



SMU

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Office of the Provost

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Dear Faculty and Staff:

To all our faculty, welcome back to fall 2021 on the Hilltop! For our faculty colleagues in Cox and Dedman Law, congratulations on navigating your first week of classes. Thanks to each of you for the ways you advance our educational mission and support our students.

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 2021. 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) Fall 2021, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 3) News and Noteworthy and 4) Closing thoughts.

Fall 2021:

- **SMU announces temporary mask requirement** – Effective August 12, SMU has implemented a [temporary mask requirement](#) in indoor spaces on campus including classrooms, event and meeting spaces, and commons areas in all buildings and residential halls, regardless of vaccination status. This requirement is a temporary precaution during the delta variant surge to supplement our other pandemic protocols. We will continue to monitor and review the campus environment, industry-specific guidance and recommendations from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state public health authorities in order to make the best decision for our community.

To re-enforce messaging regarding the temporary mask requirement, we have developed the following [signage](#) that can be printed and posted in campus locations as needed.

**Masks are
temporarily required
indoors.**



For the latest campus information
please visit smu.edu/covidsafety

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This new signage is intended to supplement the QR code signage already in place.



Any additional signs, such as those encouraging social distancing and/or occupancy limitations, should be removed, as SMU does not currently have requirements in place concerning physical distancing or occupancy.

- **SMU response to Faculty Senate resolutions** – Last week, the Faculty Senate approved and submitted three COVID-related resolutions to the President and Provost for consideration on the following topics: 1) COVID-19 vaccines, 2) masks, and 3) air intake. President Turner’s response to the Faculty Senate is available [here](#) for review.
- **New faculty COVID-19 instructional resource** – While our focus is on providing in-person instruction this fall with safety protocols in place (e.g., temporary mask requirement and vaccinations encouraged), we recognize the need to navigate short-term “what if” scenarios when faculty or students might be in isolation or quarantine. Our academic leadership teams of Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs, and Associate Provosts are working closely together this week and next to develop and implement processes for

consistent, case-by-case guidance so that faculty members can navigate scenarios and confirm plans for solutions.

- **Information regarding required syllabus language** – Please see this week’s [message](#) to faculty finalizing their syllabi and making final preparations for the fall term. We have created a website where faculty can access [required syllabus language](#) along with support [integrating it into the Canvas syllabus](#)

Sharing this information in writing with your students creates a record that you have outlined the accommodations as provided by University policy. It provides students with a reminder not only of the policies themselves, but also of how to access the services and accommodations available. After adding this language, make sure your syllabi are uploaded to the [Syllabus Library](#).

- **New Faculty FAQs** – Based on questions and recommendations received over the past week, we have updated our [faculty FAQs](#) and encourage you to continue reviewing this page for the latest answers to our most common and pressing questions.
- **Mask distribution for faculty and classes** – Because there is a temporary mask requirement across campus, students, faculty, and staff are expected to bring their own masks to maintain compliance. However, in the event that faculty would like to have backup masks available to students, they can pick up extra masks from their Dean’s office and/or from various distribution areas that each Dean designates for faculty. All Deans’ offices have been provided with sufficient masks to distribute on an as-requested basis.
- **Vaccination and COVID-19 testing available through the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center** – Starting this week, third vaccination doses are available for moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals ([as defined by CDC and FDA guidelines](#)) who are fully vaccinated with either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. To receive testing and/or vaccinations, appointments are required and can be booked through the [health portal](#) or by calling 214-768-2141.
- **Voluntarily Report Your Vaccine to SMU** – We have transitioned to a new way of voluntarily reporting your COVID-19 vaccination status which is now maintained by the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center.

If you were vaccinated on campus, your information will automatically be uploaded into your health record under *immunizations* (no action is necessary). However, if you were vaccinated off campus, please upload that information directly to the **SMU Health Portal**, even if you already voluntarily shared your status through the vaccine reporting tool last spring.

Remember, you are not considered a close contact and will not have to undergo mandatory quarantine if you are fully vaccinated.

