18 May 2017

Dear Colleagues:

As the conclusion of the spring semester approaches, I write to continue my tradition of sending periodic newsletters to the SMU community to provide information on planning, appointments, projects, and policies. In this edition, updates fall into five major sections (click on the link to move directly to the section):

- Faculty Awards, Promotion, Tenure
- A New Faculty Development Resource
- Recent Administrative Appointments
- Updates on Task Force Progress
- Concluding Remarks

An archive of previous newsletters and communications is available here.

**Faculty Awards, Promotion, Tenure**

*Faculty Awards*

With the 2017 Commencement ceremony approaching, the campus is in a celebratory spirit. Along those lines, we have much to publicize regarding faculty awards and fellowships.

In addition to Professor Fred Chang’s election to the National Academy of Engineering last year, more recently we have lauded the election of Caroline Brettell to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the nation’s oldest learned society. Election to membership is one of the highest honors that can be bestowed on a faculty member. Caroline joins 228 new fellows and foreign honorary members — representing the sciences, the humanities and the arts, business, public affairs and the nonprofit sector — and will be inducted in a
ceremony this fall at the academy’s headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Two of our faculty colleagues were among the 173 North American scholars to receive prestigious Guggenheim Fellowships: Mark Chancey and Adam Herring. Only four other scholars in the state of Texas were named Guggenheim Fellows in 2017. Chancey and Herring were both honored as a result of their prior research achievement and exceptional promise. These fellowships will provide up to 12 months of financial support for their research.

The winner of this year’s Faculty Career Achievement Award was Mary Vernon of the Meadows School of the Arts. For 50 years, Professor Vernon has dedicated herself – and her artistic talent – to the SMU and Dallas communities. In addition to receiving this honor, the Mary Vernon SMU Faculty Career Achievement Scholarship has been created and will be awarded to a student majoring in art who will enter SMU this fall.

Four faculty members won the Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Award:

1. W. Keith Robinson – Associate Professor of Law, Dedman School of Law
2. Stephen Sekula – Associate Professor of Physics, Dedman College
3. Kumar Venkataraman – James M. Collins Chair of Finance, Cox School of Business
4. Kathleen Wellman – Professor of History, Dedman College

Four other faculty members won the Ford Research Fellowships:

1. Stephanie Al Otaiba – Patsy and Ray Caldwell Centennial Chair in Teaching & Learning, Simmons School of Education and Human Development
2. Jeffery Kahn – Professor of Law and Ford Senior Research Fellow, Dedman School of Law
3. Zhong Lu – Shuler-Foscue Chair and Director of Graduate Studies/Geophysics in the Department of Earth Sciences, Dedman College
4. Bruce Marshall – Lehman Professor of Christian Doctrine, Perkins School of Theology

Faculty Promotion and Tenure

Twenty-four faculty members received either promotion and tenure or promotion in rank this year. As the academic departments announce successful promotion and tenure cases, please join me in congratulating our colleagues for their accomplishments.

New Faculty Development Resource: National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity

Effective 1 June 2017, SMU will be a member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD). Our institutional membership symbolizes the university’s ongoing commitment to faculty development – particularly for under-represented minorities.
The NCFDD is an independent professional development, training, and mentoring organization that offers support to its members. Our new membership in NCFDD aligns with SMU’s Goal One, Objective One of SMU’s Strategic Plan to “strengthen the University’s ability to recruit, appoint, promote, and retain a distinguished, gifted, and diverse faculty.” I wish to thank the Deans for their support of this membership, and Jessica Dixon Weaver, Associate Professor in the Dedman School of Law, for bringing this membership opportunity to our attention.

As an institutional member of the NCFDD, all interested SMU faculty or graduate students may take advantage of the services offered by visiting www.FacultyDiversity.org to register for a free membership to access the center’s online resources which include workshops, webinars, and seminars on topics related to faculty life, such as increasing writing productivity, managing time, cultivating mentors, securing external funding, and maintaining work-life balance.

Administrative Appointments

During this spring term, we had the exciting opportunity to identify new deans for two of SMU’s schools – the Cox School of Business and the Simmons School of Education and Human Development. As I reported to the Board during our May meeting, these searches were truly rich in terms of nationally-visible candidates.

