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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:

- **Board of Trustees meeting recap** – Last week's Board meeting concluded in historic fashion, with the formal launch of a \$1.5 billion fundraising campaign (the largest fundraising target ever set by a private school in Texas) – *SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow*. The campaign will focus on undergraduate and graduate student scholarships and fellowships, meaningful research and teaching, and enhanced community support. *SMU ignited* is positioned to accomplish three major objectives:
  - Transform the lives of high-achieving students by enabling them to come to SMU regardless of means. The University will offer more need- and merit-based scholarships, including meeting full financial need for high-performing Pell Grant-eligible students from North Texas and providing a

financial safety net for students who can be derailed by sudden financial crises. \$450M+ goal

- Enrich teaching and research by investing in faculty pursuits that have substantial societal impact. The University's plan to reach R1 will also support excellent teaching, corporate and industrial partnerships and Dallas' emergence as a technology hub. \$600M+ goal
- Enhance the campus and community by increasing partnerships with corporations and nonprofits, such as the West Dallas STEM School and Dedman School of Law legal clinics for those who cannot afford representation. The University will also bring more people together on campus for diverse programming and to cheer Division I athletic teams, investing in facilities, programs, student-athlete success and community outreach programs. \$450M+ goal

You can find out more about the goals of the campaign [here](#).

Last Thursday afternoon, Chris Regis, Vice President for Business and Finance, and I were invited to provide a report to the Committee of the Whole. Our presentation, following from a request last spring from the Board's Strategic Task Force, articulated Academic Affairs' initiatives, and the costs/funding plans associated with them, that will help us meet our goals for greater academic quality over the next three to five years. In addition to the diligent allocation of new revenue and the reallocation of existing revenue, our presentation established the philanthropic resource goals and priorities that will inform *SMU Ignited*. We will share more information in subsequent newsletters.

Following Thursday's Committee of the Whole presentation, the Committee on Academic Affairs met to discuss informational and action items such as: faculty appointments/reappointments, faculty terminations/resignations/retirements, endowed chairholders and professorships, and faculty salary comparisons. The meeting concluded with an enrollment update from Dr. Wes Waggoner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management.

During Friday's presentation to the full board, Chris Regis and I shared a Committee of the Whole meeting recap, and I provided an enrollment update. Click [here](#) for a snapshot on this year's outstanding class.

- **Early Term Grade Reports and Feedback Box** – Faculty should have received a notification from the Registrar's Office that [Early Intervention \(EPR\) Grade](#)

[Rosters](#) are now open and due by Tuesday, September 28 at midnight. Outreach from academic advisors and academic support personnel takes place for students who have multiple alerts. We reach out to any student who struggles in the early parts of the semester in order to offer 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.

“Feedback Box” is another useful tool for communication at this point in the semester for students to offer questions or to provide feedback on what is working well for them. 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 customize alert preferences. The system will send an email when any feedback is posted.

Only course instructors can see the feedback through this tool, 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 ATSD or contact the Associate Provost for Faculty Success, Paige Ware at [facultysuccess@smu.edu](mailto:facultysuccess@smu.edu).

- **COVID-19 cases trends** – Thank you for your vigilance as we continue to respond to COVID-19 on campus. I hope you saw this week’s [message](#) from Leigh Ann Moffett, Associate Vice President and Chief Risk Officer and leader of SMU’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with some good news as we are now one month into the fall semester.

Here is a bit more positive news to share. As was the case last fall and spring, and as anticipated, we are beginning to see a weekly decline in new positive cases. From a high of 20 new cases on August 31, over the past few days we have dropped to just a few new cases daily, including on September 19 when we saw 0 new cases for the second time this fall. (See chart below)

# SMU COVID-19 DASHBOARD

Data through September 23, 2021. Dashboard last updated September 24, 2021.

