

## Weekly Update | August 25, 2023

**Elizabeth G. Loba, Ph.D. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs**

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) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 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 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

### Fall 2023

#### **Student enrollment for 2023–2024 academic year and Class of 2027**

The University will not have an official final enrollment count until our September 6 census date. However, our preliminary headcount on the first day of classes totaled 11,687 – including 7,104 undergraduates and 4,583 graduate students. Two-hundred and seventy-seven students transferred to SMU for fall 2023, and 1,599 new first-year students joined us on the Hilltop for the Class of 2027.. You can view past years' enrollment data and [preliminary 2023 data here](#).

We are thrilled to welcome our new class to the Hilltop, and to welcome back all our returning students.

#### **Fall 2023 General Faculty Meeting recap**

Thank you to all the faculty who were able to attend this week's fall General Faculty Meeting on Wednesday. We were grateful to Dr. Michael Harris, Faculty Senate President, for providing an update on the Senate's plans, goals and priorities for the coming year. We look forward to partnering with the Senate in support of SMU's academic mission. It was my honor to present our most recently tenured and promoted faculty with their new regalia. Our faculty are central to SMU's ambitions, and those recognized during the faculty meeting represent the best of SMU across all our schools and colleges. Congratulations, again, to our newly promoted faculty.

In his annual remarks, President Turner emphasized the generosity of SMU's donors in fueling our goals for research excellence. The Gerald J. Ford Building for Research and Innovation (dedicated in

2020) and Frances Anne Moody Hall (to be dedicated in September 2023) are two recent examples of philanthropic investments that support and enable SMU's ability to conduct interdisciplinary research with impact.

In further support of our research ambitions, President Turner announced a new \$30 million gift from the O'Donnell Foundation, founded by the late Peter O'Donnell, Jr. and the late Edith James O'Donnell, that will support the future of technological innovation and education at SMU.

The O'Donnell Foundation's generous gift supports our goals by providing endowment and operational support in two areas:

- \$15 million for the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (formerly the Data Science Institute and the Center for Research Computing), which serves as the hub for students and researchers across the campus and community who access the SMU supercomputing system and data science resources.
- \$15 million for the Initiative for Digital Innovation in Engineering and Computer Science in the Lyle School of Engineering, which will further strengthen interdisciplinary research and teaching across engineering fields.

Click [here](#) for more information on this exciting gift and sincere thanks to the O'Donnell Foundation for this generous investment in SMU's future.

## **Council of Deans annual retreat debrief**

Yesterday, I hosted the annual full-day deans' retreat. My thanks to the deans for committing their entire day and to the associate provosts for joining us over lunch and for the afternoon session to discuss our plans and priorities for the year ahead.

See below for a recap of the meeting's primary agenda items:

### **Update on Exit Interviews and Best Practices in Faculty Hiring**

Maria Dixon Hall, Chief Diversity Officer, provided an update on key learnings from her office's review of exit interviews from FY 2023's faculty searches. Working with Maria this year and moving forward, we hope for continuous improvement and even greater outcomes in line with our goals for inclusive excellence.

### **Performance Based Funding (PBF) Update**

The Office of University Decision Support (UDS) has been instrumental in developing and maintaining our PBF model these past three years. Daniel Eady, Associate Vice President for Strategy and Operations and Chief of Staff, and Michael Tumeo, Chief Institutional Research Officer and UDS Director, provided the deans with an overview of PBF metrics and outcomes, and discussed potential modifications to the metrics in support of our academic goals. See additional details on PBF 2024 below.

### **Urban Research Faculty Cluster Planning**

Jill Kelly, Associate Professor and Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor in Dedman College's Department of History, joined the deans to discuss and coordinate planning efforts for this year's faculty cluster search. Peter Moore, *ad interim* Director for SMU's Data Science and Research Computing Institute, participated in the conversation to share lessons learned and best practices from last year's Data Science faculty cluster hire. See below for more information on the Urban Research faculty cluster hire.

