

Weekly Update | December 15, 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, 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 provost@smu.edu. Suggestions received before noon on Tuesday will be reviewed and considered for publication in that week's Friday newsletter. Others will be held until the following week. Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

Today's update falls into five categories: 1) Fall 2023, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 4) Inclusive Excellence, and 5) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2023

Holiday well-wishes

With holiday parties and activities in full swing, I look back on this past year with gratitude for what we have been able to achieve and excitement about our prospects for next year and beyond. Working together, we have accomplished so much in 2023. From receiving an invitation to join the ACC to achieving federal Tech Hub designation, fall 2023 has been full of validations for our progress and trajectory. These incredible accomplishments have been made possible by you, SMU's faculty and staff. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication over this past year! I hope that you are able to rest and enjoy the winter break, and I look forward to everyone's return to campus after the New Year. Happy holidays!

Update on Dean of Perkins School of Theology search

Search committee members met this week to finalize the detailed position description that will inform our search. My thanks to the entire committee for their hard work this fall and special thanks to Peter Moore, Associate Director *ad interim* of the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute, for his service as committee chair. We are already beginning to develop a strong applicant pool with plans to have a new dean in place by fall 2024. We will continue to provide regular updates as this search progresses throughout spring 2024.

Moody School hosting dinner for doctoral degree recipients

Each December and May, the Moody School for Graduate and Advanced Studies hosts a dinner for graduating Ph.D., D.Eng., D.L.S., and Ed.D. students on the Friday before SMU's All-University Commencement Ceremony. This year's Doctoral Graduate Recognition Dinner, hosted by Dean Robin Poston, will take place this evening, and for the first time in Frances Anne Moody Hall. The event recognizes the special bond between dissertation advisors and their students, as well as the work both students and advisors have dedicated to every individual student's accomplishment in completing the doctoral degree.

December Graduation Activities

Rotunda Recessional for Undergraduate Candidates

Today at 5 p.m. on the Main Quadrangle and in Dallas Hall, SMU will host the [Rotunda Recessional for Undergraduate Candidates](#). This event is the second, and final component of one of the University's most beloved and symbolic traditions. Part one of this tradition, the Rotunda Processional, welcomes new undergraduate students to the University and is held the day before classes start. For the Rotunda Recessional, candidates, dressed in their regalia, walk through the front doors of Dallas Hall, pass through the Rotunda, and exit out the back of Dallas Hall. This is a symbolic departure from campus and serves as a welcome to the newest members of SMU's alumni family.

December Commencement

[December Commencement](#) will be held on Saturday, December 16, 2023, at 9 a.m. in Moody Coliseum. This year's All-University Commencement will assemble degree candidates from all of SMU's schools and professional programs. Antonio Garza '83, an SMU graduate, member of the University's Board of Trustees, and a distinguished diplomat who served as the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico from 2002 to 2009 will serve as the Commencement speaker.

The ceremony will be live streamed at smu.edu/live.

Faculty advisors hooding doctoral students on stage at December Commencement

Starting with tomorrow's All-University Commencement ceremony, dissertation committee chairs for the Ph.D., D.Eng., D.L.S., and Ed.D. degrees will have the opportunity to hood their doctoral candidates, together with their school or college dean, on the ceremony platform. This change has been made in response to requests from faculty and students to provide faculty the opportunity to recognize their students' accomplishments and to be recognized for their role in their students' achievement in pursuit of SMU's highest degree.

Academic Excellence

SMU in Four Year-Two Progress Report

[SMU in Four](#) – SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) – is the University's comprehensive approach to improving SMU's retention and four-year graduation rates. To this end, our QEP advances student academic success through its most essential form: progress toward degree. On October 12, 2023, the SMU in Four team shared [a presentation with the campus community](#) to provide updates on this year's advancements in early-alert mechanisms, undergraduate academic advising, enabling technology, and gateway/introductory courses. A copy of the [SMU in Four Year-Two Progress Report](#) is now available.

Council on General Education updates to Common Curriculum Global Perspectives requirements

The Council on General Education has recently made two modifications to SMU's Common Curriculum requirements. One – students' ability to drop or withdraw from a Critical Reasoning (CR)-tagged course – was discussed in [last week's newsletter](#). Two – modifications were made to the [Global Perspectives \(GPS\) rubric](#), permitting all SMU Abroad programs to satisfy the requirement.

Beginning with the spring 2024 abroad cohort and moving forward, students who enroll in a SMU Abroad course that is not GPS-tagged will be asked to complete a 1,000-word reflection as part of their re-entry experience. The collection of student reflections will be managed in coordination between SMU Abroad and the Office of General Education. This change will allow all SMU Abroad offerings to achieve GPS student learning outcomes and is based on recommendations from the ACE Internationalization Steering Committee.

