



*Elizabeth G. Lobo, Ph. D.*  
*Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*  
*Office of the Provost*

March 25, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for your interest in, and commitment to, advancing SMU's academic mission. These weekly updates will serve as a tool to keep you informed and engaged with SMU's Academic Affairs division as, together, we manage a safe, healthy and productive spring 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](#).

### **Spring 2022**

- **Faculty accommodations for remote teaching needs after spring 2022** – Moving forward after the spring 2022 semester, faculty who need to request a reasonable accommodation on the basis of a disability for teaching will need to request accommodation through the Office of Institutional Access and Equity (IAE). This week, the President's Executive Council (PEC) approved the following language and requested that it be shared with all faculty:

“During the last two years, teaching face-to-face courses as emergency remote courses was authorized by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In light of the expiration of the emergency remote authorization by SACSCOC, beginning with May term 2022, emergency remote teaching will no

longer be allowed. Faculty who need to request a reasonable accommodation on the basis of a disability for teaching should contact IAE to request on-campus accommodations. IAE will continue to assess each request on an individualized basis. Any courses at SMU that are taught through online modalities must be approved by the Educational Programs Committee and fully follow the SMU GO process and production model.”

- **Monthly Council of Deans meeting recap** – On Wednesday, the Deans and I gathered for our monthly Council of Deans meeting. Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, and Dayna Oscherwitz, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, facilitated a brief discussion around a proposal to review communication protocols and operational processes around key academic policies for undergraduate and graduate students. I provided brief updates on this week’s PEC meeting, University operations in response to emergency conditions, and an exciting new partnership with the Bush Institute to use endowment dollars for post-docs (look for an RFP before the end of the spring 2022 semester). I concluded my remarks by highlighting the great work (both currently underway and planned) taking place in our office of Internal Audit to review and recommend leading practices in several of our key operational areas (e.g., research pre/post-award, contract management, extra compensation, OIT, conflict of interest/commitment).

Ernie Barry, Associate Vice President for Budgets and Finance, reviewed data on SMU’s endowments for a common understanding of funding opportunities. We then updated the Deans on the visualization tool under development to display the FY 2023 performance-based funding results and on progress toward improving our capabilities for reporting on graduate student data.

Wes Waggoner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, concluded the meeting by sharing a proposal for SMU to partner with Sister2Sister – an international organization focused on improving the lives of women and children from underprivileged, difficult, and even at times, dangerous backgrounds – by expanding their access to education.

- **SMU Giving Day on March 22** – Tuesday was SMU’s annual Giving Day, a 24-hour opportunity to rally the Mustang community in shaping our future. In just one day, over 3,500 donors committed more than \$8M in support for the SMU people and causes that matter most to them. Thank you to all who participated and, by doing so, showed the world what Mustangs can do in just one day!
  
- **Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) reaccreditation visit next week** – Members of Cox’s AACSB reaccreditation team will be on-site next week for campus interviews, including a meeting on Tuesday with President Turner and me. Thanks to Cox administrators, faculty and staff for their hard work preparing for – and responding to – the AACSB reaccreditation process.
  
- **Reminders from previous newsletters:**
  - **Please complete the brief survey you received from OIT to improve our facilities/OIT data** – On Tuesday, March 8, you received an email from SMU IT Communications with access instructions, including a user-specific link, for a mandatory space and asset survey that will allow SMU to improve the accuracy of our data for reporting. If you have difficulty locating the email, be on the lookout for follow-up messages with personalized instructions on how to access the survey. This survey should take no more than five minutes to complete. Thank you for your attention to this important request.

- **Policy changes in response to adverse events and inclement weather** – Based on faculty and staff suggestions, as well as feedback stemming from the working group of faculty and academic staff assembled to review SMU’s response to adverse events and inclement weather, PEC has decided to return to our previous (prior to spring 2020) approach of canceling class during inclement weather. The relevant policies ([Policy 7.7](#) and [Policy 9.12](#)) have been revised and are available on SMU’s [University Policy website](#). See [last week’s announcement](#) for additional information.
  
- **Planning for May and summer terms** – Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Dallas County currently report our community risk level as low. In light of recent trends, SMU anticipates that the May and summer terms will be mask optional across campus, including classrooms. Please see this [email](#), sent to all faculty currently scheduled to teach during either the May or summer terms, for additional information.
  
- **COVID-19 health and safety reminders** – Please consult the [Mustang Strong website](#) regularly for the latest information, as our Pandemic response is dynamic. SMU continues to provide [testing options](#) for faculty, staff and their eligible dependents as well as [vaccinations and boosters](#). If you test positive (including using an at-home kit), please report the results to your supervisor and complete the [SMU Health Reporting Form](#). SMU also continues to provide [N-95 masks](#) for faculty and staff who wish to use them in their workspace.

