

From: [Loba, Elizabeth](#)
To: [Loba, Elizabeth](#)
Subject: Weekly Update - August 28, 2020
Date: Friday, August 28, 2020 2:40:47 PM
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SMU®

Office of the Provost

August 28, 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 to ensure a safe and healthy fall 2020 and advance the goals of SMU's strategic plan. 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 three categories: 1) Fall 2020, 2) Mythbusters, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2020

- **Reflections on our first week** – I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to watch this [video](#) from President Turner, welcoming everyone to campus for the start of the fall 2020 semester. As of today:
 - The first preliminary headcount for all undergraduate and graduate students, degree and nondegree, totaled 12,301. This figure is expected to remain above 12,000 and would be the first time SMU has surpassed the 12,000 headcount milestone in its history. We have 1,533 first-year undergraduate students (target, 1,526) and 301 transfers (target, 290). Returning students totaled 4,880 (target, 4,887). Numbers are likely to change daily until the September 8 census capture date, but we are off to a strong start. Thanks to all of you, SMU's faculty and staff, for the support and preparation required to serve our students, and special thanks to the Division of Enrollment Services for their outstanding recruiting efforts this year!
 - 10,762 students have completed mandatory Canvas return-to-campus training, which includes instructions to complete our community [Pledge to Protect](#).
 - 1,154 full-time and adjunct instructors are teaching this fall across all undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree-seeking and noncredit programs. There are 805 individuals teaching in person, with the majority using the SMUFlex modality (70%). There are 349 individuals teaching in the VIRTUAL modality (30%).

- The fall general faculty meeting took place on August 26 – SMUFlex-style – in McFarlin Auditorium and via Zoom. Faculty Senate President Aurelie Thiele gave the Faculty Senate’s report, and President R. Gerald Turner delivered the faculty address. Newly tenured faculty members were recognized, and regalia was delivered in person following the meeting. Congratulations again to our newly tenured faculty!
 - Some students are reporting – particularly the remote participants in SMUFlex courses – difficulty hearing the questions and discussion of their classmates within the classroom. We are reviewing classrooms to determine whether technology improvements can be made to address this issue. In the interim, I would encourage faculty to repeat questions and comments for the benefit of all course participants.
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- **Recap: Convocation and Rotunda Passage** – On Sunday, August 23, President Turner and I, along with the Chair of SMU’s Board of Trustees, Bob Dedman; Faculty Senate President Aurelie Thiele; and Student Body President Molly Patrick, welcomed our new first-year and transfer students to campus via Zoom in SMU’s 106th [Opening Convocation](#). Prior to the event, and spaced out throughout the day to allow for social distancing, these students passed through the Rotunda of Dallas Hall in their Stampede groups. Recognizing that every undergraduate student at SMU has crossed through the Dallas Hall rotunda, students had an opportunity to reflect on their passage to college and their intellectual and personal growth during their time at SMU.
- **Reminder about classroom materials and cleaning supplies** – As mentioned in previous newsletters, 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 to provide a set of cleaning supplies for every 15 students. If faculty members 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.
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- **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.

The Caring Community Connections (CCC) Program provides support to students who are experiencing challenges by identifying and linking them to appropriate resources. Faculty, staff, students and parents are encouraged to [report](#) student behaviors that are concerning. Note: If reporting a student concern about COVID-19, be sure to check the “COVID-19 concern” box in the form’s “Medical Issues” section.

- **Onsite support/help during the fall 2020 semester** – 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.

For the next three weeks, Associate Provosts Sheri Kunovich and Paige Ware will host optional 30-minute touchpoint meetings with academic leadership teams (deans, associate deans, chairs) to help elevate any questions or concerns that are arising from students and faculty so that we can address them together and help one another in our efforts to ensure a successful fall semester. These meetings are scheduled from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. on Fridays (August 28, September 4, and September 11).

