



# SMU

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
*Office of the Provost*

August 6, 2021

Dear Faculty and Staff:

In these challenging times, let me begin by recognizing your service, perseverance and commitment to our University. Now more than ever, your contributions toward our goal of even greater academic quality remain a source of inspiration and encouragement. Thanks to each of you for the ways you advance our educational mission and support our students.

Unless necessary, I will not send an update next week but will resume weekly updates on August 20. 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) Summer/fall 2021, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

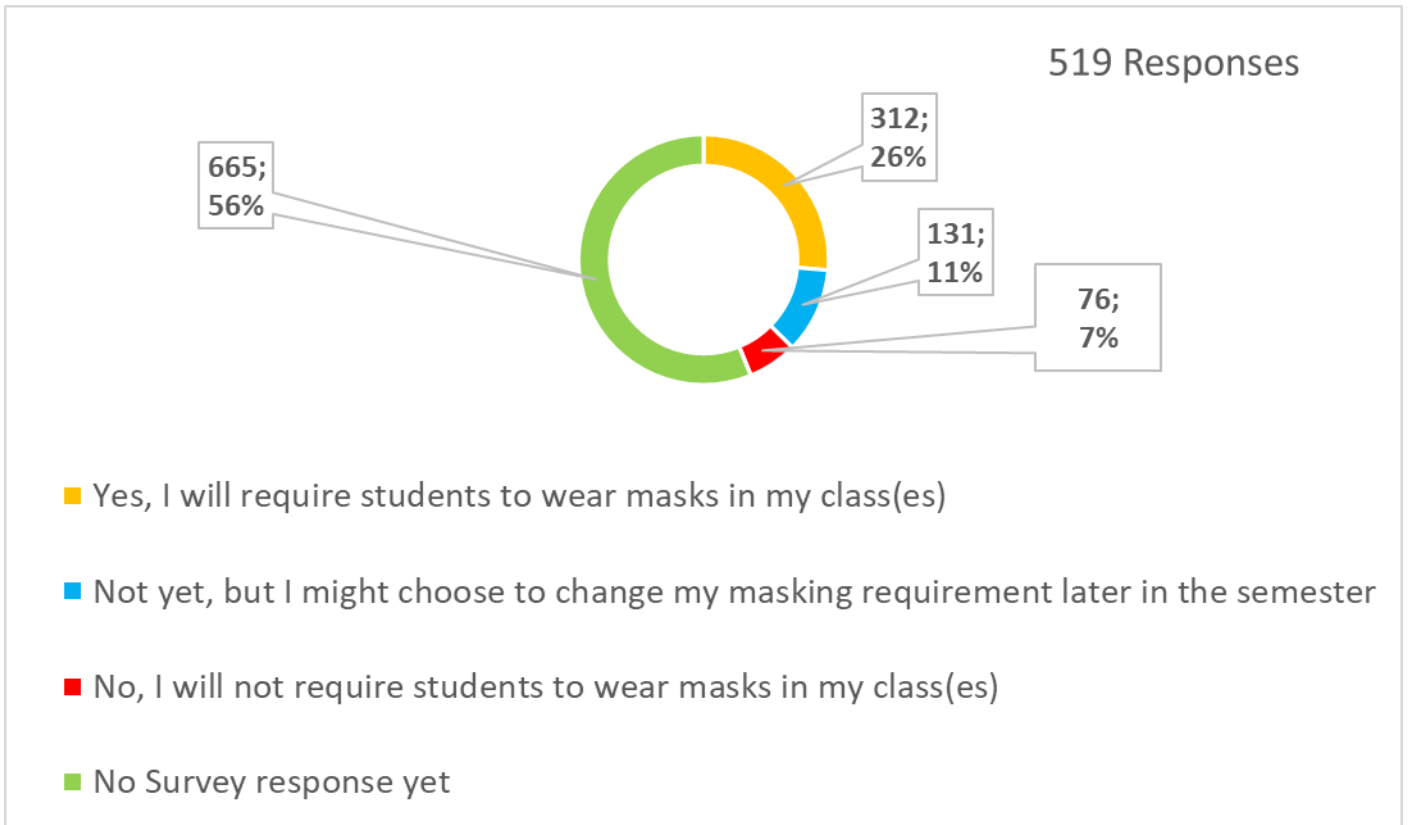
## **Summer 2021/Fall 2021**

- **Faculty/staff townhall recap** – Yesterday, President Turner, Vice President Chris Regis, and I moderated a town hall for faculty and staff to share more about our plans for fall 2021 and to address specific questions. Just over 200 faculty and staff were able to attend in person and nearly 600 more joined online. For those unable to participate, a recording of yesterday's event is available [here](#).

My thanks to Pia Vogel, Faculty Senate President and Professor in Dedman College's Department of Biological Sciences, both for recommending that we offer a livestream option as well as for facilitating the online Q&A.

- **Reminder: Fall 2021 classroom safety protocols** – As noted in my [email](#) to faculty last week, faculty members who want to require masks in their classrooms are able to do so by completing a [simple online form](#). These responses will be due two weeks prior to the first day of class (August 2 for Dedman Law and August 9 for the remainder of the campus). Below is a figure summarizing survey responses received as of Thursday, August 5. Out of a total possible 1,186 faculty responses, 519 had responded as of yesterday, a 44% response rate. Once the form is submitted, faculty will receive an auto-generated email confirming their response

and providing the standardized language to add both to their syllabus that is uploaded each semester to the syllabus repository as well as to their Canvas syllabus.