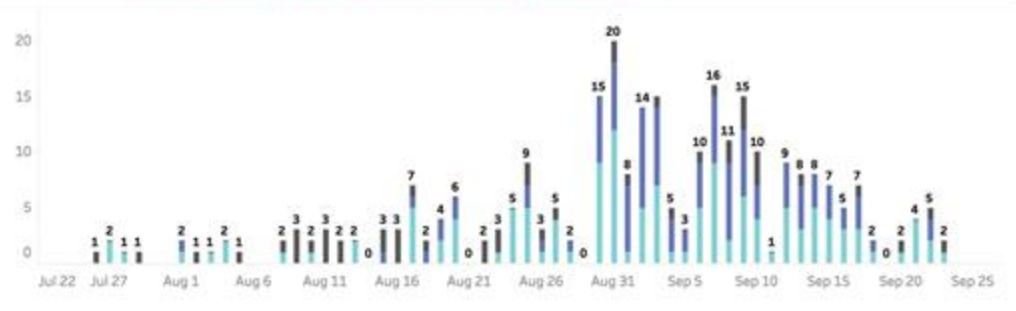
Select a Population:  
 Students and Faculty/Staff  
 Select Time Period:  
 60 Day



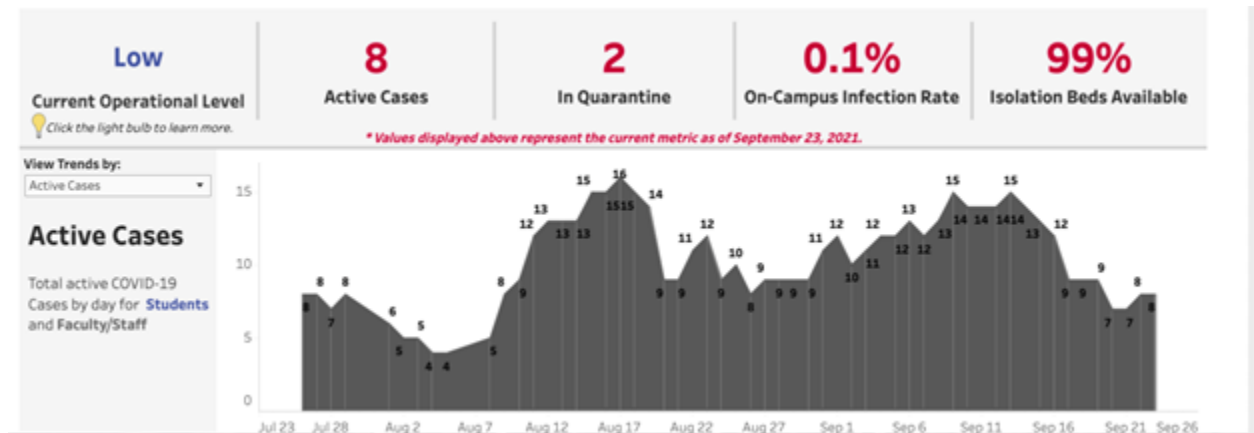
View Trends by:  
 Daily New Cases

### Daily New Cases

New COVID-19 Cases reported by day for  
 Campus Resident  
 Students, Off-Campus  
 Faculty/Staff



Since before the beginning of the semester, the total number of COVID 19 cases within the faculty and staff population has also remained low, from one to three new cases a day and no more than 16 active employee cases at any time. (see chart below)



For fall 2020 and spring 2021, we reached peak cases during week three of the semester, followed by sustained decline. We are observing the same pattern this semester, but with even lower numbers than in previous semesters. When compared to the same time last year (the first 31 days of the semester), we have seen a 55% drop in overall cases (from 508 in fall 2020 to 227 this fall).

This good news does not minimize the challenges we continue to face. Thank you for your resilience and flexibility through during this time.

- **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 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.

As a reminder, SMU's Community Action Network (SMU CAN) has asked that all faculty spend a few minutes at the beginning of their classes to review this year's "[Pledge to Protect](#)" and to walk your students through how to upload their vaccination information. They have created a [graphic](#) with a QR code to help guide this process. Basically, it explains:

- 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.
- **Mask requirement extending week to week** – SMU will continue its indoor mask requirement on a week-to-week basis. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will review 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.

#### Road to R1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence:

- **SMU poised to increase its high-performance computing capabilities** – SMU implemented ManeFrame II and the Center for High Performance Computing to support computational research projects that require high-performance computing for data analysis. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the SMU Center for Scientific Computation work together to provide the computational and digital data infrastructure necessary to support research endeavors of SMU's faculty, researchers and students.

This cluster features state-of-the-art CPUs and GPUs, accelerators, networking and storage technologies—making it one of the fastest high-performance computing environments of any private university campus in Texas.

In support of our goals for enhanced research and in line with Dallas' growing emergence as a technology hub, SMU is looking to expand upon our previous investments in high-performance computing and take our tools, processes and research outputs to the next level. Be on the lookout for an exciting

announcement in the coming weeks concerning SMU's next generation of high-performance computing.

