughout the summer as room updates are completed. ATSDs in each school receive weekly progress updates as well. At this point, the OIT team is completing updates to nine final rooms bringing the total number of updated spaces to over 250. This week, OIT tested classrooms to identify and resolve any remaining issues. Facilities also arranged the rooms and is continuing to remove as much extra furniture as much as possible. Thank you to these staff members for their outstanding efforts and to the faculty members who have taken time to familiarize themselves with their updated classrooms.
- **Reminder about classroom materials and cleaning supplies** – As I mentioned last week, faculty can now obtain face shields and a supply kit (including classroom materials such as markers) from the office of their college/school dean. Facilities will regularly stock each classroom with cleaning supplies and masks. They will be stocking classrooms with cleaning supplies so that there will be a set of supplies for every 15 students. If faculty arrive at a room that needs supplies to be replenished, they can call the Facilities support center at 214-768-7000, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **50% outside air management project complete** – On August 18, the Facilities Planning and Management team completed system modifications to safely increase the amount of fresh air pushed through our HVAC system from 20% to 50% in all academic buildings. This change, in addition to upgrading the air filters in all building air handlers to MERV-13, the highest level possible, will significantly improve air quality. Our plan was to complete air filter installation in all academic building by the first day of classes. However, due to supply chain challenges, there will be a one-week delay in some of these spaces. The new completion date for MERV-13 filters in all campus buildings is August 31.
- **Mental health support in the time of COVID-19** – The challenges and stresses of a new semester are only amplified as we manage them in the midst of a pandemic on the scale of the COVID-19 outbreak. SMU has an Employee Assistance Program for all full-time faculty and staff and their dependents that offers assistance and resources. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. See this [website](#) for additional information.

I would also encourage faculty to review the following [article](#) from *Inside Higher Education* for 12 principles of crisis-aware teaching that can help support students as they navigate these uncertain times.

- **Onsite support/help during the Fall 2020 semester** – I hope you were able to review the *OIT Technology News: Back to School 2020 Edition* e-mail sent to all faculty and staff on August 19. It provides updates on a broad range of topics of interest as you make final preparations for Fall 2020. In particular, see this [blog](#) on where to go for 24/7 technology help and support. OIT’s regular classroom support methodology – initiated by calling 214-768-HELP (4357) – will be ramped up by reallocating staff within OIT for the first two weeks of class to assist. In addition, the ATSDs will also be responding to AV startups calls. I would encourage all faculty to review and even print out a copy of this reference guide for a compiled list of OIT’s [faculty support plan](#) during the first few weeks of the semester.
- **COVID-19 Symptom checking tool and PathCheck app** – To help protect and inform the SMU community, we are deploying two new tools early next week for monitoring the health of students, faculty, and staff—A COVID-19 Symptom Checker and Contact Tracer.

 - If you are not feeling well or not sure if you should be on campus, you can use the [COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#) at any time. The survey will help you to determine if you are currently experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19. After answering a few questions, the Checker will provide guidance for your next actions, and based on the results, you will receive further instructions. You will also begin receiving automated emails next week with instructions on how to complete your ‘mustang daily symptom check.’
 - As previously shared, SMU is partnering with the [PathCheck Foundation](#) to pilot a mobile app that can help in contact tracing efforts, should an individual test positive for COVID-19. SMU partnered with PathCheck because it is a privacy-first design that started at MIT before transitioning into a nonprofit foundation. Location data never leaves your phone without your consent should you experience a positive COVID-19 test result. Even then, the data will only be used once to assist in the contact tracing interview and then deleted. The app is available on the Apple and Google store. Visit this [blog post](#) for additional information and download/configuration instructions.
- **Update on required facial coverings** – In response to faculty concerns about a student wearing a facial covering, the faculty member will, should they so desire, have the ability to provide an alternative face covering to the student. To facilitate this, additional language will be added to the Mustang Strong website, the Fall Operations Plan and communications elsewhere as follows: “Understanding that multi-ply face masks provide the best protection, SMU strongly encourages the

use of multi-ply masks instead of other types of face coverings. Faculty can require students in the classroom to wear face masks versus other types of face coverings.”