### **Three-year Budget Planning**

To begin our planning conversation during the retreat, Ernie Barry, Associate Vice President for Budgets and Finance, reviewed SMU's consolidated financial statements and FY 2023 Operating Budgets with the deans.

From there, we continued conversations that began last summer around projecting revenue sources and strategic areas of investment using a three-year horizon. Using the FY 2024 – FY 2026 budget model as a key input, we began the work of developing a revised three-year budget for FY 2025 – FY

2027. Having better projections across multiple years for revenue, expenses and strategic investments will inform our planning efforts as we strive to meet our goals for greater academic quality.

#### **Admissions and the recent SCOTUS decision**

Paul Ward, Vice President for Legal Affairs, and Wes Waggoner, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Chief Enrollment Officer, provided an update on SMU's admission policies and practices in light of this spring's SCOTUS ruling on race-conscious admissions.

#### **Collaboration with the Faculty Senate during the 2023 – 2024 Academic Year**

Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success, previewed the Faculty Senate's priorities for the current academic year and facilitated a conversation with the deans to promote collaboration.

#### **Critical Reasoning, Assessment and Improvement**

Dayna Oscherwitz, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, gave the deans an update on efforts underway by a faculty-led committee to review and revise the assessment rubric for Critical Reasoning.

### **Reminder: Performance-Based Funding dollars for 2024 Academic Year have been distributed**

Performance-Based Funding (PBF) allocations for the 2024 Academic Year have now been disbursed to the colleges/schools based on their contributions to SMU's academic goals this past academic year.

As a reminder, PBF was designed to reward academic units for actual performance based on transparent measurements and metrics that align with our four academic priority areas through 2025: 1) Academic Excellence, 2) Research/Creative Excellence, 3) the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan, and 4) Inclusive Excellence. For FY 2024, as was the case in FY 2023, we allocated \$5 million total in discretionary funding with hopes to increase or, at a minimum, sustain this level of funding in the years to come contingent upon our ability to generate additional revenue.

[Click here](#) for a detailed presentation on the Performance-Based Funding model for FY 2024, including a college/school breakdown of results and earnings across all metrics.

### **To inform SMU's Inclusive Excellence goals, two task forces have published their findings**

Two faculty task forces have been hard at work to further define our current and future goals for inclusive excellence. I want to thank Jessica Dixon Weaver, Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Law at Dedman School of Law, for chairing the Task Force of Social Justice and Equity, and Maria Dixon Hall, Chief Diversity Officer and Associate Professor at Meadows School of the Arts and task force convener for the Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Force. Additional information on each task force and access to their reports can be found below.

#### **Social Justice and Equity Task Force**

In Spring 2021, I established the [Task Force on Social Justice and Equity](#), a University-wide interdisciplinary group of faculty and staff tasked to explore and inform SMU's approach to greater social justice and equity. A two-year charge was set to focus on reviewing other university social justice and equity centers and institutes in addition to what SMU already offers in this space. Then the task force would evaluate the types of issues that SMU would like to address and explore launching a structured program or center/institute addressing these issues.

The Task Force on Social Justice and Equity has [submitted their final report](#). To further inform and build on the great work of this task force, we will invite all SMU faculty to participate in a brief survey. Be on the lookout for a survey invitation next week and look for reminders in this newsletter.

One of the report's key findings was the need to continue expanding the diversity of SMU's faculty. We are hopeful that this year's search for at least eight new faculty in an urban research cluster will help us attract a diverse pool of world-class scholars to augment SMU's areas of emerging strength.

### **Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Force**

In February 2023, I [charged a faculty task force](#) to inform the creation of SMU's fourth faculty cluster hire – urban research. The idea of an urban research faculty cluster was initially brought forward during Faculty Town Hall conversations in spring/summer 2021 and endorsed by the Social Justice and Equity Task Force.

The Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Force has [submitted their final report](#). I am grateful for their fulsome response to my charge, particularly as it augments our learnings on best practices for cluster hires, an assessment of other urban research clusters in the state of Texas, and strategic opportunities that will help align the urban research cluster around the needs of our DFW community.

