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Office of the Provost

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Dear Colleagues:

Thanks to each of you for the ways you advance our educational mission in support of 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 fall semester. 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) Fall 2021, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2021:

- **COVID-19 case trends** – As she did in her [message](#) last week, Leigh Ann Moffett, Associate Vice President and Chief Risk Officer and leader of SMU's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), sent a [follow-up e-mail](#) this week to provide an update on case trends as we conclude the month of September.

I would like to highlight a few data points:

- The most recent posting of the [Mustang Strong dashboard](#) shows that we have a total of 26 active cases on campus (19 students, 7 employees) with two people in quarantine and zero students in on-campus isolation. For reference, we had 67 active cases in last week's report posting. Daily new cases remain in the single digits.
- The Dr. Bob Smith Health Center is actively consolidating and verifying vaccine records for our community. While actual numbers are likely higher, we can confidently report that 70% of faculty, 62% of staff and over 65% of on-campus residents have reported receiving the vaccine.
- The Health Center continues to provide Covid-19 testing for students. As of yesterday, there was only one positive test out of 50 tests administered this week.

Please continue reviewing the [Mustang Strong dashboard](#) to stay informed on our current situation and thank you for your resilience and commitment to our COVID-19 safety protocols.

- **Early Term Grade Reports and Feedback Box** – [Early Intervention \(EPR\) Grade Rosters](#) were due on Tuesday, September 28. Outreach from academic advisors and academic support personnel will now take place for the students who have multiple alerts. We reach out to students identified through the EPR process, offering resources to turn around their academic performance and experience and ensure they are oriented toward a positive path. These early reports provide an excellent time to remind students about course expectations and to positively acknowledge what has already been accomplished.

As a reminder, “Feedback Box” is another useful tool for faculty-to-student communication at this point in the semester. Feedback Box is a new tool in Canvas that allows students to write confidential, anonymous messages to faculty. Instructors can view student feedback submissions on a dashboard, reply while maintaining anonymity, and are able to customize alert preferences. By default, the system will send faculty an email when any student feedback is posted.

Only course instructors can see the messages on Feedback Box, and students cannot see one another’s submissions. If there are concerns with any messages, faculty can mark the feedback as “abusive” and request support. Faculty who would like to use Feedback Box should announce the feature either in class or on Canvas and provide students with prompts on the type of feedback they would like to receive. For more information on Feedback Box, reach out to your school [Academic Technology Service Director \(ATSD\)](#) or contact the Associate Provost for Faculty Success, Paige Ware at facultysuccess@smu.edu.

- **Vaccinations available through the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center**
 - To receive COVID vaccinations on campus, appointments (required) can be booked through the health portal or by calling 214-768-2141.
 - Third vaccination doses (not booster) are currently 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.

- **Voluntarily report your COVID vaccine to SMU** – Having accurate vaccination information helps to inform SMU’s COVID-19 response. The process is quick and easy. Please take a few minutes

to [report your COVID-19 vaccination status](#) today through the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center.

- **Mask requirement extending week to week** – SMU will continue its indoor mask requirement on a week-to-week basis. The EOC reviews the situation each week using our assessment tool to measure the impact of the pandemic on our campus while taking into consideration the most up-to-date health guidance from local, state and federal authorities. Factors such as the number of cases at SMU and in the county; infection rates; local hospitalizations; and campus isolation capacity will help determine when the mask requirement should be lifted. Regardless of whether the indoor mask requirement is lifted, faculty will continue to have the choice to require masks in their classrooms/instructional spaces for the remainder of the fall 2021 semester.
- **COVID-19 testing resources for faculty and staff** – As offered last year, SMU is still providing access to convenient and free of cost COVID-19 testing for employees and their families [through Virtual Care for Families locations around the DFW area](#). Testing is also available free of cost to you and your benefits-eligible dependents through your SMU benefits at pharmacies, health care providers and testing sites off campus.
- **Reminder: consult Mustang Strong for the most up-to-date source of information regarding SMU's COVID-19 response (case counts, FAQs)** – 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](#). This unique [FAQ](#) for

faculty also maintains the most recent information concerning academic and classroom issues.

