

Weekly Update | March 15, 2024

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 [submit your ideas through this form](#). 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 four categories: 1) Spring 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2024

University Testing Center to have new room numbers due to renovation

The [University Testing Center's \(UTC\)](#) room numbers have changed as part of the Scholars Den renovation in Clements Hall. Visitors will still access the UTC most directly at the west end of the Clements Hall basement in suite G15 by using the side entrance facing Dallas Hall. Students and professors should check in at the testing office (now renumbered room G28) for test administration and completed test pickup. Students will continue to be assigned to testing labs identified as "Peruna," "Hilltop," and "Varsity."

Room number identification will be updated on the [UTC website](#), the [UTC portal](#) for test registration and in informational handouts for both students and professors.

Please contact the UTC at universitytestingcenter@smu.edu with any additional questions.

Provost monthly lunch at the Commons Table next week

On Monday, March 18, from 12–1 p.m., I will be having lunch in the Faculty-Staff Dining Room located in Umphrey Lee. The "Commons Table," created by the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Club,

is designed for community members who come to meals by themselves or in small groups and wish to socialize with others to promote faculty and staff community. I look forward to seeing you there and hope you will join me for a relaxed lunch and conversation.

Reminder: Students observing Ramadan

March 10 marked the beginning of the month of Ramadan, an important holiday in Islam. The time of observation is expected to end on April 9, culminating with the Eid-al-Fitr holiday; depending on the sighting of the moon, the holiday may move to one day before or after. During the blessed month of Ramadan, observant Muslims fast from dawn to dusk, abstaining from food and beverages, even water. Observant Muslims eat a substantial meal (suhoor) before dawn and break the fast (iftar) with a feast at sunset. During this period, late afternoon classes and tests may be challenging for students who are fasting.

The final 10 days, March 31-April 9, of Ramadan are the most auspicious days. Many observant Muslims pray and recite the Quran late into the evening with their religious community following the iftar meal. Early morning classes and tests may be challenging for students who participate in these rituals.

We encourage faculty to support students who need to miss class for religious observance in the coming weeks by making arrangements for students to access course materials and make up missed work in a timely manner.

Academic Excellence

Senior business leader joins Cox School of Business Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership

Joshua Taylor has joined Cox School of Business as the managing director of the [William S. Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership](#). Taylor will be responsible for leading the institute's goals, programs and operations in alignment with the overall mission and vision of SMU Cox, Co-Founding Directors Megha Tolia and Nirav Tolia and benefactor Dr. William S. Spears.

Taylor brings 20 years of experience in senior leadership roles at Fortune 500 and start-up organizations. He has led large, cross-functional teams through multiple successful strategy and transformation programs in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Most recently, he was the Chief Strategy Officer at a rapid growth, venture-backed consumer product start-up based in California. In fall 2021, Taylor joined Cox as a mentor in the MBA startup "Unbridled Ventures" program and, since that time, has served as an adjunct instructor for Cox's Executive MBA program.

Center for Digital and Human-Augmented Manufacturing under construction at Lyle School of Engineering

Construction is underway for a new, 5,000-square-foot center in the Lyle School of Engineering's J. Lindsay Embrey Engineering Building and is scheduled to open in April 2024. The [Center for Digital and Human-Augmented Manufacturing](#) will advance how digital modeling, simulations, augmented reality, robotics, automation, and artificial intelligence shape the future of engineering and industry. The center will combine innovative research and industry partnerships to promote the transition of

manufacturing away from traditional approaches that rely on bulky and expensive equipment to a modern, digital approach that leverages high-performance computing and augmented reality.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences dean search

The search committee for the next Elisabeth Martin Armstrong Dean of Dedman College held their first meeting on March 7. In that meeting, I charged the group and answered their preliminary questions. My thanks to all who have agreed to serve in support of this important search.

Committee Chair Robin Poston, dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and associate provost for graduate education, and Chuck O'Boyle, our executive search consultant, met with Dedman College stakeholders over three days to inform the position description that will guide our search.

Be on the lookout for additional information in subsequent newsletters.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Cox School of Business faculty member researches bond market liquidity during the COVID-19 pandemic

Alex Zhou, a professor in the Department of Finance at Cox School of Business, and his co-authors, Maureen O'Hara of Cornell University and Andreas C. Rapp from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, sought to investigate the changes in bond market liquidity during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, fixed-income markets were essentially dysfunctional illustrating the "value of value investors during times of stress." Their study used data from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, tracking every bond purchase or sale by U.S. insurance companies and their counterparties (or dealers) during the years 2017 to 2020. Their study sample comprised nearly one million bond trades.

Their paper "The Value of Value Investors" is under review and revision for publication in *Review of Financial Studies*. A second paper "Bond Market Illiquidity: Is Portfolio Trading the Solution?" is under revision for publication in the *Journal of Finance*.

News and Noteworthy

Chronicle of Higher Education Virtual Forum: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Earth Hazards

On Wednesday, March 20, at 1 p.m. Central Standard Time, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* will host a virtual forum on "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Earth Hazards" sponsored by the [Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies](#). The virtual forum will feature an interview with Stephen Arrowsmith, professor and Hamilton Chair in Earth Sciences in the Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences.

In addition to featuring the interview with Professor Arrowsmith, the forum will include an expert panel examining how over the last decade universities have restructured interdisciplinary programs to better explore resilience in the face of natural disasters.

[Register for the virtual forum here.](#)

Lyle School of Engineering faculty member pens *Times Higher Education* article empowering women in STEM

In recognition of International Women's Day, Professor Janille Smith-Colin, J. Lindsay Embrey Trustee Assistant Professor in Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, wrote an [article for the *Times Higher Education*](#) outlining ways to empower future female engineering leaders. Professor Smith-Colin details four ways to improve the experience and retention rate of female students in STEM majors, helping students find their voice and the determination to use it.

As we look forward to welcoming back our students next week from spring break, I want to pause now and thank you for your efforts toward making spring 2024 so successful. Working together, let's continue those efforts toward a strong finish to the semester.

Sincerely,



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