New Dean of the Cox School of Business

Effective 1 August 2017, Matthew B. Myers will begin his service as dean of the Cox School. Dean Al Niemi will return to full-time teaching on July 31st. Matt’s impressive background of scholarly excellence and ability to collaborate with regional, national, and global business communities will propel the Cox School of Business toward even greater visibility and impact. I also wish to extend hearty thanks and congratulations to the search committee. For her outstanding service as chair of the committee, I wish to thank Dean Jennifer Collins of the Dedman School of Law.

New Dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development

Effective 1 August 2017, Stephanie L. Knight will become dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development. The SMU community is deeply grateful to Dean ad interim Paige Ware for her service to the Simmons School; Paige will return to her faculty position on July 31st. Stephanie’s strong career of scholarly excellence and outreach to the education community will enable her to deliver visionary leadership to advance the Simmons School toward even greater visibility and impact. Sincere thanks and congratulations to the search committee. For his outstanding service as chair of the committee, I also wish to thank to Dean Marc Christensen of the Lyle School of Engineering.

Central University Libraries Dean ad interim
I have named Elizabeth Killingsworth, Director of Fondren Library and Head of Research Services, as the Dean and Director of Central University Libraries ad interim effective as of July 1. Current Dean and Director of Central University Libraries Gillian McCombs will retire from her nearly 20-year tenure at SMU effective 30 June 2017. The breadth and depth of Elizabeth’s experience equips her to be the ideal leader for Central University Libraries during the next academic year. During autumn of 2017, we begin a national search for a permanent Dean, with the aim of making an appointment during spring or summer of 2018.

Task Forces

Faculty involvement is crucial in defining academic excellence at SMU. During the 2016-2017 academic year, five faculty-led task forces have been hard at work to review and extend various components of SMU’s academic strategy.

The advice of these task forces, most of which have either recently completed or will complete their reports during the next few months, will be fundamental in our planning to refine SMU’s vision for academic excellence. By the autumn of 2017, I will share a framework with the SMU community that will serve as the basis for a campus-wide dialogue (e.g., Town Hall meetings) regarding how to refine and implement a bold academic vision, one that reflects the deliberations of these tasks forces and consultations with Deans, the Faculty Senate, and other members of the SMU community. The dialogue will address interdisciplinary themes and aspirations for SMU. Based on the dialogue during autumn 2017, I anticipate that implementation and resource allocations will gather speed before the end of the calendar year 2017.

Task Force on Scholarly Research and Creative Impact

In October of 2016, I invited 17 SMU faculty members to serve on the Task Force on Scholarly Research and Creative Impact.

Chaired by Professor Fred Chang of the Lyle School of Engineering and co-chaired by Professor Pia Vogel of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, the Task Force was asked to provide vital faculty-led guidance and recommendations for SMU to strengthen its scholarly research and creative activities and to advance the University’s position as the leading global research university in North Texas.

The task force also invited and received considerable input from, and conducted extensive interviews with, at-large faculty members. The report was completed in March. To ensure that all SMU faculty have a full opportunity to participate in the upcoming discussions about the report, I will release it when the faculty return for the autumn semester (i.e., in the September timeframe). The report will be a key element in the campus-wide dialogue about the future of academic excellence at SMU to which I referred above.

Task Force on Creative and Interactive Technology
During November, I invited eight SMU faculty members and three Deans to serve on the Task Force on Creative and Interactive Technology. Chaired by Dean Tom DiPiero of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, this group provided faculty-led input in shaping our aspirations for more deeply integrating digital humanities, creative computation, and computer gaming.

The Task Force delivered their report to me in April. I also plan to release it in the September timeframe as part of the campus-wide dialogue about academic excellence at SMU.

Task Force on Data Science and Data Analytics

In October, six SMU faculty members began meeting – under the leadership of Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies James Quick – to conceive of a vision for the future of data science and data analytics at SMU.

