



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 three categories: 1) Spring 2021, 2) SMU's Road to R-1, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2021

- **December faculty survey report and key findings** – All full-time and part-time faculty were invited to participate in an optional, end-of-term survey during a one-week window from December 11 – 18, 2020. The survey consisted of four open-ended items designed to elicit feedback about experiences across the fall semester. A total of 484 full-time and part-time faculty responded to the survey, with representation from all academic units.

Unlike the September and October surveys, no information about part-time or full-time status, teaching modality, or home department was collected. All raw data associated with each school/college was shared on December 18 with each school's respective Deans and Associate Deans, and an email was sent to all chairs informing them that those responses would be shared with them by their Deans' offices in order to support their efforts in planning during the winter break. Click [here](#) for a summary of the feedback received through the December 2020 faculty survey.

- **New Canvas-based student retention tool** – To assist faculty teaching undergraduate courses (especially those with large classes) in proactively monitoring student engagement as reflected by activities within each Canvas course, SMU is piloting the tool Dropout Detective for the spring 2021 semester across all undergraduate Canvas courses. Within your individual Canvas course page, you will find a new "Dropout Detective" link located on the left navigational toolbar.

To learn more about this tool and how to use it to detect potentially at-risk students, click [here](#) to download a PDF with more information. For specific questions, write the OIT Help Desk by emailing help@smu.edu.

- **COVID-19 vaccine plan updates** – We continue to submit weekly requests for vaccine allocations under the state’s distribution phases but have not yet received confirmation of when we might receive our first allotment or how many doses to expect.

We do, however, have our system in place, including a tent near the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center, and will follow state guidelines in making the vaccine available, beginning with the 1A phase designated for campus health care workers and police. Next, the 1B phase will prioritize people 65+ and/or those with underlying medical conditions with priority given to those in that phase who are working/residing directly on campus. Along with faculty and staff, students who fit in this category are also eligible for the vaccine.

For more information on how the process will work, check out the [new vaccination page](#) on the [Mustang Strong website](#). You’ll find information and tools to help you identify your eligibility phase, as well as steps on how to register for and receive the vaccine when the time comes. It also contains answers to frequently asked questions you may have. A map is available to help you find the campus Vaccination Site and additional parking spaces if needed.

We encourage you to take advantage of the first opportunity to get the vaccine regardless of whether it is through SMU or another provider. Visit the [Texas COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Locations map](#) for additional vaccination sites and availability. Whether you have received the vaccine or are still waiting to get it, it is important to continue with the healthy behaviors outlined in our community’s [Pledge to Protect](#).

- **COVID-19 test sites on campus** – The curative kiosk uses a self-administered oral swab to collect test samples for faculty, staff and students as well as the general public. It is located near the Airline Parking structure at 6501 Airline Court. [Appointments are required](#). As part of the registration process, your insurance information will be collected and costs will be billed to your insurance.

The Urgent Care for Kids and Families’ no-cost, rapid drive-through testing site is also still available for employees and their dependents. It is located on the East Campus at Expressway Tower, [6116 North Central Expressway](#). You will need to [complete a telemedicine screening to schedule a test](#).

- **Date extensions for spring 2021 pass/fail declaration and course withdrawal** – In response to student requests and to provide our undergraduates additional support, we are extending the pass/fail declaration deadline to March 5, and the course withdrawal deadline with a W to April 23. Thank you to the Faculty Senate for reviewing and approving this proposal.
- **Reminder: Event request process** – This is a reminder that in-person meetings of SMU students, staff, and faculty may occur as long as the most current county and state guidelines can be followed within the meeting space, such as face coverings and social distancing. Attendance rosters should be kept and there must also be a way for attendees to participate remotely via Zoom, conference call, etc.

As part of our current operations, no events beyond the meetings described above will take place on campus without advance authorization. [Employees requesting events](#) must submit [exceptions](#) to the Events Group no later than 10 business days prior to the event for consideration. A recommendation to approve/disapprove will be made by this group. If further discussion is required, the exception request will be brought to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for determination. If PEC review is required, they will make the final determination. Any outdoor events requiring an event exception must also have a fully approved [Outdoor Event Request](#) (OER) before an exception request will be reviewed. Please note, events taking place in an off-campus location do not require an event exception request.

Click [here](#) for a description of guidelines for student events.

- **Accommodations for students with COVID-related medical conditions** – This is a reminder to faculty that if you have a student experiencing long-term effects from a previous illness (including COVID-19) and who is requesting accommodations for your course this semester, such as extended testing time or flexible attendance, please refer the student to the Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies ([DASS](#)) process to request temporary accommodations. The DASS office will consider ways to assist the student in remaining on campus and participating fully in the course as it is designed, but possibly with some reasonable accommodations, such as a reduced course-load, handicapped parking, or extra time on exams.

