



SMU

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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

- **Overview of performance-based funding model awarding Provost's discretionary funds** – In consultation with the deans, my office has developed an initial performance-based funding model that will inform and promote the transparent distribution of the Provost's discretionary funds annually to SMU's academic units. The performance-based funding model is designed to reward academic units for actual performance based on transparent measurements and metrics that align with our strategy as defined by key documents such as the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan and SMU's response to the Black Unity Forum Action Plan.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2022, we will introduce the performance-based funding model for the distribution of discretionary dollars from the Provost while also retaining SMU's standard incremental funding model for budget creation. As we roll out this new model, we will carefully monitor the awards earned by the academic units against historic (three-year average) funds distributed by the Provost's discretionary fund to reduce the potential for service disruption and to promote a smooth transition.

At last Friday's Department Chair Retreat, we provided additional information on the new performance-based funding model. Under this new structure, we will increase the annual Provost's discretionary funding amount to \$4 million (historically \$3.3 million – \$3.5 million). The primary funding sources for this \$4 million will be intersessions and online courses revenue.

The metrics behind this new model focus on four main areas, and the \$4 million will be divided across these four areas as indicated below:

- Undergraduate programs (\$1.25 million)
- Master’s/professional programs (\$250,000)
- Ph.D. programs (\$250,000)
- Research (\$1.5 million)
- Management (\$750,000)

Use of the funding received from the Provost’s discretionary funds will be at the determination of the Dean of the school/college. It is also important to note that, beginning in Fiscal Year 2021-2022, the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies will begin providing additional funding to the academic units for research, Ph.D. student support, and other efforts to support our academic goals as outlined in the Moody gift, and consistent with our strategic plan.

The table below provides a better understanding of the focus of the metrics that will be used to inform our four main areas of focus.

Undergraduate (UG) Programs	Master’s, Professional and Ph.D. Programs	Research	Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic program health • Size of UG courses • UG student retention • UG student graduation rates • UG student diversity • Student outcomes (post-graduation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student academic quality • Student diversity • Post-graduation placement • Ph.D. student throughput • Ph.D. student funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research expenditures • Research expenditures/FTE faculty member • Funding of post-docs • Scholarly and creative output, awards and recognition • Research space utilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National ranking of programs • Transparent workload policies • Support of Black Unity Forum goals and action plan • School/college-level performance-based funding model • Financial resourcefulness and utilization of financial aid

Over the next few months, members of the Provost’s Office team will engage Deans, Associate Deans, and Department Chairs in the important work of defining,

gathering and reporting on the data that will underlie the new model so that we can make necessary refinements in time for implementation in June 2021.

- **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. In that meeting, we reviewed the overall budget process for this year, including key dates and deadlines for budget drafting, review and finalization.

Final budgets must be submitted by early December. Between now and that deadline, I will be meeting with Deans and Associate Provosts to review their proposed budgets and to make recommendations as needed. One of my goals for this year's budget is greater transparency and collaboration across the academic units. To support this, I have asked Associate Provosts and Deans to have draft budgets completed and provided to me by mid-November to allow us time to meet collaboratively and to review our budget proposals together with an eye toward synergies such as strategic interdisciplinary initiatives.

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.

- **Award-winning theatre artist Regina Taylor debuted her art in collaboration with SMU's Meadows School of the Arts** - In partnership with the Division of Theatre and the Meadows School of the Arts, alumna Regina Taylor '81 debuted the black album. 2020. resistance. on October 27 and 29 on the SMU Meadows YouTube channel. A series of snapshot scenes written and directed by Taylor, the black album.2020.resistance., explores and addresses the question of what it is to be Black in 2020. Two additional parts of the black album. 2020., including a collaboration with students and artists from SMU and institutions around the globe, and a roundtable presentation of noted Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) artistic directors and theater makers, are in the planning stages and will debut this winter and spring.
- **Department of Education awards major funding to Simmons researchers Allor, Al Otaiba, Kamata, and Walkington** – The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education, is awarding significant funding to four Simmons professors: Jill Allor, Stephanie Al Otaiba, Aki Kamata, and Candace Walkington. The funding total, including two additional sub-grants, is \$7,841,791. See more information about this accomplishment [here](#) and kudos to Simmons and these faculty for their tremendous research contributions to SMU!

Fall 2020

- **Campus health and safety update** – As of today, we have 79 student cases and 6 employee positive COVID-19 cases. There are currently no reported active faculty cases. You can follow our trend and review case specifics in more detail 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](#).

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. Previously, being within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 **consecutive** minutes was considered "close contact." 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." In other words, under the new standard, multiple brief periods of exposure within a 24-hour period should be aggregated in determining whether the 15-minute threshold is met. SMU's contact tracing protocol is following the CDC's guidance concerning the new definition of "close contact."

With only a few weeks remaining until we break for Thanksgiving, let me remind everyone again how important it is for all of us to remain vigilant and adhere to the protocols we have established to protect ourselves and our community. Thank you for your continued flexibility and caution in this pandemic.