The group’s preliminary work focused on developing a robust inventory of SMU’s investments as well as our research and educational programs in this area. Report writing is currently underway. I anticipate receiving a briefing from the Task Force in June. When completed, this report too will be included in our upcoming campus-wide dialogue about academic excellence. The report will coincide with the rollout and benchmarking of SMU’s ManeFrame II supercomputer – which is expected to appear in the list of the top-500 fastest supercomputers in the world.

General Education Review Task Force

In response to a Faculty Senate resolution passed in January 2016, the General Education Review Task Force was formed to: (1) complete a study of the University Curriculum, both UC-2012 and UC-2016 and (2) formulate recommendations for improvements.

The Task Force is ably co-chaired by Associate Provost Peter Moore and Professor Mickey Quiñones of the Cox School of Business. We expect that approval by SMU deliberative bodies, such as the Faculty Senate, SMU faculty, and Board of Trustees, will be completed no later than 2018, in time for the new curriculum to be launched by the autumn of 2020. For more information, you may revisit the e-mail message Peter recently sent to all faculty on 11 May 2017.

Task Force on Continuing Education

In response to President Turner’s charge, and in line with Goal 2 of SMU’s strategic plan to engage the community for lifelong learning through professional training and continuing education, the Task Force on Continuing Education analyzed ways for SMU to broaden and strengthen its continuing education.

The Task Force was chaired by Vice President for Executive Affairs Harold Stanley and comprised of nine faculty and staff members. Based on the Task
Force report, and in consultation with the Council of Deans, the President and I subsequently articulated the parameters for the future of continuing education at SMU with a focus on building upon – and strengthening – SMU’s efforts in this area.

A critical next step is to identify an individual to become the inaugural Associate Provost for Continuing Education. With that in mind, we are currently conducting a national search, chaired by Associate Provost Julie Forrester, to identify a new leader for this position. The new Associate Provost for Continuing Education will provide university-wide leadership to coordinate, support, and grow continuing education. The Associate Provost will work with a newly formed Continuing Education Program Council (CEPC), comprised of the Deans and chaired by me. The new Associate Provost will ensure that continuing education advances SMU’s academic mission and is in close alignment with SMU’s values.

Task Force on the Future of Libraries at SMU

As a first step to identifying the next Dean and Director, I will identify and charge a faculty and staff task force regarding the structure of SMU’s library system. The task force’s findings will inform the job specification of the next Dean and Director of Central University Libraries at SMU.

In Conclusion

Each spring, commencement is a special opportunity to celebrate and recognize academic life at SMU. This year, 1,813 students will participate in SMU’s 102nd all-University Commencement Ceremony, to be held on May 20th in Moody Coliseum. I thank each of you for the unique roles and contributions you have made to shape the lives and minds of our students and to prepare them to be world changers.

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Institutes of Health and renowned leader of the Human Genome Project, will be the featured speaker. In addition, he will be joined by three other distinguished individuals in receiving honorary SMU degrees: Francis Halzen, Ph.D., a pioneer in the field of astrophysics; E.P. Sanders, Th.D., internationally-respected New Testament scholar; and Nancy Nasher, attorney, businesswoman, and philanthropist.

The work and contributions of these four prestigious leaders in science, theology and the arts will be the focus of public presentations and discussions at SMU in the days leading to their receipt of honorary degrees at the University’s Commencement ceremony. All the events are free and open to the public. Click here for more information about these events.

I encourage you to participate in these important and meaningful celebrations, which are at the heart of SMU’s academic life. I look forward to seeing you at Commencement on the 20th.

In conclusion, I invite you to take a moment to watch the following video,
entitled “SMU Year in Review 2016-2017.” You can access the video by selecting the following link. The 2016-2017 academic year has truly been a momentous year at SMU, and this video is a powerful testimony to the significant contributions made by so many from within the SMU community.

Your feedback is important. Should you have any questions or suggestions for my office, please contact us by email at provost@smu.edu. All best wishes for a productive summer and eager anticipation for the fall.

Sincerely,

Steven C. Currall, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
David B. Miller Endowed Professor
Professor of Management and Organization
Professor of Psychology
Professor of Engineering Management, Information, and Systems