- **Enrollment update for fall 2021** – Our enrollment for fall is strong. The incoming undergraduate class is on target to be the largest, most talented, and most diverse in the University’s history and includes a record number of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. We are expecting record number of returning students as well. On-campus housing is at full capacity. Graduate student enrollment, particularly in our professional schools, looks to be very strong as well. Cox projects another year of expansion, and Dedman Law will welcome its most academically qualified J.D. class in history with a median LSAT score of 163.

My immense thanks to all of you, SMU’s faculty and staff, for the support and preparation required to serve our students, and special thanks to Wes Waggoner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Elena Hicks, Dean of Admission and Executive Director of Enrollment Services, and the Division of Enrollment Services for their outstanding recruiting efforts this year.

- **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. Much of what we

discussed in the town hall is echoed here along with answers to frequently asked questions, access the latest [campus announcements](#), information on receiving and reporting the [vaccine](#), and the latest data on [confirmed COVID-19 cases on campus](#). Faculty, please note that we updated our [faculty FAQs](#) this week based on your questions and recommendations, and we encourage you to continue reviewing this page for the latest answers to our most common and pressing questions.

- **Remobilizing SMU CAN** – SMU CAN has been and will remain an important group to support community awareness and adoption. Last summer, the SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN) was established to support a greater understanding and adoption of the personal responsibilities needed to keep our campus safe and healthy.

Wednesday, Dr. K.C. Mmeje, Vice President for Student Affairs, and I reconvened SMU CAN and [charged them](#) with the goal of supporting and enhancing our efforts to encourage our community to adopt and adhere to campus safety protocol measures. Among their first activities, SMU will revise our community’s “pledge to protect” to align with current realities and bring forward proposals to increase vaccinations, vaccine reporting, and compliance with classroom masking requirements.

### **Road to R-1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence**

- **Update on faculty hiring deliberations** – Last week, 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.

Additional items discussed:

- Reports from faculty working groups on strategic cluster hires
- Recommendations from Deans on faculty lines to support cluster hires
- Faculty needs to support the Common Curriculum
- College/school requests for faculty searches outside of strategic cluster hires
- Overview of changes to the faculty search and recruitment process

My thanks to the Deans for the time and effort spent preparing for this meeting and for their willingness to collaborate around proposals for tenure-track and non-tenure-track lines that will support our academic goals.

In terms of next steps, Deans are submitting final requests this week, and members of my team and I will be meeting with Business and Finance to review these requests from a budget and strategic perspective. We will provide more detailed information in the near future, and once decisions are finalized, will announce

which strategic cluster hires and additional faculty lines will be opened for searches starting this fall.

- **Three strategic external searches to begin in early fall 2021** – As mentioned last month, Jim Quick, Dean of the Moody School and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies has announced his plans to take a sabbatical at the end of the 2021 – 2022 academic year. Under his outstanding leadership, SMU has progressed from R3 to R2 in the Carnegie Classification of Research Universities and launched the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies.

In recognition of his tremendous workload and the importance of leadership in the areas of research and graduate studies, SMU will launch two national, external searches this fall for his replacements in these 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 we 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.

SMU's Data Science Institute (DSI) was launched in fall 2020 to coordinate and facilitate interdisciplinary research teams and programs in Data Science across the University. As the DSI's Inaugural Director, Dr. Lynne Stokes, Professor in Dedman College's Department of Statistical Science, has served SMU by establishing and positioning the DSI for lasting sustainability and success. In spring 2022, SMU will conduct a national search for her successor, and we will call on our data science faculty at that time to inform and support the search process.

- **Reminder: Workload policies** – SMU is committed to developing and approving department-level and unit-level workload documents that make our SMU policies clear and transparent at the unit level, which will be a critical step in helping us reach our research and creative impact goals for R1 and our BUF goals around greater transparency and equity.

See the first [summer 2021 update](#) for a more detailed update, but our goal remains to approve and post final department-level workload policies early in the fall 2021 semester. We have invited department chairs to attend a Lunch-and-Learn on Wednesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, with a focus on Equity in Workload Policies to be co-hosted by Dr. Johnitha Johnson, Research Fellow for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success.

- **Toyota foundation awards an additional \$3M to the Simmons School of Education** – Last week, we received confirmation that the Toyota Foundation has awarded \$3M over the next three years to the Simmons School of Education to launch the implementation phase of the West Dallas Stem School Initiative. Congratulations to Dean Stephanie Knight and the Simmons team for receiving the

support needed to continue this exciting and transformative work for our community.

### **News and Noteworthy**

- **SMU researcher featured in *Washington Post*** – Dr. Anthony Fiorillo, Research Professor of Earth Sciences and Senior Fellow in SMU’s Institute for the Study of Earth and Man (ISEM) was recently featured in a *Washington Post* [article](#) for his work in search of Arctic dinosaur footprints in Alaska.
- **SMU grads make Alzheimer’s discovery that could shape future treatments** – James McCormick and Lauren Ammerman, fiancées and SMU Ph.D. graduates in cellular and molecular biology were recently featured in this [video](#) produced by NBCDFW. Motivated by personal experiences with the disease, their breakthrough research shows promise in shaping future treatments.
- **SMU faculty member featured in the *New York Times*** – Congratulations to Dr. Peter Weyand, Glenn Simmons Endowed Professor in Applied Physiology and Biomechanics in the Simmons School of Education’s Department of Applied Physiology and Wellness, for his interactive *New York Times* [article](#) this past weekend, “How Olympic Athletes Run: The Difference Between Speed and Distance.”

Sincerely,



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