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

- **Research and Innovation Week** – Dr. Anima Anandkumar, Director of Machine Learning at NVIDIA and Bren Professor in Computer & Mathematical Sciences at Caltech, will deliver the 2022 Research & Innovation Week keynote talk. Dr. Anandkumar’s presentation is titled

“The Impact and Promise of AI, Simulations and High-performance Computing.” The keynote will consider the impact and promise of these technologies across the disciplines from science and engineering to the humanities and will be held via Zoom webinar on Monday, March 28, at 6:00 pm. More information and the link to register can be found here: [R&I Week Keynote Talk](#).

You can find information about all of the Research & Innovation Week events at [www.smu.edu/riw](http://www.smu.edu/riw). Other events include the Undergraduate Poster Session (Tuesday, March 29, 3:00 – 6:00 pm, Hughes-Trigg Student Center Ballroom), Graduate Poster Session (Wednesday, March 30, 2:00 - 5:00 pm, Hughes-Trigg Student Center Ballroom), and Panels with Student Winners of National Fellowships (Friday, April 1, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, Hughes-Trigg Student Center 121 and 226). In addition, a number of departments are organizing events in conjunction with Research & Innovation Week. A listing of departmental events can be found here: [R&I Week Departmental Events](#).

- **Ribbon cutting for Biolabs grand opening at Pegasus Park** – This week, I attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for Biolabs at Pegasus Park, a 40,000 SF state-of-the-art, flexible lab, training and office space that aims to serve as the epicenter for regional life science innovation and to enable biotech trailblazers in their pursuit of the next big scientific breakthrough.

Pegasus Park, developed in a partnership between Lyda Hill Philanthropies and J. Small Investments, opened in 2021 after years of planning and development, and aims to boost North Texas’ biotech, nonprofit and corporate innovation. SMU is in talks with Pegasus Park to establish a partnership that will give our faculty exposure to opportunities for expanded research and innovation. Be on the lookout for additional information on this exciting opportunity.

- **Key leadership searches underway**

- Dedman Law Dean – Click [here](#) to go to the website where the position profile is posted that will guide our search for the next Dean of the Dedman School of Law. And, please share with prospective candidates from within your network. The search committee will review the developing applicant pool during a half-day meeting scheduled for April 6.
- **Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer** – Interviews and campus visits for two of our four finalists took place this week with the remaining two campus visits scheduled for early April. We will share more details in subsequent newsletters. As a reminder, all candidates arriving to Campus should remain confidential. Please do not share candidates' names or visits with anyone outside of SMU.
- **Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education** – This week, search committee members and I conducted airport interviews with our seven semifinalists with plans to narrow the field and bring 3-5 finalists to campus for interviews in April.

### News and Noteworthy:

- **SMU Dean named President of Clarkson University** – As [announced yesterday](#), Marc Christensen, Dean and Lyle Professor of Engineering Innovation in the Lyle School of Engineering, has accepted an offer to become the next president of Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York on July 1, 2022.

Next week, I will be meeting with the Lyle Executive Board and with Lyle faculty and staff to begin a series of conversations that will guide our search for a new Dean and inform my decision on an Interim Dean. We will launch a national search in fall 2022 for Dean Christensen's

replacement, and I have asked Sam Holland, Dean of the Meadows School, to chair the search. Together, we will charge a search committee in early fall to identify candidates for the permanent Dean of the Lyle School of Engineering.

Dean Christensen has been at SMU for 20 years and served as Department Chair or Dean for 15 of those years. He has worked very effectively with leaders and supporters of the Lyle School of Engineering, including Bobby Lyle, to construct new facilities and to develop and expand the scope of the school. We will have a University-wide reception for Dean Christensen and his wife before the end of the academic year and will provide additional information in subsequent newsletters.

- **SMU wins world championship in debate** – For the first time in our history, SMU won the world championship in the *International Public Debate Association's* (IPDA) debate tournament at the *32nd International Forensics Association* meeting held March 15 and 16. The IPDA is the largest of more than a dozen speech and debate events open to undergraduate students around the world.

Congratulations to Dr. Ben Voth, Director of Debate and Speech and Associate Professor in Dedman College, and to the SMU students for this accomplishment. Ryan Booth, a senior political science and finance major, has won multiple regional championship tournaments this year and has been rated this past fall as the best varsity debater in the United States by IPDA. All four SMU debaters advanced to the sweet sixteen of octafinal debates and first year debater Eric Ryan was selected as third speaker overall in the tournament. Engineering junior Emma Waite also defeated the number two debater of the tournament in a preliminary round.

- **Reminder: Campus call for Faculty-in-Residence (FiR) applications** – The Office of the Provost and the Office of Student Affairs are now seeking faculty candidates to serve as the Faculty-in-Residence (FiR) in McElvaney

Commons. The successful candidate will begin a three-year appointment in the fall 2022 semester.

Additional information about the FiR position is available at the [Residential Commons recruitment and selection website](#). Please submit your completed application via the [web form](#) on the recruitment and selection website. Questions about the application process should be directed to Dr. Dustin Grabsch at 214-768-4887, or by email at [dgrabsch@smu.edu](mailto:dgrabsch@smu.edu). The deadline to apply is **March 27, 2022, at 11:59 pm**.

Sincerely,

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

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Southern Methodist University  
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>  
**World Changers Shaped Here**