- **Search committees for Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer and Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education** – Earlier this month, I invited committee members to serve on two strategic searches beginning this fall: 1) [Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer](#) and 2) [Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education](#). My thanks to Stephanie Knight, Dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development, for chairing the Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer search and to Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, for chairing the Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education search. Initial planning meetings have been scheduled today and for October 1 for these committees to begin their work. We will provide additional updates on these searches' timelines and progress in future newsletters.
- **Reminder and 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.

We are pleased to announce the search committees for these two cluster hires.

#### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology and Education

- Eric Bing, Professor of Global Health in the Simmons School's Department of Applied Physiology and Wellness and Dedman College's Department of Anthropology; Co-chair
- Tony Cuevas, Assistant Dean for Technology and Innovation and Clinical Professor in the Simmons School; Co-chair
- Stephanie Al Otaiba, Patsy and Ray Caldwell Centennial Chair in the Simmons School's Department of Teaching and Learning

- Corey Clark, Assistant Professor in the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Computer Science and the Guildhall's Human and Machine Intelligence Game Lab
- Ernest Jouriles, Dale McKissick Endowed Professor of Psychology and Chair, *ad interim*, in Dedman College's Department of Psychology
- Aki Kamata, Professor and Ph.D. Program Director in the Simmons School's Department of Education Policy and Leadership
- Eric Larson, Associate Professor in the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Computer Science
- Renee McDonald, Associate Dean and Professor of Psychology in Dedman College's Department of Psychology
- Suku Nair, University Distinguished Professor and Director of the AT&T Center for Virtualization in the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Tony Petrosino, Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning and Associate Dean in the Simmons School of Education and Human Development
- Candace Walkington, Associate Professor and Gerald J. Ford Research Fellow in the Simmons School's Department of Teaching and Learning

#### Earth Hazards and National Security

- Zhong Lu, Professor and Shuler-Foscue Chair in Dedman College's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences; Chair
- Stephen Arrowsmith, Associate Professor and Hamilton Chair in Earth Sciences in the Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences in Dedman College
- Andrea Barreiro, Associate Professor in Dedman College's Department of Mathematics
- Klaus Desmet, Ruth and Kenneth Altshuler Centennial Interdisciplinary Professor in Dedman College's Department of Economics
- Tom Hagstrom, Professor in Dedman College's Department of Mathematics and Director of the Center for Research Computing
- Nikos Makris, Addy Family Centennial Professor in Civil Engineering in the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Ömer Özak, Associate Professor in Dedman College's Department of Economics



- Neil Tabor, Professor in Dedman College's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences

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, to focus on these topics. That meeting will take place at 3:00 p.m. in Crum Auditorium. Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College and Sam Holland, Dean of Meadows, will be facilitating the meeting. Click [here](#) to register.

#### News and Noteworthy:

- **10<sup>th</sup> Emerging Leaders series begins today, September 24** – This semester-long series, by invitation based on Deans' recommendations, will give emerging faculty leaders an opportunity to supplement their knowledge and expertise with a larger sense of the University as a whole. The seminar's goals are two-fold: 1) participating faculty will develop and refine their own interests in pursuing intellectual and administrative leadership positions, and 2) SMU will benefit from the ongoing contributions of engaged, informed thought leaders. Congratulations to this year's [emerging leaders](#).
- **Search process for Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness** – Dr. Patty Alvey, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, has expressed her intention to retire from her 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.

Last week, I announced an [open call](#) to senior faculty members to apply for this position. Questions and applications (due October 15) can be sent to the [Office of the Provost](#).

- **Provost Faculty Fellows – call for applications (last call)** – All full-time faculty members can [apply](#) for two additional Provost Faculty Fellows positions during the 2021 – 2022 academic year: 1) Equity and Inclusion and 2) Faculty Awards and Fellowships. Our primary focus will be faculty who have demonstrated

interest and experience in either of these areas (with priority for instructional/non-tenure track, or tenured faculty). Questions and applications (due today, September 24) can be sent to Dr. [Paige Ware](#), Associate Provost for Faculty Success. Past applicants are encouraged to apply.

- **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 on October 1.

This is often a time in the semester when students have found their rhythm with classes. Stimulating discussions fill our buildings, performances are launching, and feedback cycles are in play. Thank you for creating such a vibrant learning environment at SMU!

Sincerely,



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**SMU**  
World Changers Shaped Here