



SMU

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Office of the Provost

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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 advance the goals of SMU's strategic plan and continue to move SMU forward and upward. 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) SMU's Road to R-1, 2) Fall 2020, 3) Spring 2021, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

SMU'S Road to R-1

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 – 2022 Budget Process** – The annual budget process, to establish the incremental budget for FY 2021–2022, began in mid-October with an initial meeting between PEC members and the Council of Deans. Between now and the early December budget submission deadline, I will be meeting with Deans and Associate Provosts to review their proposed budgets. One of my goals for this year's budget is greater transparency and collaboration across the academic units with clear focus on our 2016–2025 Strategic Plan, BUF Action Plan Responses, *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, and Road to R1. Budget proposals will be reviewed by members of SMU's senior leadership team in January and February with final budget decisions announced in March 2021.
- **Post-award grant PI dashboard** – We are happy to announce the completion of the Sponsored Projects Dashboard available through my.SMU. This dashboard, created by the Office of Research and Office of Information Technology, provides principal investigators with a real-time financial picture of their sponsored projects.

Training will be provided through a webinar on November 10, 2020; principal investigators will receive an invitation. Instructions and a recording of the training will be available on the [Sponsored Projects Dashboard Wiki](#).

- **College/school research spotlight** – Dr. Corey Clark, Professor in SMU's Guildhall, was nominated by [Tech Titans](#) as Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of the year for his work with Balanced Media Technology, a crowdsourced

health care artificial intelligence company that is fundamentally changing the diagnosis and treatment of diseases through gaming. Balanced Media was also nominated for, and won, the award for Emerging Innovation Company of the Year. Dr. Clark's brand of interdisciplinary research, in partnership with the Dallas and North Texas community, provides a dynamic template for SMU as we seek greater research productivity with impact.

- **Faculty Fulbright recipient** – Congratulations to Dr. Maryann Cairns, Assistant Professor in Dedman College's Department of Anthropology, for receiving a Fulbright fellowship. The funding from this award will support Dr Cairns' research in North Macedonia. She will work with colleagues at University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bitola, as well as the local municipality, regional/international NGOs, and the Institute of Hydrobiology to study the impact of pollution on environmental and cultural dimensions of the UNESCO World Heritage Site-designated Ohrid region. She will likewise train local students in anthropological research methods through her ongoing research program.
- **SMU faculty received Ford Research Fellowship award notifications** – The Office of the Provost administers Ford Research Fellowship awards on the basis of recommendations from the University Research Council. Supported by a generous contribution from SMU Trustee Gerald J. Ford, these competitive research awards help the University retain and reward outstanding scholars. Currently, the Ford Research Fellowships provide stipends of \$15,000 annually for up to four faculty members.

Starting last week and concluding with a meeting this week, I had the privilege of surprising each of the four 2020 Fellows (courtesy of Zoom): Dr. Candace Walkington, Associate Professor in Mathematics Education and Learning Sciences in the Simmons School's Department of Teaching and Learning; Dr. Sherry Wang, Professor in Dedman College's Department of Statistical Science; Dr. Jianhui Wang, Professor in Lyle School's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering; and Jenia Turner, Dedman School of Law's Amy Abboud Ware Centennial Professor in Criminal Law. My thanks to Dr. Tim Jacobbe (Chair, Teaching and Learning), Dr. Dan Heitjan (Chair, Statistical Science), Dr. Dinesh Rajan (Chair, Electrical and Computer Engineering), and Dean Jennifer Collins (Dedman School of Law) for facilitating these surprise announcements, as well as to the faculty who joined in celebrating the accomplishments of Drs. Walkington, Turner, S. Wang, and J. Wang.

Fall 2020

- **Campus health and safety update** – As of today, we have 65 student cases and 2 employee positive COVID-19 cases. There are currently no reported active faculty cases. You can follow our case trends and specifics with SMU's [dashboard](#). Our operational level remains in the "moderate" category. Remember that our operational level is reviewed each week, and any

necessary updates are posted each Monday afternoon on the [Mustang Strong website](#).

As a reminder, on October 21, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced a new, broader definition of “close contact” for purposes of COVID-19 contact tracing. Under the new expanded CDC standard, “close contact” is defined as being “within 6 feet of an infected person for a **cumulative** total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, two days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.”

Thank you for your continued flexibility and caution in this pandemic. This semester has been unlike any other, but the reward for embracing our shared responsibility has been great – time spent together safely in our treasured residential and academic community.