As a reminder, the [Council on General Education meeting dates and course proposal deadlines](#) are posted for spring 2024. If you wish to propose a course, the Office of General Education (gened@smu.edu) is available to assist you.

SMU's fourth Marshall Scholar recipient named

Austin Hickle '22 was [named SMU's fourth-ever Marshall Scholar](#). The Marshall Scholarship program funds graduate study at any university in the United Kingdom for some of the United States' most talented undergraduate students. Only 51 recipients were chosen in this year's highly selective national competition.

A distinguished student leader, Hunt Scholar, Phi Beta Kappa member and Student Body President, Austin left an indelible mark on our campus. His advocacy for increased scholarship funding culminated in the creation of two SMU scholarship programs: the Rotunda Scholarship, designed to help close the financial gap for Pell Grant recipients and the SMU STEM Scholarship. Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson issued a Special Recognition last August to Austin in celebration of his work.

Austin is currently serving as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Ochang-eup, South Korea where he teaches over 650 middle-school students, after which he plans to pursue a Master of Science in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation and a Master of Science in Education (Comparative and International) at the University of Oxford.

Undergraduate students interested in learning more about applying for national fellowships should contact Dr. Brandon Gray Miller at bgmiller@smu.edu, Assistant Dean for University Honors Program and Fellowships.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Tech Hub Phase II Workshops underway

On October 23, 2023 President Biden announced the designation of regional tech hubs across the country. The SMU-led proposal for the Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub was one of only 31 (out of nearly 400 submissions) selected, and the only one in the state of Texas, to receive Tech Hub designation. This week, SMU hosted the first in a series of workshops with members of our Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub consortium to develop proposals in line with the [Economic Development Administration's](#) (EDA's) February 29, 2024, Phase II submission deadline.

SMU researchers build on sports-related concussion research to learn how likely tennis players are to experience head injuries

Xin-Lin Gao, a mechanical engineering professor at Lyle School of Engineering, and Yongqiang Li, a former SMU Ph.D. student, conducted a detailed, computational study to investigate the likelihood of tennis players experiencing head injuries. Specifically, if a tennis ball could cause a concussion or traumatic brain injury.

Gao's team found that mild traumatic brain injuries, or concussions, caused by a tennis ball hitting an individual's head are rare, but can occur. These findings were published in the [ASME Journal of Applied Mechanics](#).

These findings were also covered by several media outlets including [USNews.com](#), [UPI.com](#), [Healthday](#), and [Yahoo finance](#).

Article co-authored by Simmons School of Education and Human Development researcher honored with Editor's Choice in *The Journal of Educational Psychology*

Stephanie Al Otaiba, Patsy and Ray Caldwell Centennial Chair in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Simmons School of Education and Human Development, has co-authored an article published in *The Journal of Educational Psychology* that was selected as the Editor's Choice. According to the journal, the article titled: *The relations of kindergarten early literacy skill trajectories on common progress monitoring measures to subsequent word reading skills for students at risk for reading difficulties*, was selected for this honor because it is "reflecting science that is incredibly important, impactful, and deserves additional visibility for the whole field."

The study addressed the need for reliable and efficient assessment data to inform early and preventative literacy interventions for students at risk of developing reading disabilities.

Lyle School of Engineering professor elected to the National Academy of Inventors (NAI) as an NAI Fellow

J.-C. Chiao, Mary and Richard Templeton Centennial Chair and professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department in the Lyle School of Engineering, has been named a fellow of the [National Academy of Inventors](#) (NAI) for 2023. The full list of 2023 Fellows can be found [here](#).

Election as an NAI fellow is the highest professional distinction awarded to academic inventors. The [NAI Fellows Program](#) highlights academic inventors who have demonstrated a spirit of innovation in creating or facilitating outstanding inventions that have made a tangible impact on quality of life, economic development and the welfare of society.

Chiao, one of 162 inventors selected for the 2023 class of fellows, is widely recognized for his research in using electromagnetic waves in medical applications, including wireless closed-loop pain management systems and battery-less gastric motility management.

Congratulations, Professor Chiao, on this wonderful recognition.

Inclusive Excellence

Dedman School of Law Alumna Confirmed to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals

On Monday, December 4, 2023, Judge Irma Carrillo Ramirez '91 was confirmed to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and became the first Latina to serve on the Fifth Circuit. Judge Ramirez previously served as a federal magistrate judge for the Northern District of Texas and prior to that served as a federal prosecutor. She is a member of the SMU Dedman School of Law Executive Board and is an esteemed Community Fellow and mentor to our SMU students.

Read more about Judge Ramirez's confirmation in [The Texas Tribune](#) and [The Dallas Morning News](#).

Lyle School of Engineering researchers and students develop Infrastructure Dashboard Prototype to improve infrastructure equity in Dallas

Lyle School of Engineering researchers and computer science students built an [Infrastructure Dashboard Prototype](#) that has been used to identify 62 infrastructure deserts in Dallas. The dashboard was developed with support from a six-year \$638,000 [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF) grant and allows the research team to display analyses and data from a wide variety of sources to help scientists, policymakers and residents improve their neighborhoods.

