

Weekly Update | July 21, 2023

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

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I hope you are having a restful and productive summer. Whether you are teaching, conducting research, or preparing exhibits or performances, your contributions are vitally appreciated and valued in our quest for even greater academic quality. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to SMU's academic mission.

As mentioned in the [final weekly](#) of the spring 2023 semester, my plan is to send these updates twice for the month of July and once in the month of August prior to the start of the 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) Summer 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Summer 2023

SMU-in-Taos Executive Board Meeting and Taos Cultural Institute

Yesterday, President Turner; Brad Cheves, Vice President for Development and External Affairs; David Lee, Assistant Vice President for Curricular Operations and Strategy and the William P. Clements, Jr. Endowed Executive Director of SMU-in-Taos; and I had the opportunity to participate in the SMU-in-Taos' Executive Board meeting. My report began with a snapshot of our incoming class of 2027 and concluded with an update on SMU's plans to incorporate the Taos campus more fully into the life of the University, focusing on the work underway by the Taos Strategic Planning Task Force.

This week's Executive Board meeting took place on SMU's Taos Campus and was the precursor to the [Taos Cultural Institute](#), which is taking place July 20 – 23. Each summer, the Taos Cultural Institute provides SMU alumni and friends an opportunity to travel to New Mexico, engage with the beautiful surroundings on our Taos Campus and take a broad range of short courses offered by SMU instructors. This was my first opportunity to experience the Taos Campus. I now know firsthand what an incredible resource it is, and I am grateful for the work being done by the Taos Strategic Planning Task Force to open up new and innovative pathways for our campus community to experience it.

Performance-based funding model nearing completion for fiscal year 2024

Over the past three years, my office has worked in consultation with the deans to develop and refine our performance-based funding (PBF) model which is used to inform and promote the transparent distribution of discretionary funds annually from the Office of the Provost to SMU's academic units. As a reminder, PBF is intended to be a transparent way to replace all previous ad hoc requests and negotiations for discretionary funding commitments from the Office of the Provost by directly disseminating this discretionary funding to the deans.

For FY 2024, as was the case in FY 2023, the amount of discretionary funding to be distributed will be \$5M total with hopes to potentially increase or, at a minimum, sustain this level of funding in the years to come based on our ability to generate additional revenue.

A joint team from University Decision Support (UDS) and Business & Finance is finalizing and testing the PBF 2024 model this week, and we will share distribution amounts by college/school in the next summer newsletter.

Cox School of Business graduates rank among nation's highest paid

A new study conducted by [Venture Smarter](#), a consulting group, reports that SMU Cox business alumni are the third-highest paid in the U.S. after a period of four-years in the workforce. SMU Cox sits closely behind University of Virginia and Emory University who claimed first- and second-place, respectively. [The Dallas Morning News reported on the study](#) and discussed that the SMU Cox graduate's average salary of \$105,314 was approximately 75% more than the rest of U.S. business graduates.

Congratulations to Cox School for their continued academic excellence and their outcomes-based approach to preparing students for post-graduation success.

Help SMU Students Dress for Success with Donations to Career Closet

The SMU Career Closet is continuing to accept donations of new and gently used professional blazers, button down shirts, dress pants/slacks, skirts, blouses, ties and dress shoes through August 1. These donations will be available for student use as they interview, intern, and enter the workplace.

If you wish to donate, you can drop off items through August 1, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center, or donations can be mailed to:

Amanda Bobo
Career Closet c/o Hegi Career Development Center
3140 Dyer St #256
Dallas, TX 75206

For additional questions or information please contact Amanda Bobo, Associate Director for Employer Relations in the Hegi Family Career Development Center at abobo@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Biology professor receives \$1.8M from the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) R35 Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA)

Zhihao Wu, Professor in the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Biology, has received an R35 Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) from the NIH. The award will

provide five years of funding. Additionally, Dr. Wu was the first SMU researcher to be awarded Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) funding.

Professor for SMU's Chemistry department to receive \$3.5M in funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for research into tuberculosis treatments

John Buynak, Professor in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Chemistry, is set to receive a large grant from the NIH. Professor Buynak will be leading the research project to design and synthesize new antibiotics to fight drug resistant strains of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and *Mycobacterium abscessus*. SMU is the lead and will retain approximately half the award funding for on-campus research with the remaining half to be distributed among the project's partner institutions (University of Central Florida, U.S. Naval Academy, and University of Kentucky) which will assist SMU in completing this research project.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences paleontology professor helps shed light on 94-million-year-old mosasaur fossil found in Utah

After a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) team discovered fossil fragments in the badlands of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in Utah, the fragments were sent to SMU professor and paleontologist expert Michael J. Polcyn in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences. He confirmed that this was the [oldest mosasaur fossil found in the Western Interior Seaway](#), a geographical area that encompasses Texas and parts of the Southwest and Midwest, stretching into both Canada and Mexico. Polcyn has worked with members of the BLM and other paleontologists to [publish research](#) on these fossils and how they help us understand the evolutionary pathway of this marine reptile that thrived millions of years ago.