I am pleased to announce that Jill Kelly, Associate Professor and Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor in Dedman College's Department of History, will serve as coordinator for this year's search for our urban research faculty cluster.

### **Request for participation in the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness' Common Curriculum course survey**

The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (IPE) is [currently collecting evidence](#) regarding courses tagged with Common Curriculum (CC) components. Faculty teaching these courses received an initial email via [assessment@smu.edu](mailto:assessment@smu.edu) on Friday, August 11, about the data collection. We ask faculty to continue to monitor their email for an important survey on or shortly after Friday, September 8, that will assist with these collection efforts. The email will include tailored submission instructions that vary depending on the term. Read more about these differences [here](#).

Additionally, faculty can find important resources on IPE's reorganized [website](#) and newly created [Wiki site](#). IPE may be reached at [assessment@smu.edu](mailto:assessment@smu.edu) for any additional questions or concerns.

### **Applications are Open for Provost Faculty Fellow for Equity and Inclusion.**

We have an opening in the Provost Faculty Fellows program for interested faculty to apply for the role with a focus on Equity and Inclusion and join us this fall term. We encourage all full-time faculty, including non-tenure line faculty and tenured faculty, to consider applying. Applications include a two-page statement of interest and a current CV. Faculty should obtain agreement from their chair or dean that their full university service contributions can be allocated to this role during the period of service. Recipients can choose either a \$10,000 stipend annually or a course release and a \$3,000 stipend. Applications are due by Friday, September 15, and should be emailed to [facultysuccess@smu.edu](mailto:facultysuccess@smu.edu). For questions, please also reach out to [facultysuccess@smu.edu](mailto:facultysuccess@smu.edu).

### **Re-opening of the Faculty-Staff Dining Room with new provisions**

Thanks to the collaborative efforts between the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Club, the University has reopened the Faculty-Staff Dining Room in Umphrey Lee under new protocols that will assist in fostering faculty and staff community. The Faculty-Staff Dining Room was reopened on Monday, August 21, with the following new provisions in effect:

- A staff person will clear/bus tables
- Coffee and iced tea will be available in the Faculty-Staff Dining Room
- The Faculty-Staff Dining Room will have a "Commons Table" designated for folks who come to meals by themselves or in small groups and wish to socialize with others. The Commons Table is meant to encourage discussion across the boundaries of work responsibilities and academic disciplines.

- The Faculty-Staff Dining Room is available not only to SMU faculty and staff but also to post-doctoral scholars. Faculty are also encouraged to use the Faculty-Staff Dining Room to discuss projects with graduate students.

You can [purchase credits online for SMU dining facilities \(which includes access to the Faculty-Staff Dining Room\) here](#).

## Fall 2023 religious holidays

On Monday, Reverend Lisa Garvin, Chaplain and Minister to the University, and Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, [sent a message to faculty and staff](#) detailing observed religious holy days for fall 2023. Please take time to become familiar with these holidays, their importance, and possible impact on students.

Coming up in the next few weeks, Janmashtami occurs on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 6-7 and Rosh Hashanah will begin at sunset on Friday, September 15, and conclude at nightfall on Sunday, September 17.

We encourage faculty to support students who need to miss class for religious observance by making arrangements for students to access course materials and makeup missed work in a timely manner. The dates for this academic year's religious holidays can be found in the [University's academic calendar](#).

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

### Call for proposals: Provost Research Fellowships

The Office of the Provost requests nominations for Provost Research Fellowships, which supports the research of tenured faculty currently at SMU with \$15,000 stipends for the current academic year. Prospective candidates for FY 2024 Provost Research Fellowships may be nominated by their deans and Faculty Senate. Letters of nomination are due by September 15, 2023, and should include the reason for the nomination as well as a detailed evaluation of the nominee's contribution relative to others in the field in PDF format.

Once nominations have been received and nominated faculty members have submitted their research proposals (due by October 13, 2023), the University Research Council will evaluate all nominations and select six names to forward to the Office of the Provost for final selection. Those selected (up to four) will be announced before the end of the fall 2023 semester.