- **Contact tracing update** – To help protect and inform the SMU community, we have deployed two new tools this 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 should have also begun receiving automated emails this week with instructions on how to complete your “Mustang daily symptom check.”
 - The PathCheck contact tracing app is available on the Apple and Google store. Visit this [blog post](#) for additional information and download/configuration instructions. 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 be deleted. I downloaded the PathCheck app earlier this week, and it was an easy and quick process.
 - Should a student test positive for COVID-19, it is possible that they might choose to let you know about their situation before their data has been processed through our system. Please note that there is often a 24-48 hour delay between receipt of a positive test and the time it takes our local contact tracing team to verify and process the contacts. See the Mythbusters section below for additional information on COVID-19 case reporting.

Special thanks to Curt Herridge (featured toward the end of this [video](#)) for his tremendous leadership in supporting SMU's efforts to implement these innovative tools in our efforts to monitor COVID-19 on campus.

- **Spring schedule** – Associate deans, department chairs, departmental schedulers and building schedulers will spend most of the month of September developing and submitting the spring 2021 schedule to the office of Peter Moore, Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation and Policy. 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.

- **Masks/facial coverings required indoors as well as outdoors when social distancing is not possible** – SMU is requiring that everyone on the SMU campus wear a face covering over the mouth and nose in all public indoor spaces. This requirement – in accordance with the latest local ordinance – includes classrooms; building entrances and exits; lobbies and lounges; as well as in hallways, stairwells, restrooms and elevators. 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. Face coverings are not required outdoors, in private spaces such as inside an office or partitioned cubicle for employees, or inside an individual residence hall room for students, unless you are unable to maintain safe social distancing (6 feet). To preserve your health and the health of others, you should follow these same protocols both on and off the SMU campus.
- **University position on masks/face shields behind plexiglass/podium shields** – Questions have arisen about the relationship among plexiglass shields, face shields, and masks for faculty who are teaching on campus. The University position is that either a mask or a face shield is required for faculty when teaching. The plexiglass shields at the podium offer additional protection, particularly when faculty prefer to teach with a face shield in lieu of a mask. However, the plexiglass shield at the podium is not sufficient on its own.

Face shields do not offer the equivalent protection of face coverings over the mouth and nose. However, due to the vocal aspects of classroom instruction, a face shield is an acceptable substitute for faculty members to wear while teaching as long as the instructor also adheres to the other required safety standards, such as staying behind the plexiglass at the podium and maintaining appropriate social distancing. SMU has added plexiglass barriers to podiums, provided face shields and coverings, and distanced desks and lecterns to accommodate faculty in conducting their instructional duties. Faculty can also wear a face mask in addition to, or in lieu of, a face shield, for added protection.

We know that utilizing face shields and masks may present additional challenges in terms of teaching. If you believe that adding a lav microphone would assist you, please reach out to your academic technology specialist. Anti-fogging wipes or sprays might make face shields more comfortable during your classes. If you have other suggestions or ideas for ways we can assist, please do not hesitate to reach out to your chair or dean. Thank you so much for all you are doing for our students in this very unique semester.

Please know that students are required to wear face coverings in classrooms. If additional accommodations such as a face shield are

needed, students should work with SMU's Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies for available options. Understanding 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.

- **Student-athlete support** – The student athlete support units, Center for the Academic Development of Student-Athletes (ADSA) and Student Athlete Academic Services (SAAS), have begun using a new, more efficient, software. Starting this summer, faculty began feedback requests for student-athletes from a system called Teamworks. Moving forward, all athlete communications regarding faculty feedback and travel letters will come from this system. Please see the below snapshot as an example of Teamworks to eliminate any concerns it may be a phishing attempt.

Dear Professor (insert name),

Hanna Axene has requested feedback from you on 8 student-athletes for 1 courses that you teach:

Course Section	Title	Student-Athletes
(insert course name)	(insert course title)	8

Dear Professor,

We need your help in providing quick academic progress feedback to students in your course. We use your feedback to tailor our individual academic counseling sessions with students who are Student-Athletes. The requested information will be shared with the following areas who counsel the students listed: ADSA and A-LEC. Academic counselors from these areas may contact you for additional information.

