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

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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 toward achieving the goals that fall within our four priority areas through 2025: 1) Academic excellence/ *US News and World Report* top 50, 2) Research/scholarly creative excellence/ Road to R1, 3) 2016 – 2025 Strategic Plan and 4) Inclusive Excellence.

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 2022, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

### **Fall 2022**

- **Executive board meetings this week** – Yesterday, President Turner, Vice President for Development and External Affairs Brad Cheves and I joined Deans Knight and Jeffcoat in meetings with their units' executive boards.
  - **Simmons School of Education and Human Development** – For this meeting, I updated Board members on SMU's – and Simmons' –

recent accomplishments in two of our four priority areas for Academic Affairs: 1) academic excellence and 2) research excellence. I concluded my remarks by introducing SMU's two newest deans – Jason Nance, Judge James Noel Dean of the Dedman School of Law, and Robin Poston, Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education.

- **SMU Libraries** – For this meeting, I updated Board members on SMU's recent accomplishments toward greater academic excellence and concluded with introductions of deans Nance and Poston.
- ***U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) rankings update*** – Each fall, USNWR releases a series of rankings that serve as a helpful measure to monitor our progress toward SMU's academic quality goals.
  - **Best colleges and universities** – SMU ranked 72<sup>nd</sup> this year in USNWR's ranking of the Nation's best colleges and universities. We ranked 68th last year after peaking at 56 in 2017. SMU's rise in the rankings during the 2010s was fueled in large part by the *SMU Unbridled* capital campaign's focus on endowed scholarships (689) and faculty positions (54).

In 2019 and again in 2021, USNWR made a series of ranking and weighting changes to focus more intently on social and economic mobility measures and to reward schools for the retention and timely graduation of students, particularly those who are Pell eligible.

USNWR's metric changes align with SMU's inclusive excellence goals and reflect a push across higher education toward increased access and affordability within higher education. Programs such as SMU in Four, Access SMU and Opportunity SMU are vital to improving retention and graduation rates for all our students – with a targeted focus on achieving parity for our Pell-students – and we

hope to make support for these initiatives a key component of the current SMU Ignited Campaign.

- **Best Colleges for Undergraduate Teaching** – I am pleased to share that SMU ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in USNWR’s ranking of Best Colleges for Undergraduate Teaching. Schools on this list were ranked based on votes cast by top college administrators for putting a particular focus on undergraduate teaching.
- **Best Colleges for Veterans** – I am also pleased to share that SMU ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in USNWR’s ranking of Best Colleges for Veterans. Schools in this list are ranked based on their participation in federal initiatives helping veterans and active-duty service members pay for their degrees.
- **Place-based Community Engagement Symposium October 3 and 4:** Join [Engage Dallas](#) in partnership with [Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute](#), [Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#), [Office of General Education](#), and [Residence Life and Student Housing](#) for a symposium featuring Dr. Erica Yamamura and Kent Koth - authors of [\*Place-Based Community Engagement in Higher Education: A Strategy to Transform Universities and Communities\*](#).

The authors will distinguish place-based community engagement as a strategy that prioritizes a campus-wide and education-centered approach, compared to other individual/office-level (e.g. service learning pedagogy) and economic (e.g. anchor institution) strategies. Plus, learn about how faculty, staff, and students at SMU can connect to Engage Dallas and build our collective capacity for community engagement on the Hilltop. [Learn more about the program sessions, dates/times, and RSVP.](#)

- **SMU offers active shooter training resource** – Please review this [6-minute video](#) and consider showing it in your classroom followed by a short discussion about safety procedures. A warning that viewer discretion is

advised should precede the showing as some students may find the information alarming. [Complete this form](#) to request a training session for yourself or your organization.

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

- **SMU launches lab focused on reducing bias in AI systems** – Quantifying and minimizing bias in artificial intelligence systems is the goal of the new Intelligent Systems and Bias Examination Lab ([ISaBEL](#)) established within SMU’s AT&T Center for Virtualization. Pangiam, a global leader in artificial intelligence, is the first industry partner for the lab. As the lab grows ISaBEL will seek additional industry partners to submit their algorithms for certification.

ISaBEL’s mission is to understand how Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems, such as facial recognition algorithms, perform on diverse populations of users. The Lab will examine how existing bias can be mitigated in these systems using the latest research, standards, and other peer reviewed scientific studies.

- **Federal research workshop scheduled for Thursday, October 27** – On Thursday, October 27, SMU will be hosting a federal research workshop on campus to support the development of research projects to be submitted to the U.S Congress as part of the FY 2024 earmark and/or appropriation process. See [this email](#) for additional information.

Be on the lookout for information about how to participate in the workshop as well as additional details about the FY 2024 submission process.

- **Reminder: Moody School Doctoral Completion Grants and Dean's Postdoctoral Fellowships** – Through the generosity of the Moody Foundation’s landmark \$100M gift, the Moody School of Graduate and

Advanced Studies has been able to set aside funding this year for two initiatives aimed at helping our Ph.D. students finish their degrees and launch successful careers.

- **Moody School Doctoral Completion Grants** are intended to help SMU PhD students defend their dissertations and complete their degrees in the Fall 2022 or Spring 2023 semester. They provide funding for stipends, research materials, and other expenses as needed. Nominations will open soon and will be due in October. Be on the lookout for an email from the Moody School, re-enforced in the newsletter, with the call for nominations!
- **Moody School Dean's Postdoctoral Fellowships** will fund one-year postdoctoral fellowship positions in the academic year 2023-2024 for a limited number of PhD students who complete their degrees by the end of the Spring 2023 semester. Fellowships will be in the student's home department and under the mentorship of a tenured/tenure-track faculty member in the department. Proposals for these fellowships will include a description of research and/or teaching responsibilities required as part of the fellowship, a mentoring plan, and a description of any matching funds available from the department or school. The call for proposals will go out next month, and proposals will be due in January, 2023.

Questions can be directed to Dr. Alan Itkin ([aitkin@smu.edu](mailto:aitkin@smu.edu)).

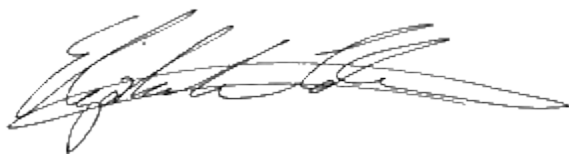
- **Key leadership searches underway:**
  - **Lyle School of Engineering** – Last month, I launched [the search committee](#) for our next dean of the Lyle School of Engineering. My thanks to committee members for their service and to Sam Holland, Dean of the Meadows School of the Arts, for agreeing to chair this committee.

The search committee's kickoff meeting took place on Tuesday, September 27. I will continue to provide regular updates in subsequent newsletters.

### **News and Noteworthy**

- **SMU faculty receives international recognition for research excellence** – The Pan Wen Yuan foundation held an award ceremony on September 22 to recognize global scholars for their outstanding scientific and technological accomplishments. Congratulations to J.C. Chiao, Mary and Richard Templeton Centennial Chair Professor in Lyle's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, for receiving the foundation's research excellence award this year in recognition of his ground-breaking inventions and contributions across a variety of clinical, diagnostic and medical technologies.

Sincerely,



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Southern Methodist University

<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

**World Changers Shaped Here**