

Weekly Update | November 10, 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 this [email address](#). 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

Faculty Internationalization Survey results

As part of SMU's participation in the [ACE Internationalization Laboratory](#) and the internationalization self-study process that accompanies it, SMU conducted a faculty survey to learn about our faculty's international experiences and activities. The survey was sent to all full-time SMU faculty in the month of October with a 46 percent total response rate. The summary report of results is available to the SMU community [here](#) (SMU log-in credentials required). The results from the survey will be incorporated into the self-study report, which is expected to release in spring 2024.

Clery reporting and SMU official off-campus site list

SMU is required by law to report to the Federal Government as part of our Clery reporting all off-campus sites (including abroad sites) where educational or instructional activity occurs on a regular basis. In addition, we are required to report to the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges](#) (SACSCOC) all off-campus sites (including abroad sites) where 25 percent or more of an academic program (major or degree) is delivered, any increase in the amount of instruction delivered, as well as the closure of any off-campus sites. To manage compliance SMU requires that all off-campus instructional sites be proposed and approved through the [Educational Programs Committee](#) (EPC) and the Board of Trustees before any instruction is delivered. Any

closure of an off-campus instructional site must be approved by the EPC, the Board of Trustees, and SACSCOC before instruction is stopped. There are significant financial and legal penalties for failing to comply with these requirements. Please note, internship and externship sites are excluded from Clery reporting.

To ensure accurate approval and reporting of off-campus sites, the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness has created a list of [all approved SMU off-campus sites](#). I ask that all faculty members and department chairs review this list for accuracy and report any errors to Dayna Oscherwitz, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, at oscherwi@smu.edu. Additionally, starting spring 2024, the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness will send all department chairs a brief survey asking for information about any sites not included on the official list or the impending closure of any site on this list at the beginning of each term. Please help keep SMU in good standing by regularly reviewing the official list, reporting any changes through EPC and responding to the surveys about off-campus sites if you receive them.

First-Gen Fest 2023 recap

On Thursday, November 8, SMU's First-Generation Initiative and partner departments hosted the fourth annual First-Gen Fest in recognition of the national First-Generation College Celebration. The event has been designed to build community among SMU's first-generation students, faculty, and staff and to provide information on important support resources.

Thank you to all the faculty, staff, and students who organized and attended this event. Initiatives such as these are vital in promoting student success.

2023 Fall Research Symposium recap

On November 1, 2023, the Office of Engaged Learning (OEL) held the annual [Fall Research Symposium](#). Twenty-four undergraduate and graduate students from across campus presented on issues affecting local and global communities. These students represented the Engaged Learning Fellows, Summer Research Fellows, Cooper McElvaney Peace and Justice Fellows, Hamilton Scholars, Maguire Public Service Fellows, Mayer Fellows, McNair Scholars, Richter Fellows and Tower Scholars programs.

Thank you to the staff in OEL who organized and hosted this event. It is wonderful for our students to have the opportunity to present their research to other campus and community members.

Reminder: Pass/fail deadline moved to deadline to withdraw date

The pass/fail grading declaration deadline has been moved to align with the deadline to withdraw from the class and/or the University. This calendar change was implemented permanently to provide students with academic continuity options other than simply withdrawing from a course.

The pass/fail grading declaration deadline for fall 2023 classes is now Tuesday, November 21, 2023.

FAQs about pass/fail grading are posted on the [Office of the Registrar's website](#).

Academic Excellence

Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies highlighted in NBC program segment

The Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and the Frances Anne Moody Hall were highlighted last week in an NBC program segment designed to inform the Dallas community and beyond of the many exceptional graduate programs that SMU has to offer and to highlight the outstanding graduate educational experience led by our faculty across campus. The [NBC5 segment about the Moody School](#) was broadcast on Wednesday, November 1. It was also featured at the top of the [NBC5 homepage](#) on Thursday and was simultaneously the lead story on the [Texas Today page](#).

Perkins School of Theology dean search underway

As mentioned in [last week's newsletter](#), I launched and charged the search committee for the next dean of the Perkins School of Theology on Thursday, November 2. Now that the committee has convened, they will begin engaging with our executive search partner, [William Funk & Associates](#), to start drafting the position description that will inform our search.

Additional information regarding the search will be announced in upcoming newsletters.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute distributes research seed fund grants

The O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (ODSRCI) is currently funding four research projects proposed by SMU faculty that relate to the ODSRCI's mission. These projects will receive up to 12 months of seed funding from the ODSRCI, after which time the research team will deliver a report summarizing how the funds were spent, what products were generated, and what external funding will be sought or has been obtained to continue the project.