- **The Mustang Strong website is the most up-to-date source of information regarding SMU’s COVID-19 response** – Please continue reviewing the [Mustang Strong website](#) for information on SMU’s COVID-19 response. Here, you can find answers to frequently asked questions, access the latest [campus announcements](#), review information on

receiving and reporting the [vaccine](#), and monitor the latest data on [confirmed COVID-19 cases on campus](#)

- **Opening Convocation and Rotunda Passage** – On Sunday, August 22, all new first-year and transfer students are invited to participate in SMU's 107th Opening Convocation. At this event, students are formally welcomed to the SMU community in a ceremony dating back to 1915. Highlights of this year's ceremony include a message from SMU President R. Gerald Turner, a convocation address, and the presentation to Dr. Turner of the new class of students by Dean of Admission Elena Hicks. The ceremony is designed to set students on their new path of academic discovery. As a reminder, masks will be required at this year's event.
- **Enrollment update for fall 2021** – SMU's fall enrollment outlook remains strong. We are on pace for the most talented and most diverse class in SMU's history – including a record number of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. My immense thanks to all of you, SMU's faculty and staff, for the support and preparation required to serve our students in these challenging times.

Road to R-1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence:

- **SMU's July 2021 research award total a record for SMU** – SMU's faculty received \$10.7 million in research awards last month. This represents the highest single-month total in SMU's history. Below, by college/school, are a few examples of the major contributors to July's numbers.
 - Simmons School of Education (\$7.5M)
 - Dean Stephanie Knight received \$3 million from the Toyota Foundation to support the implementation phase of the West Dallas PreK – 8 STEM school.
 - Associate Professor Candace Walkington in the Department of Teaching and Learning received \$1.3M from the National Science Foundation to work on “Seeing the World through a Mathematical Lens: A Place-Based Mobile App for Creating Math Walks” and \$325,000 from the Department of Education to work on “Exploring Collaborative Embodiment for Learning (EXCEL): Understanding Geometry through Multiple Modalities.”
 - Associate Dean and Professor Anthony Petrosino in the Department of Teaching and Learning received \$1.36 M from the Department of Education to continue his oversight of SMU's Upward Bound programs.
 - Professors Jill Allor and Stephanie Al Otaiba in the Department of Teaching and Learning received \$750,000 from the Department of Education for continued work on their collaboration, “Friends on the Block: Project Intensity.”
 - Others:
 - Regina Nippert, Executive Director of the Budd Center, received \$60,000 from the United Way.
 - Annie Wright, Executive Director of the Center on Research and Evaluation, received \$115,000 from the Miles Foundation.
 - Stephanie Al Otaiba, Patsy and Ray Caldwell Centennial Chair in Teaching and Learning, received \$325,000 from the Department

of Education and \$118,000 from the National Institutes of Health in collaboration with Vanderbilt University.

- Annie Garrison Wilhelm, Associate Professor in Teaching and Learning, received \$163,000 from the National Science Foundation.
- Dedman College (\$2.6M)
 - Professor Thomas Ritz in the Department of Psychology received \$725,000 from the National Institutes of Health to continue his work on The Dallas Asthma Brain and Cognition Study.
 - Professor and Chair Elfi Kraka in the Department of Chemistry received \$498,000 from the National Science Foundation to work on “The Local Mode Analysis – Decoding Chemical Information from Vibration Spectroscopy.”
 - Assistant Professor Adam D. Norris in the Department of Biological Sciences received \$358,000 from the National Institutes of Health to dissect interactions across gene regulatory layers in single cells, and \$60,000 from the Welch Foundation to continue his work with new chemosensory isoforms of a canonical mechanosensory protein.
 - Others:
 - John D. Buynak, Professor in the Department of Chemistry, received \$170,000 from the National Institutes of Health.
 - Stephen Arrowsmith, Associate Professor and Hamilton Chair in Earth Sciences in the Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, received \$100,000 from the Department of Energy.
 - Maria Magnani, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, received \$58,000 from Memphis Light Gas and Water.
 - Dan Reynolds, Professor and Chair in the Department of Mathematics, received \$85,000 from the Department of Energy.
 - Weihua Geng, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics, received \$199,000 from the National Science Foundation.
 - Robert Kehoe, Professor in the Department of Physics, received \$100,000 from the Department of Energy.
 - Jodi Cooley, Professor in the Department of Physics, received \$239,000 from the National Science Foundation.
 - Jing Cao, Associate Professor in the Department of Statistical Science, received \$13,000 from the National Institutes of Health.
- Lyle School of Engineering (\$468,000)
 - The Brown Foundation, Inc. Professor of Engineering Ali Beskok in the Department of Mechanical Engineering received \$225,000 from the National Science Foundation to begin a collaborative project with TAMU to investigate anomalous transport phenomena during evaporation from nano-engineered surfaces.
 - Others:
 - Brett Story, Associate Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, received \$133,000 from the Federal Railroad Administration.
 - Xin-Lin Gao, Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, received \$104,000 from the United States Army.