- **Faculty workshops for student support and emergency preparedness** – Our faculty are positioned as supports for students and colleagues in the case of issues that can arise, from stress to medical emergencies in their classroom. The Associate Provost for Faculty Success, CTE and the Office of Dean of Students are planning workshops this fall to assist faculty in navigating this array of issues. More information will be forthcoming from the CTE in the coming weeks.

Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

- **Search Committees activated for two key academic leadership searches** – Last Friday, Stephanie Knight, Dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development and I hosted a kickoff meeting with members of the Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer [search committee](#). Joining us for Friday's meeting were representatives from the Isaacson, Miller Executive Search firm, our partner throughout the process. Tom DiPiero, Dean of the Dedman College of Arts and Humanities, hosted a similar kickoff meeting today with members of the Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education [search committee](#).

My thanks to Deans DiPiero and Knight for chairing these committees and to the faculty and staff for their service.

- **Reminder: Update on cluster hire search committees** – Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences and the Simmons School of Education and Human Development are using existing resources

and funding lines within each of their schools to accomplish this first round of strategic cluster hiring to augment areas in which our SMU faculty are already engaged in two high-impact research areas: 1) 21st Century Technology and Education and 2) Earth Hazards and National Security.

In last week's [newsletter](#), we announced the search committee members who agreed to serve on these two cluster hires.

- **Invitations sent for this month's faculty Town Hall on additional cluster hires** – We recognize the value and importance of incorporating the arts, humanities, social sciences and professional schools into our ongoing and future conversations around academic excellence and resource allocation for later rounds of cluster hires. We have scheduled a Town Hall for Arts and Humanities on October 14, at 3:00 pm in Crum Auditorium to focus on these topics. Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, and Sam Holland, Dean of Meadows School of the Arts, will facilitate the meeting. See this week's [email](#) for additional information or click [here](#) to register.

News and Noteworthy:

- **10th Emerging Leaders series began last week** – This semester-long series, by invitation and based on Deans' recommendations, gives emerging faculty leaders an opportunity to supplement their knowledge and expertise with a larger sense of the university as a whole. Congratulations to this year's [emerging leaders](#).
- **Search process for Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness** – I recently announced an [open call](#) to senior

faculty members to apply for the Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness position. Questions and applications (due October 15) can be sent to the [Office of the Provost](#).

Dr. Patty Alvey, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, has expressed her intention to retire from this position effective December 31, 2021. Dr Alvey has been an integral member of the Provost's Leadership Team, and during her tenure, has done an outstanding service to the university both as accreditation liaison and in establishing and leading robust initiatives through the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness.

- **Provost Faculty Fellows** – The application window for two additional Provost Faculty Fellows positions during the 2021 – 2022 academic year has now closed. Thanks to those who applied. My team is currently reviewing applications, and we will announce selections in the coming weeks.
- **Search process for Director for Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)** – This is a reminder that we currently have an [open call](#) for faculty to apply for a three-year (renewable) appointment for the Director of the CTE position effective January 10, 2022. The position will be vacant due to Dr. Michael Harris's decision, after six years of outstanding service, to transition into a new role as Department Chair for Education Policy and Leadership. Applications are due today, October 1.
- **New landslides on US West Coast detected by SMU researchers** – Geophysics professor [Zhong Lu](#) in Dedman College's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences and his team were

awarded nearly \$1 million over the past 4 years from the [NASA](#) Interdisciplinary Research in Earth Science Program and the NASA [Earth Surface and Interior Focus Area](#) to study landslides on the West Coast. In this research, they have used satellite imagery to identify more than 600 slow-moving landslides occurring near the U.S. West Coast. Fewer than 5% of these landslides in California, Oregon and Washington state had previously been identified.

- **SMU Dedman Law Professor receives prestigious appointment** - Carla Reyes, Assistant Professor of Law in the Dedman School of Law, was [appointed](#) as one of two academic members on the Texas Work Group on Blockchain Matters, and will serve as the Work Group's chair. Her article "[Creating Cryptolaw for the Uniform Commercial Code](#)," forthcoming in the *Washington & Lee Law Review* was featured by [The ALI Advisor](#).

Sincerely,



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