The process does NOT change for students quarantining due to contact or isolating due to infection, and the campus should follow the same procedures from the fall. The Dean of Student Life's office will continue to work with students who quarantine or isolate. Students should only be referred to the DASS office if they're experiencing lasting and lingering symptoms from a past illness (therefore, experiencing a chronic temporary disability) and are requesting formal accommodations in order to participate in their education.

SMU'S Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 Budget Process** – The review of final budget proposals by members of SMU's senior leadership team continues throughout this month, with final budget decisions announced in March 2021. The focus throughout our budget deliberations this year, including faculty/staff hiring requests, has been on how budget requests will help us attain SMU's goals within the 2016–2025 Strategic Plan and Black Unity Forum (BUF) Action Plan, as well as *U.S. News & World Report* top 50 ranking and R1 status. Thanks to the Deans and Associate Provosts for their collaborative approaches to prioritization.
- **Department-level workload policies revised and approved by May 2021** – This is a reminder that SMU is committed to developing and approving department-level workload policies by May 2021. To meet the late-May timeline, I have asked Deans to engage faculty and Department Chairs to develop and submit draft workload policies to my office by Wednesday, March 31. Meeting this deadline will give my office sufficient time to review and recommend any modifications prior to final approval by each Dean and by me in late May.

Having departments clarify and operationalize transparent workload policies will be a critical step in helping us reach our research goals. Additionally, establishing these workload policies by the end of spring 2021 is a commitment SMU made in response to the Black Unity Forum action plan. Each department's workload policies should reflect a clear and transparent understanding of the research, teaching, and service expectations for all faculty.

I recognize the time and effort required and want to thank you for your attention to this important initiative.

- **Research days 2021** – Each spring, the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies hosts SMU Research Days, a showcase and celebration of graduate and undergraduate student research at SMU, in collaboration with the Office of Engaged Learning. This year, Research Days is going virtual and is scheduled for March 15 – 19. Research Days will include live talks and panels. Additionally, both graduate and undergraduate students will have the opportunity to compete in 5-minute research presentation video competitions with cash prizes and competitor videos publicly available on [this site](#). [Registration](#) for the graduate and undergraduate video competitions closes today.
- **College/School spotlight** – Lorena Padilla, Professor of Practice in the Meadows School of the Arts, completed shooting her first feature film as writer-director in Guadalajara, Mexico in December and January. MARTINEZ stars Francisco Reyes as a bitter man in his sixties struggling with life changes, and has been supported at the script, production, and distribution stages by the Mexican Film Institute, the Tribeca Film Institute, and Paris-based Luxbox Films.

News and Noteworthy

- **Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor Award presentations** – Each year, the Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor Award recognizes SMU faculty for their commitment to and achievements in fostering student learning. Last year's four recipients were named in May 2020 by the Center for Teaching Excellence; however, COVID forced the cancellation of the Board of Trustees' traditional awards presentation dinner.

As an alternative, beginning last fall and concluding this week, I have been able to recognize this year's recipients through a series of surprise visits to their classrooms. Congratulations again to our 2020 Altshuler recipients!

- Jeffrey Kahn, J.D. – Professor of Law and Gerald J. Ford Research Fellow, Dedman School of Law
- Jill E. Kelly, Ph.D. – Associate Professor of History in the William P. Clements Department of History, Dedman College
- James Lee, Ph.D. – Associate Professor of the History of Early Christianity and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Perkins School of Theology
- William Maxwell, Ph.D. – Professor of Finance, Mary Jo Vaughn Rauscher Chair in Financial Investments and the Academic Director of the EnCap Investments & LCM Group Alternative Asset Management Center and Don Jackson Center for Financial Studies, Cox School of Business

Thank you to the Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, faculty and staff who made this year's presentations unique and meaningful.

- **Undergraduate fellowship season outcomes** – SMU's Office of National Student Fellowships helps SMU undergraduate and graduate students apply for external, nationally-competitive fellowships, scholarships and awards such as the Rhodes, Marshall, Fulbright, Mitchell, Truman, Goldwater, Udall, Guggenheim, and many others. While final results are still forthcoming, we are pleased to share some very positive preliminary decisions.
 - **Fulbright Semi-finalists** – This year, we had a record number of applicants (37) and now have a record 20 semi-finalists for the award. For context, in 2020 we had 15 semi-finalists and in 2019 we had 5 semi-finalists.
 - **Critical Language Scholarship Semi-finalists** – Of our ten applicants, five have been named semi-finalists. All five semi-finalists are University Honors Program students, and two are President's Scholars.

My thanks to Dr. Rachel Ball-Philips, Director of the Office of National Student Fellowships, for her leadership and support of our students' accomplishments and to the many faculty who have mentored and provided letters of support for our students in their pursuit of these awards and opportunities.

- **Spring faculty meeting debrief** – The spring General Faculty Meeting took place last week, SMUFlex-style, in Crum Auditorium and via Zoom. Faculty Senate President Aurelie Thiele gave the Faculty Senate's report, and I delivered the faculty address. Thanks to those who were able to attend. A recording is available [here](#) and presentation materials can be found [here](#).

Sincerely,



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