Key leadership searches underway

Peter O'Donnell Jr. Data Science Institute (DSI) Director

Currently, the search committee is scheduling interviews for finalists with plans to conduct on-campus interviews in August. We hope to fill the position by the 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 DSI Director *ad interim* and the Center for Research Computing Director *ad interim* until the new Director arrives. Be on the lookout for additional information in subsequent newsletters.

News and Noteworthy

G. William Jones Film & Video Collection acquires The Ken Heckmann Film Collection, featuring 30 years of Dallas media and local filmmaking

The G. William Jones Film & Video Collection at SMU Libraries has acquired the [Ken Heckmann Film Collection](#) in support of their mission to preserve local films and the story of the oft-forgotten Dallas film industry. Ken Heckmann was an esteemed Dallas commercial filmmaker who developed several prominent advertising campaigns, including the legendary "Pepsi Challenge" series. Some highlights of the donated collection include Heckmann's commercial work with the Southland Corporation, Xerox, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce and the City of Irving. The collection also includes Heckmann's locally shot films, including *A Father A Son And A Three-Mile Run; Like A Roaring Lion; The Legacy Of Mary C. Crowley; Hank's Journey; And Power, Passion & Glory: The Real Story Of Texas Football Madness*.

SMU's Vice President for Development and External Affairs honored with University Park's Citizen of the Year award

Brad Cheves, VP for Development and External Affairs, accepted the honor of University Park's 2023 Citizen of the Year from Mayor Thomas H. Stewart on July 4th, at the conclusion of the city's annual Independence Day parade.

The Citizen of the Year award was created by the University Park City Council in 2005 to boost public awareness and appreciation for residents who work to improve the city's quality of life. Cheves has been a University Park resident with his family for nearly two decades and was a member of University Park's Centennial Master Plan Steering Committee from its creation in 2019 until the master plan was adopted last year.

He continues as a member of the Centennial Celebration Committee's Legacy Advisory Group, working to prepare for the celebration of University Park's centennial in April 2024.

Meadows School of the Arts student wrote and directed feature length film for SMU's Summer Feature Production program and hopes for a festival run in 2024

Piper Peña Hadley (B.F.A. '23) has accomplished what few undergraduates have – writing, filming, directing and producing her very own feature-length film. With the support of the Summer Feature Production program housed in Meadows School of the Arts, Hadley's project, *Crossroads*, has become a reality. *Crossroads* is the sixth student-produced film that has been supported by the program since its conception in 2011. Hadley and her production team will continue to fine-tune the edited version of the film and gather resources for a festival run in 2024.

SMU alumnae, business and community leaders support SMU CAPE's online Women in Leadership certificate

Starting August 1, participants in the third cohort of SMU Continuing and Professional Education's (CAPE) online [Women in Leadership: Influence and Impact](#) certificate program will interact with a unique, engaging curriculum to build skills necessary for effective, impactful leadership.

Throughout the six-week course, participants will cultivate their own emotional agility, communication style, and successful team-building strategies. The *Women in Leadership* program curriculum represents a collaboration driven by CAPE, part of the Office of Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE), in partnership with [Bisk](#), an online learning service provider that partners with universities and corporations, five subject matter experts who each have expertise in a core function of leadership, and a program advisory committee.

The program advisory committee, named [Women in Leadership Advisory](#), is a dynamic group of women executives, including many SMU alumnae, who are business, nonprofit and educational leaders from industry sectors relevant to SMU's educational mission. They provide curricular guidance, case studies, mentorship, as well as individual and collective instruction delivered in on-demand and live online sessions.

Dedman College of Humanities & Sciences Professor elected Program Chair for Statistics in Sports section of the American Statistical Association (ASA)

Monnie McGee, Professor of Statistics and Data Science at SMU since 2002, has been elected to serve as the Statistics in Sports Program Chair of the American Statistical Association (ASA) for the 2024 calendar year. The Statistics in Sports section was established in 1992 and has been fostering statistical education in sports and making statistics accessible to individuals interested in sports ever since.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

World Changers Shaped Here