- **Flu shot vaccine reminder and awareness – over-65 flu shot vaccines now available** – SMU employees may get a flu shot, now including the 65+ version of the vaccine for seniors, from the same drive-thru urgent care tent where COVID-19 testing is available at Expressway Tower on SMU’s East Campus. Please schedule an appointment in advance [here](#) and remember to bring your SMU ID.
- **October faculty/student survey** – The second fall 2020 faculty and student surveys were administered October 8–12. You can review findings from either the [faculty survey](#) or the student surveys ([graduate](#) and [undergraduate](#)) at any time. My thanks to the team for their service administering and analyzing the survey, which is providing important data to inform our plans moving forward. As a reminder, the Provost’s Office will offer a final opportunity for faculty and students in late November or early December to provide feedback.
- **Additional days added to holiday break** – As [President Turner announced](#) earlier this week, SMU is adding two extra days (December 21 and 22) to the University’s holiday break to recognize the tireless efforts of faculty, staff, and students during this challenging semester. This is in addition to the time off already scheduled from December 23 returning January 4. The hope is that this will be a time for renewal that will energize us all to return with optimism and stamina for 2021.
- **Resource for faculty supporting student learning across time zones** – Dr. Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, and members of her team have developed this [resource](#) for faculty which focuses on supporting students across time zones – whether teaching fully remotely or through SMUFlex.
- **Reminder: date extension for fall 2020 undergraduate course and term withdrawal** – The date for course withdrawal and term withdrawal for the fall 2020 semester for undergraduate students has been extended to December 2nd (5 p.m. CST). A drop or withdrawal at this point in the semester will result in

a grade of W on the official transcript. Any withdrawal from a course or term may affect federal aid, veterans benefits, athletic scholarships, and immigration status, so we encourage all students to visit with their advisors prior to making any decisions about course or term withdrawal in light of the extended time frame. This extension will not result in an adjustment to the University refund schedule.

Spring 2021

- **Operations plan and assessment tool progress update** – The [Fall Operations Plan](#) that has guided our campus response this semester will feed into a carefully reviewed and updated operations plan for the spring 2021 semester. Development on the revised Operations Plan and Operations Assessment Tool is progressing as planned. This week Academic Affairs leadership (Deans and Associate Provosts) provided feedback on the current draft, and SMU plans to release the updated plan to the campus community around Thanksgiving.
- **Spring schedule** – The spring 2021 schedule was released on October 19, and can now be viewed in my.SMU. As informed by the October survey of faculty and students, we will be able to accommodate a limited number of undergraduate courses fully in person for spring 2021. We will also continue to offer SMUFlex courses and virtual-only classes. For faculty interested in the possibility of shifting a red/blue rotation SMUFlex class to a fully in-person mode, they should work directly with their Department Chairs to determine the feasibility by analyzing variables such as physical space, impact on undergraduate course schedules, and other discipline-specific factors that merit contextual consideration. Spring enrollment for undergraduates will take place by appointment November 16–20. Open enrollment will continue until the end of the add period.
- **Spring 2021 calendar** – We continue to receive questions and concerns from some faculty and students about the decision to “stay the course” with the current spring schedule. We recognize the need to develop strategies to reduce the potential stressors brought on by a spring semester without a spring break and encourage you to continue submitting your ideas to our Mustang Strong website’s [Spring 2021 Suggestion Box](#). My office receives regular updates and will stay in close contact with faculty through Department Chairs, Associate Deans, and Deans to identify the right solutions to mitigate stress. CTE has also developed a [resource document](#) about reducing possible stress and anxiety that students or colleagues may be facing, specifically developed as an initial response to providing ideas for the spring semester ahead.
- **Help students prepare for the spring semester: Submit book adoptions by November 25th** – An important way to support our students is to ensure that they can receive their books in time for the spring semester and Jan-term. Please submit your book adoption for the spring term and Jan term no later than November 25. Connect with your department/unit support or visit www.facultyenlight.com 24/7 to submit adoptions, request desk copies, and

research books. Submitting your adoptions early ensures that students get the right course materials for their courses at the most affordable price and that our University remains SB-810 compliant. We sincerely appreciate your effort in achieving this goal and meeting this deadline. Publishers are working with limited staff because of COVID, and the earlier we can get books ordered the more likely we are to be able to deal with any delays that might come up over the next couple of months. If you have any questions, please contact Rachel Russell at TM526@bncollege.com or 214-768-2435.

News and Noteworthy

- **Mental health support in the time of COVID-19** – The challenges and stresses of living and working through the pandemic could be amplified by the recent elections and, from there, transition into the holiday season. SMU has an Employee Assistance Program for all full-time and part-time benefits-eligible faculty/staff and their dependents that offers assistance and resources. Calls to 1-877-704-5696 are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. EAP information and services can be accessed online at the [Magellan Health Services Website](#), which includes online counseling. See this [website](#) for additional information.
- **Festival for first-generation students** – Today, SMU's First-Generation Association hosted the annual First-Gen Fest on campus. This socially distanced event provided an opportunity to spread awareness about first-gen students and their struggles. Thank you to the departments and organizations on campus who provided their support to making a difference in the lives of our first-gen students.

Sincerely,



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