Congratulations to the following ODSRCI seed fund grant awardees:

- *Novel Methods for Scalable and Reliable Learning from Spatiotemporally Complex Data* – Marcin Jurek, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences; and Mohamad Kazem Shirani Faradonbeh, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- *Training and evaluation of large language models for psychological assessment* – Joshua Oltmanns, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences; and Mehak Gupta, Lyle School of Engineering
- *Deep Generative Modelling for Accelerating Scientific Computing* – Difeng Cai, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- *Improving the Design of Generative AI Applications with Personalized Recommendations* – Jane Tan, Cox School of Business

SMU's Artist-in-residence sells out Carnegie Hall

Sergei Babayan, the Joel Estes Tate Endowed Chair in Piano and Artist in Residence in Meadows School of the Arts' Division of Music, played a sold-out show in Carnegie Hall on November 2, 2023. Babayan, who last played Carnegie Hall in 2018 with his protégé, Daniil Trifonov, returned with a recital of his most celebrated repertoire. The program consisted of multiple pieces composed by Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Franz Schubert and included *Fantasia* by Vladimir Ryabov and concluded with R. Schumann's *Kreisleriana*.

Meadows School of the Arts faculty member's AI-generated portraits on exhibition in New York

Professor Ira Greenberg of Meadows School of the Arts' Division of Creative Computation has a series of works currently on exhibit at [Artmatr](#), an art gallery in Brooklyn, New York. Professor Greenberg's collection *Painted Heads*, part of the larger [Reflections](#) exhibition, looks like a series of oil-on-canvas portraits but is actually much more. The works are AI-generated by the artist, then an AI-driven robotic painter programmed to fabricate paintings as if they were rendered by a physical painter translates the work onto a physical canvas. These pieces are being sold as non-fungible tokens (NFTs), which includes a physical version at auction through [Tender Art](#) and are even purchasable with Ethereum, a cryptocurrency.

Inclusive Excellence

Home is a Journey March and Symposium recap

The fifth annual *Home is a Journey* March and the inaugural *Home is a Journey* Symposium were held on Friday, November 3, 2023. A collaborative effort between Meadows School of the Arts, Simmons School of Education and Human Development, and the Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII), the symposium brought together the strengths of various disciplines to address the complex issue of homelessness.

The symposium was a success, uniting 190 participants and underscoring the pivotal role of collaboration, creativity, and education in the fight against homelessness and the pursuit of social justice. This event demonstrated the profound impact of the arts, higher education, and the commitment of non-profit leaders in addressing societal challenges. Special thanks to Professors Willie Baronet and Laura Robinson-Doyle for bringing such an impactful event to SMU.

SMU's Office of International Student and Scholar Services celebrates upcoming International Education Week

The Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) celebrates the contributions of SMU's international students and research scholars during the upcoming International Education Week. There are over 1,300 international students at SMU who represent 86 countries. Each year, the [U.S. Department of State](#) and the [U.S. Department of Education](#) designate the second week in November to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. SMU joins these celebrations during the week of November 13 – 17 with different events to recognize the broad range of cultures represented on campus.

For more information on International Education Week, please visit the [ISSS website](#).

News and Noteworthy

Lyle School of Engineering professor featured in media outlet for artificial intelligence (AI) patented technology

Professor Jia Zhang's [MATA](#), a patented, artificial intelligence (AI) research assistant for scientific data, was [featured in Datanami](#), a prominent media outlet for data science, AI and advanced analytics. Datanami discussed the workings and applications of MATA that are currently being used to collaborate with the Earth science community to better understand the Earth and climate change.

Meadows' students and faculty shine in the Texoma National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Region Conference

Last week, more than 800 students and [NATS](#) faculty judges and more than 90 collaborative pianists and guest adjudicators from universities throughout Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico met for four days of opera, concerts, recitals and student competitions.

SMU's 15 singers – four from the studio of Leon Turner, Visiting Professor of Practice, and 11 from the studio of Barbara Hill Moore, Senior Associate Dean and Meadows Foundation Distinguished Professor of Voice – all received semi-finalist designations during the conference. Three students were finalists, and one, Jasmine Williams, won the Grady Harlan Award for the most outstanding career potential and the most outstanding singer of the conference.

Lyle School of Engineering faculty member presents research at the United Nations' Minamata Convention On Mercury

Dr. Kathleen Smits, Chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Solomon Professor for Global Development at Lyle School of Engineering, was invited to present at the meeting of the delegates (COP-5) of the United Nation's Minamata Convention on Mercury on November 3, in Geneva, Switzerland. [Her research](#) and presentation at the convention offered insight into why past approaches to reducing mercury contamination may have failed and how policymakers and environmental practitioners can learn from it to take action. The need for new approaches toward cleanup and usage of mercury demonstrates how impactful research can inform policy. Read more about Professor Smits' [presentation and research here](#).

Sincerely,



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

World Changers Shaped Here