To advance the conversation around infrastructure inequity and to inform opportunities for improvement, Barbara Minsker, Bobby B. Lyle Endowed Professor of Leadership and Global Entrepreneurship, Janille Smith-Colin, assistant professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Eric Larson, associate professor of Computer Science co-organized an event in the Lyle School of Engineering on December 1, with 35 Dallas community experts from government, non-profit and commercial organizations.

News and Noteworthy

Inaugural Southwest CMMC Implementation Conference recap

The inaugural Southwest CMMC (Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification) Implementation Conference, hosted by SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE) in Frances Anne Moody Hall, was a success, attracting over 100 participants. The event featured a broad range of speakers, including a keynote address by SMU's Chief Information Security Officer George Finney, alongside prominent figures like Jerry Leishman from the [CMMC Accreditation Body](#) (AB) Standards and Adoption Workgroup, Matt Travis, CEO of [Cyber AB](#), and CMMC expert attorney Eric Crusius from [Holland and Knight](#) in Washington D.C.

This conference not only provided invaluable insights into CMMC implementation but also solidified SMU GOCE's position as a Licensed Training Provider for the [Cybersecurity Assessor and Instructor Certification Organization](#) (CAICO), a [Department of Defense](#) division. Offering courses in CMMC Cyber Professional and Assessor level certificates, SMU GOCE continues to play a pivotal role in advancing cybersecurity education.

Office of Engaged Learning's E-Launch workshop series propels the latest generation of SMU entrepreneurs

SMU's Big iDeas program in the Office of Engaged Learning offers funding, training and mentoring to undergraduate entrepreneurs in any major. Their E-Launch workshop series, which premiered in fall 2023, guides student entrepreneurs in the creation of their businesses. E-Launch met each Monday evening during the fall 2023 semester and was led by Entrepreneurship Fellow Michael Kelly, founder of [Resolute Future](#), with sessions taught by Seth Orsborn, director of the [Deason Innovation Gym](#), John Rougeux, partner at [Category Thinkers](#), and Ellen Smoak, founder and CEO of [The Society of Women Entrepreneurs](#). Workshop sessions covered a wide range of topics including market research, prototyping, business planning and storytelling.

Each student entrepreneur has made considerable strides in crafting their business through these sessions and many will compete in the Big iDeas Business Plan Competition on February 9, 2024.

Guildhall 2023 Bagel Day recap

On December 11, 2023, SMU Guildhall celebrated its annual Bagel Day. This longstanding tradition provides an opportunity for the Guildhall community to come together over breakfast to play the games they have made together over the past year. This year's Bagel Day marked the successful completion of 12 games, including 10 mobile and two capstone games.

For this year's two Capstone games, *Kneedle Knight* and *Asurya's Embers*, well over 100 SMU students, faculty, staff, and industry partners contributed to every aspect of their creation and publication. Students from Meadows School of the Arts film and game scoring program, led by Dr. Robert Frank, provided original soundtracks, while students from the sound design program, led by Dr. Mark Kerins, contributed game sound design. Two current students and one alumni from SMU's acting program, led by Kristi Dana, performed key voiceover roles. Additionally, Dr. Aanmona Priyadarshini from Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Anthropology served as a cultural sensitivity consultant for *Asurya's Embers*, which is set in ancient Nepal. Combined with the talents of the roughly 50 Guildhall master's students who began developing these games in May

2023, these collaborations have allowed students to produce professional-quality games downloaded and played by millions of people around the world.

Next semester, Guildhall looks forward to working with students and faculty from Cox School of Business to market both capstone games.

Kneedle Knight and *Asurya's Embers* have been green-lit for publication by SMU Guildhall's GameLab and will be available to play for free on Steam and the Epic Games Store in the spring. Watch for announcements on SMU Guildhall's social channels and download the games for free on PC once they launch.

Learn more about *Asurya's Embers* [here](#) and learn more about *Kneedle Knight* [here](#). SMU Guildhall's entire back-catalog of published games can be played for free on Steam [here](#).

SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education launches new Data Literacy for Business program

SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE) is excited to announce the launch of its first Advisory Board program, [Data Literacy for Business](#), led by Dr. Bivin Sadler, a faculty member for SMU's online Master in Data Science program. This program is the result of extensive discussions with hundreds of companies to help identify critical skills gaps for the emerging workforce.

This program opened on November 21, and is designed to bridge knowledge gaps by providing comprehensive insights into data science for non-technical professionals. It offers on-demand flexibility, empowering participants to acquire vital skills essential for data-driven decision-making in today's business landscape.

Again, my very best wishes for joyful and happy holidays to all of you!

Sincerely,



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

World Changers Shaped Here