Providing this feedback does not violate FERPA regulations.

While comments are very helpful, we understand you might have limited time and prefer to provide a grade only. If you have not assigned grades, you can use your observations based on class attendance and participation to determine if the student might be at risk. If you wish to be contacted to discuss a particular student, you can request this in the comment area as well.

The Office of the Provost only requests this information twice each semester and we appreciate your participation.

Please click on the link below to automatically populate a list of students enrolled in your course who fit the aforementioned criteria to begin entering feedback information.

Thank you for your support.

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

[Enter Feedback Now](#)
Response requested by Tuesday, August 04, 2020 at 11:59 PM

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,
Hanna Axene
haxene@smu.edu

This email was generated by Hanna Axene. Replying to this email will message them directly.

- **Resource for students requiring disability accommodations** – DASS (Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies) is the office that provides support services and accommodations to undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities. DASS uses an online portal to receive students' requests and share letters of accommodation with professors securely and electronically. Please [log in to the DASS Link](#) to view your students' letters. DASS is also available for limited virtual proctoring, if you have explored all options (technology, departmental

support) to virtually monitor the student with testing accommodations. Instructions for using the DASS Link can be found [here](#). For more assistance, call the office directly at 214-768-1470 or join a [Zoom faculty drop-in session](#) on September 9 from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. with DASS staff. They are happy to help!

- **Accommodations for international students living in different time zones** – We appreciate faculty efforts to build VIRTUAL courses with the recommendation of 33% synchronous participation, as that will help ensure that students can have real-time contact. OIT has created an [FAQ](#) for many questions.

This recommendation was made with the understanding that, in the unique context of the fall 2020 semester, some international students would need additional accommodations, particularly if they live in time zones that would otherwise mean participating in the middle of the night. We encourage you to consider the following accommodations if and as students request them:

- Continue to run your class as you have planned it—please don't think you need to create a separate experience for international students; however, in that approach, below are a few accommodations that you can make for international students who live in time zones that are prohibitive for taking the class in real time:
 - Ask your international students to watch the synchronous recordings. There are several pedagogical options to ensure students are engaged and are accessing the information: a) create embedded Panopto Q&A within the recording for them to respond to; or b) create a parallel assignment for them to answer a series of questions about the synchronous recordings.
 - Make yourself available to international students by encouraging office hours in ways that accommodate their time zones. A little outreach can go a long way to help them feel supported.
 - Encourage your international students to visit [A-LEC](#) for support, as they offer virtual tutoring until 10:00 p.m. CST (Sun-Thurs).
 - Reach out to the CTE, other colleagues, and your ATSD for additional ideas.
- **Reminder: upload syllabi into SMU's password-protected archive**
 - Faculty are reminded to upload your syllabi into SMU's online syllabus library before September 4. The syllabus library is only accessible by members of the SMU community and is password-protected. It is a resource for SMU students and should be considered internal-use only. Any other use of this resource is prohibited. Faculty who are unable to upload their syllabus are encouraged to complete this task in coordination with their department administrator.
- **Messaging to Students**
 - The Division of Student Affairs published their 2020–2021 event [guidelines](#) last week, which will govern student groups recognized by or affiliated with SMU (either formally or informally).
 - In last week's [email](#) to students, Associate Provost Sheri Kunovich

provided students with some final reminders before the start of the school year on topics such as:

- Where to go on the first day of class.
 - How to find their Red/Blue assignments. Note: The University's official [Red/Blue calendar](#) is also available for print/download.
 - How to reserve Zoom Spaces.
 - This week's Mustang Strong [newsletter](#) focused on how students can still develop and maintain lifelong connections through socially distanced events and get-togethers.
- **Faculty and staff needing child care support**
 - The Childcare Working Group invites faculty and staff to join a [Facebook group](#) they created, "SMU Childcare Connection," that was formed to help connect SMU community members with one another and to expand the network of options available for interested parents.
 - For staff with children attending K-12 schools that have extended their timeline for remote-only instruction, SMU will continue to offer flexibility and [options with some slight adjustments](#). Please continue to work with your supervisor to find the best solution.
 - **CTE: Just-in-Time Teaching & Tech Grant Application now open!**
 - The Center for Teaching Excellence, in partnership with Academic Technology Services, is happy to open applications for Just-in-Time Teaching and Technology Grants. [Request your grant](#) now by sharing your name, email address, amount requested, and a brief rationale for your request. Grants are available to faculty (a maximum of \$500 per grant) for the fall 2020 term. Grant decisions will be reviewed at two deadlines. The priority deadline for requests is Friday, September 4, at 5:00 p.m. and the final deadline is Friday, September 11, at 5:00 p.m.
 - **Reminder: rapid curbside COVID-19 testing for employees now available at Expressway Tower** – SMU employees and families can receive no-cost, rapid drive-thru testing for COVID-19 at Expressway Tower, 6116 North Central Expressway. The University covers 100% of the cost and no insurance paperwork is needed for those who have SMU health benefits. Telemedicine appointments and drive-thru testing may be scheduled for this location Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We encourage employees in need of testing to use this convenient service so that testing at the Bob Smith Health Center can focus more directly on students.

Mythbusters

- **Is SMU administration working with OIT to monitor/police the content of faculty email accounts?** – No. Recently, a question has arisen as to whether or not SMU's central administration is working with OIT to monitor the content of faculty email accounts. While SMU provides email services to faculty to perform work for the University in support of its mission, the administration makes every effort to protect expectations of privacy for SMU's community. While there are legitimate reasons that periodically arise based on situations such as legal action, the health and/or safety of an individual or group, and an urgent University business need—these exceptional events require extreme intervention triangulating SMU's legal affairs, human resource

and police departments as IT services are engaged. For your general awareness, regular SMU email services do allow senders to recall, to replace and to request deletion of their previously sent messages. This service does sometimes surface as unusual email activity—since a sender recalling or requesting the deletion of a sent email can sometimes result in a message’s disappearance from your Inbox.

- **Is SMU hiding positive COVID-19 test results?** – No. As SMU is informed of [COVID-19 cases](#), the University uses a contact tracing protocol to identify and notify people on campus known to have come into close contact with the person infected. This contact tracing process takes place before SMU can release the information to the public and accounts for the differing individual timelines between when SMU learns of a positive case and when the case gets published to [the site](#). Close contact is described by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) as being within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes (without direct respiratory droplet exposure). Given the complexities of contact tracing and the need for thorough investigation and follow-up with those who might have been in contact with the confirmed positive case, there can be a time lag of 2-3 days between learning of a positive case and it being posted to the website. Our contact tracing team is working hard to reduce reporting delays, but must take the time necessary to ensure they are providing complete and accurate information to the community.

News and Noteworthy

- **Faculty-in-residence applications (reminder)** – The Office 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.
- **Faculty Fellows application process (reminder)** – The application process is underway for the inaugural cohort of Provost’s 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.
- **Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute research clusters for 2020-2021 announced** – During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII) is sponsoring 25 research clusters exploring a varied and exciting range of topics. These clusters are open to participants from across the campus. Please take a moment to look through the research cluster titles on the website and contact one of the conveners if interested in participating. Research clusters will meet a few times each semester to discuss common interests and collaborate in shared activities. For full descriptions of the clusters, please visit the [DCII’s website](#).
- **SMU student leader demonstrating world-changing leadership** – Over the summer, Student Body Vice President Austin Hickle organized the [College Health Alliance of Texas](#) – a consortium of student body leadership from 35 colleges and universities across the state of Texas. *The Dallas Morning News* ran an [article](#) this week featuring this initiative. The group has published a Student Health Resource guide which is available on their [website](#). Pony Up, Austin!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth G. Loba", written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth G. Loba
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