- **Reminder about standard syllabus language** – See my [e-mail](#) to faculty last week for a reminder about specific information on language to include in your fall 2020 course syllabi.
- **Student return-to-campus training** – All students who will engage in SMUFlex courses during Fall 2020 must complete their return-to-campus training course in Canvas by August 24 to avoid registration holds.
- **Additional staff at libraries to manage traffic/compliance** – SMU libraries will add security guards to extend the Business Library hours (to accommodate direct BBA admits and increase spaces for virtual students at night), an additional guard at Fondren and Hamon to help with ID check, traffic flow at doors, and masks/other enforcement issues.
- **Spring schedule** – Late last week, Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation and Policy Peter Moore presented a proposed calendar for the Spring 2021 schedule development plan to the deans. This week, Peter reviewed the plan with associate deans, department chairs, departmental schedulers and building schedulers, who will spend most of the month of September to develop and submit the Spring 2021 schedule. Taking lessons learned from Fall 2020 scheduling and with greater time for feedback from the college/schools, Peter and his team will run an updated version of the algorithm used in Fall 2020 to build the Spring 2021 schedule, which should be published mid-October. Enrollment for Spring 2021 will open on November 16.
- **Extended limitations on the use of SMU facilities** – SMU’s outdoor facilities will remain closed to the general public. They will be open to the campus community on a limited schedule.
- **Updates on domestic/international travel** – This week, the PEC approved moving to Phase II for domestic travel. University-sanctioned trips are being supported under guidance from Dallas County, state and federal authorities and infection rates at the time of travel. Currently, international travel requests must be submitted to the Travel Oversight Committee (TOC) for review and determination.
- **Guidelines for student events** – Many faculty and staff have expressed interest in the guidelines for student events to promote the health and safety of event participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The

Division of Student Affairs published their 2020-2021 event [guidelines](#) this week, which will govern student groups recognized by, or affiliated with, SMU (either formally or informally).

- **Messaging to Students**
 - In last week's [email](#) to students, Associate Provost Sheri Kunovich focused on Red/Blue assignments by providing students greater understanding of where to look in my.SMU to determine their status (Red, Blue, Remote) and an overview of the fall 2020 Red/Blue rotation schedule.
 - On August 17, SMU's Dean of Students, Dr. Melinda J. Sutton, sent a [message](#) to faculty and staff announcing a series of virtual opportunities to discuss the ways in which she and her office partner with you to support our students. The message also contained attachments with information about new and legacy support programs for our students.
 - This week's Mustang Strong [newsletter](#) focused on SMU's contact tracing protocol for students.
 - Today, President Turner and Vice President Mmeje sent a crucial [message to students](#) stressing the importance of personal responsibility in order to complete and enjoy the fall semester on campus.

Mythbuster

- **SMU is hiding information on COVID-19 employee hospitalizations** – There have been no COVID-19-related employee hospitalizations to date. As noted on SMU's [blog](#), cases are considered recovered when they have met CDC criteria for symptom-based recovery. CDC criteria for symptom-based recovery is defined as:
 - At least one day (24 hours) has passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Once these two criteria have been met, the employee is cleared to come back to work per our guidelines at SMU. If the employee receives different guidance from their physician (e.g., to wait 14 days since symptom onset, to have a certain number of negative tests before returning, etc.) then they certainly can, and do, follow those guidelines instead. However, from the SMU perspective, all employees are cleared upon satisfaction of the two criteria shown above.

News and Noteworthy

- **Faculty in Residence applications** – The Offices of the Provost and the Vice President for Student Affairs are now seeking faculty candidates for two Faculty-in-Residence (FiR) positions. The successful candidates will begin a three-year appointment in the fall 2021 semester. Click [here](#) for more details on qualifications and the application process.
- **Faculty Fellows application process** – As [announced](#) this week, the application process is underway for the inaugural cohort of faculty fellows! All full-time faculty members can apply, with a preference for tenured faculty or non-tenure track faculty. The application deadline is September 18 and questions should be addressed to Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware at pware@smu.edu.
- **Opening Convocation and Rotunda Passage this Sunday August 23** – All new first-year and transfer students are invited and encouraged to watch SMU's 106th Opening Convocation. At this event, students are formally welcomed to the SMU community in a ceremony dating back to 1915. Watch the event live at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 23 at this [link](#). An important part of Opening Convocation is the Rotunda Passage. From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. prior to the ceremony, students in their Stampede groups will pass through the Rotunda of Dallas Hall, SMU's first building and a historic landmark. Recognizing that every undergraduate student at SMU has crossed through the Dallas Hall rotunda, students have an opportunity to reflect on their passage to college and their intellectual and personal growth for their time at SMU.

Sincerely,



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