You will receive an email early next week with additional details about nominations and submissions.

### SMU faculty, researchers and students helped Dallas Love Field capture clean energy

Students and researchers from SMU and Clarkson University worked on the early modeling for [Dallas Love Field Airport's](#) innovative partnership with [JetWind Power Corporation](#) to capture wind blasts from aircraft and convert them into environmentally friendly electricity.

This new method for generating wind energy, utilizing wind that would otherwise be wasted, can now provide clean energy while saving money and lessening stress on energy grids worldwide. Read more about this [revolutionary technology here](#).

### Data Science Cluster hire onboarding activities planned for fall 2023

This past year, SMU successfully completed a cluster hire in data science with eight new faculty joining us this fall. As part of the efforts to ensure the success of the cluster, biweekly meetings have

been scheduled starting Friday, September 1, from 3:00–4:00 p.m. in the Visualization Lab on the first floor of Ford Hall. These meetings are open to any faculty member interested in data science and will include discussions and updates on data science at SMU, short talks by our new hires as well as our current data science faculty, and the ability to cross-pollinate ideas.

During the first meeting, everyone will have a chance to meet one another and then hear from the Chair of the new Statistics and Data Science Department, Dan Heitjan, as well as HPC/OIT staff. Later in the semester, two guest speakers will attend select meetings and discuss the field of Data Science. These speakers are Dr. Soroush Saghafian from Harvard University visiting on October 26-27 and Dr. Pedram Hassanzadeh from Rice University visiting on November 2-3.

Thank you to Peter Moore, *ad interim* Director for SMU's Data Science and Research Computing Institute, for putting together this meeting series and for overseeing the hiring process for our Data Science Cluster.

### **Key leadership searches underway**

#### **[Peter O'Donnell Jr. Director of the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute](#)**

Last week, we completed our final round of on-campus interviews with each of the finalists. We are currently gathering feedback from campus stakeholders on all three candidates with hopes of naming our new director this fall.

As always, thank you to Suku Nair, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer, for chairing the search committee, and to Peter Moore, who is serving as the *ad interim* Director for Data Science and Research Computing Institute, until the new Director arrives.

## **News and Noteworthy**

### **Constitution Day with the Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility and SMU Libraries**

The [Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility](#) and [SMU Libraries](#) have teamed up to celebrate Constitution Day this year on September 12–19 with a scavenger hunt at Fondren Library. Constitution Day, also known as Citizenship Day, commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.

### **Poets & Quants for Executives names SMU graduate student one of 2023's Best & Brightest Executive MBA**

Caleb Messer, a graduate student in Cox School of Business' Executive MBA program, has been recognized by [Poets & Quants for Executives](#) as one of the Best and Brightest graduating students for 2023. Caleb was nominated for this recognition by Emily Newsome, Associate Director of SMU Cox Executive MBA Programs, for his "relentless optimism focused on helping others find joy in personal and professional growth." Caleb originally hails from Camdenton, MO, and currently works for [GME Supply](#). Learn [more about Caleb here](#).

### **Simmons School of Education & Human Development hosts annual Texas Graduate Liberal Studies Symposium**

SMU was pleased to host this year's [Texas Graduate Liberal Studies Symposium](#) in late July. In partnership with Rice University, the day-long event was designed to provide a meaningful exchange of ideas through the written and spoken word featuring papers authored by professors and graduate students from SMU, Rice, TCU, UT Dallas and many more.

## **SMU to host 2024 American Athletic Conference (AAC) Academic Consortium Symposium**

SMU will be hosting the American Athletic Conference (AAC) Academic Consortium Symposium in April 2024. The symposium brings together professionals working with student-athletes to discuss programming related to student well-being. These programs create structure, processes and programming that fosters partnerships among member institutions and develops initiatives that advance the academic mission of each school. Additional information about the Consortium can be found on the [AAC website: Academic Consortium](#).

Sincerely,

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

Elizabeth G. Lobo, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

**World Changers Shaped Here**