- **Flu vaccine reminder and awareness – over-65 flu vaccines now available** – Minimizing your chances of contracting influenza this year is one of the most important steps you can take to stay healthy and help prevent our community's COVID-19 medical resources from becoming depleted. 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 during the seventh week of the fall semester. A total of 553 faculty participated in the survey (472 faculty completed the September survey). This represents 44.7% of SMU's full-time faculty. Of these 553, 84.4% of faculty (467) who started the survey completed it. 1,566 undergraduates started the survey and 1,160 completed the survey (1,424 undergraduates participated in the survey in September).

My thanks to the team for their service administering and analyzing the survey, which will provide important data to inform our plans moving forward. You can review findings from either the [faculty survey](#) or the student surveys ([graduate](#) and [undergraduate](#)) at any time. Thanks also to SMU's faculty and students for their feedback. The Provost's Office will provide a final opportunity for faculty and students in late November or early December to provide feedback.

In addition to the analyses referenced above, the Office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Success and the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success (SAES) are continuing to review the open-ended responses as additional context for interpreting these findings. The many suggestions that faculty and students provided through their open-ended responses provide a similar picture to the findings presented in the reports referenced above by offering additional, more detailed context that allows for outreach to faculty and students where necessary. SAES will also follow up with Athletics, Facilities, Student Affairs, and OIT to provide feedback from the student's qualitative responses to help with spring planning, as many of the comments focused on what students hope will change in the future if the situation with COVID-19 changes.

- **Resource for faculty supporting students across time zones** – Over 400 international undergraduate students are engaging in virtual coursework this fall, many of whom are outside the United States. These students are overwhelmingly connecting from China. Dr. Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, and members of her team have developed this [resource](#) which focuses on supporting students across time zones – whether teaching fully remote or through SMUFlex.
- **Date extension for fall 2020 course and term withdrawal for undergraduates** – The dates for course withdrawal and term withdrawal for the fall 2020 semester for undergraduate students have been extended to December 2nd (5:00 p.m. CDT). Please remember that a drop or withdrawal at this point in the semester will result in a grade of W on the official transcript. In addition, 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

- **Spring Operations Plan progress update** – Development on the Spring Operations Plan is progressing as planned. Deans and the Associate Provosts have provided feedback on the current draft, and SMU plans to release the updated plan to the campus community around Thanksgiving. The [Fall Operations Plan](#) that has guided our campus response will feed into a carefully reviewed and updated operations plan for the spring 2021 semester. SMU will remain flexible to the fluid nature of the coronavirus with a clear focus on continuing to offer safely our excellent education and exceptional campus experience to the greatest extent possible.
- **Spring 2021 calendar** – Per President Turner's [message](#) last week, SMU will “stay the course” with the current spring schedule, starting our spring 2021 a week later than originally planned, on January 25, and continuing straight forward

without a spring break through the conclusion of exams on May 12. We continue to receive questions and concerns about this decision from some faculty and students, and we recognize the need to develop strategies to reduce the potential stressors brought on by a spring semester without a spring break.

The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has already made a call to the academic leadership group to help generate ideas for ways that faculty can ensure that we have many pedagogical options that will support the successful navigation of the spring semester. From ideas shared, CTE has developed a [resource document](#) about reducing possible stress and anxiety that students or colleagues may be facing. You may also submit your ideas to our Mustang Strong website's **spring 2021 suggestion box**, and my office will stay in close contact with faculty through chairs, associate deans and deans.

- **Spring schedule** – Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation and Policy Peter Moore and his team released the spring 2021 schedule on October 19, which 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 as fully in person for spring 2021. Some graduate courses can also be accommodated, with priorities to be determined by the individual schools and college. Undergraduate course priorities will be given to courses such as labs and performance-based 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. We will also continue to offer SMUFlex courses and virtual-only classes. Spring enrollment for undergraduates will take place by appointment November 16–20. Open enrollment will continue until the end of the add period.
- **SMU-in-Taos** – Following renewed travel restrictions by the Governor of New Mexico, and after careful consideration of the time needed to prepare the Taos campus, the President's Executive Council (PEC), at the recommendation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), has decided to suspend Jan Term operations at SMU-in-Taos for the coming 2021 term. The EOC has formed a task force to develop a plan for the campus's reopening, with a goal to renew SMU-in-Taos activities for SMU students by May Term 2021. We know this is a disappointment, but we look forward to welcoming you back to our beautiful SMU-in-Taos campus soon. Please continue to monitor the SMU-in-Taos [website](#) for updates on campus reopening.

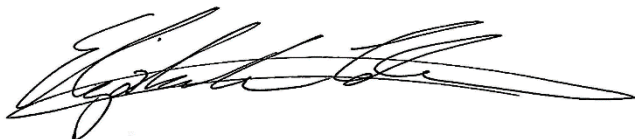
News and Noteworthy

- **SMU's Department of Human Resources will collectively complete CIQ@SMU training** – SMU's success in addressing the challenges, hardships and inequities, as elaborated on by members of the Black Unity Forum will require commitment from our entire SMU community. I want to highlight SMU's

Department of Human Resources who, collectively, will participate in CIQ training prior to the spring 2021 semester in support of one of the goals articulated in the Black Unity Forum Action Plan.

- **Mental health support in the time of COVID-19** – The challenges and stresses of living and working through the pandemic could be amplified as we have a presidential election and, from there, transition into the holiday season. This is a reminder that 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.

Sincerely,



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