- **Plans for September Board of Trustees meeting** – Plans are underway for this September’s Board of Trustees’ meetings. On September 16, the Committee on Academic Affairs and the Finance Committee will convene a joint meeting to review the strategic academic priorities that will help us meet our goals for greater academic quality along with the financial investments required, through fundraising and/or resource reallocation, to implement them. We will share additional information in future updates.
- **Update on faculty hiring deliberations** – Last month, members of the Provost’s Office team and I met in a half-day retreat with the Deans. We reviewed recommendations of the Deans concerning which tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty lines outside of strategic cluster hires to open for searches this fall with the goal of bringing new members to campus in the fall of 2022.

Deans have submitted finalized requests which are under review by my office, and we hope to be able to announce in next week’s newsletter which strategic cluster hires and additional faculty lines will be opened for searches starting this fall.

- **Reminder: strategic external searches to begin in early fall 2021** – SMU will launch two national, external searches this fall for two key academic leadership positions: 1) Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer and 2) Dean of the Moody School and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies. We are pleased to announce that SMU will be partnering with Isaacson Miller, Executive Search, to conduct these searches. Early in the fall 2021 semester, we will launch two search committees, one for each position. Be on the lookout for additional information in future newsletters.

News and Noteworthy:

- **SMU scientist studies what goes on beneath the surface of planets** – Matthew Siegler, Research Professor and Research Scientist with the Planetary Science Institute in Dedman College’s Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, had his work recently featured in this *Dallas Morning News* [article](#). Siegler participates in several new NASA missions to take temperature measurements from Mars and the moon for a better understanding about how these bodies formed and the implications this has for understanding the Earth.
- **SMU faculty member selected as Nasher Museum Public Exhibition Artist** – Brian Molanphy, Associate Professor of Drawing and Ceramics in the Meadows School of the Arts, *Silent Partner*, was featured in the Nasher Sculpture Center’s public exhibition and was on view from July 22 – August 15. *Silent Partner* chronicles Professor Molanphy’s deep consideration of ceramics’ dual roles as functional object and metaphorical carrier of meaning. **For high resolution images, please follow [this link](#).**

Closing:

Thank you to the many faculty and staff who take the time to reply to these weekly newsletters. I learn a lot about SMU and our community from your insights and reflections. Last week, Professor Philip Van Keuren, Professor of Art in the Meadows School of the Arts, sent me a particularly thoughtful email.

While acknowledging the value of recognizing and celebrating excellence and accomplishment in our fields of study, Professor Van Keuren stressed the importance of sharing credit for our

successes to all the faculty who anonymously and quietly ‘labor in the shadows’ and who – out of love for what they do – have made the choice to teach at SMU. He concluded his wonderful letter with a passage from the book *Summer* by Karl Ove Knausgaard:

“This little world of grass is large enough that I can lose myself in it, and the satisfaction of knowing it so well I can only compare to that of knowing intimately the work of a painter or poet, when everything about it is familiar and yet nothing is ever exhausted.”

I’m hopeful Professor Van Keuren’s lovely reflection on what it means to teach at SMU can be a source of encouragement and inspiration as we start the fall term. Thank you for all you do for our students.

Sincerely,

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

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Southern Methodist University
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>



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