

Weekly Update | April 19, 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 five categories: 1) Spring 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 4) Inclusive Excellence, and 5) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2024

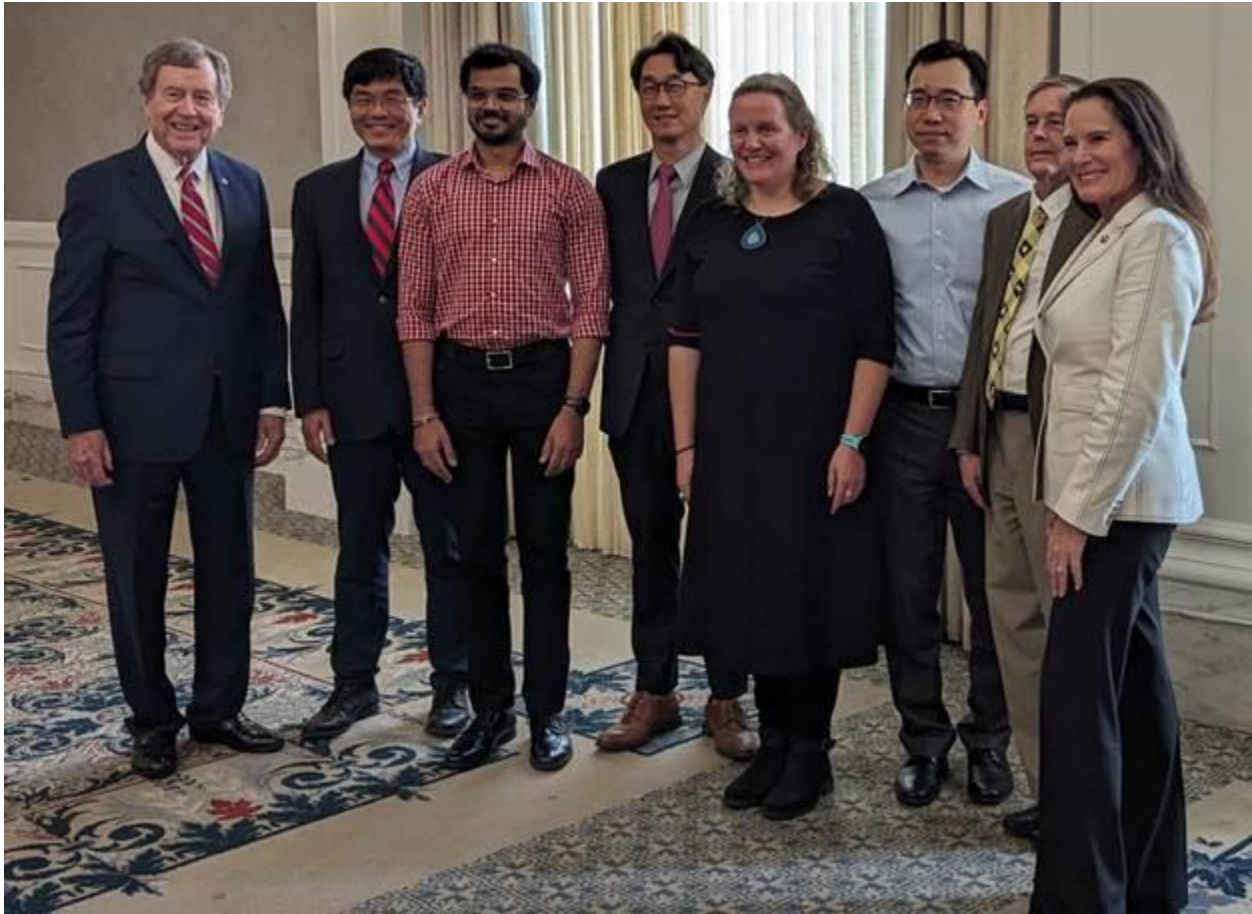
Faculty Career Achievement Award Reception

On Monday, April 15, my office held the [SMU Faculty Career Achievement Award Ceremony](#) to honor some of the most noteworthy accomplishments of SMU's faculty, both this year and over the course of their careers. This year, President Turner and I honored 30+ faculty members who received significant scholarly recognition during the 2023 – 2024 academic year, six faculty members who received prestigious national or international recognition during the 2023 – 2024 academic year, and SMU's 2024 Faculty Career Achievement Award Honoree, Dr. Randall Griffin, University Distinguished Professor of Art History in the Meadows School of the Arts. The Faculty Career Achievement Award is presented annually to a SMU faculty member who has demonstrated consistently outstanding work in the instruction of students, publication of impactful scholarly work, and service to the University.

During his 31- year career at SMU, Dr. Randall Griffin has established himself as one of the foremost experts in the field of American art with four books in print and a fifth forthcoming from University Press. Dr. Griffin is dedicated to student success, as evidenced by the consistently high ratings he receives on course evaluations as well as the numerous teaching awards he has received, including the "M" Award, the highest recognition bestowed upon SMU students, faculty, staff, and administrators. To highlight one pillar of his incredible service contributions, he has served on more than 80 committees in support of both Meadows School and SMU-wide initiatives.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Griffin on his incredible career and the nearly 40 other faculty who received external, honorific recognition this year!

Below is a picture of five of the faculty recognized for receiving prestigious national or international recognition this year along with Dr. Randall Griffin, SMU's 2024 Faculty Achievement Award honoree. From left: R. Gerald Turner, President; J.C.Chiao, Mary and Richard Templeton Centennial Chair and Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the Lyle School of Engineering; Digvijay Boob, Assistant Professor of Operations Research and Engineering Management in the Lyle School of Engineering; MinJun Kim, Robert C. Womack Chair and Professor of Mechanical Engineering in the Lyle School of Engineering; Carla Reyes, Associate Professor of Law in the Dedman School of Law; Zhen Zhang, Paul Corley Distinguished Chair in Organizational Behavior and Administration and Professor of Management and Organizations in the Cox School of Business; Randall Griffin, University Distinguished Professor in the Meadows School of the Arts' Department of Art History. Not pictured: Amber Bemak, Associate Professor of Film and Media in the Meadows School of the Arts.



2024 Honors Convocation

Honors Convocation occurred today, April 19, at 2:00 p.m., and marked the 27th celebration of SMU's outstanding students whose intelligence, dedication, and hard work contribute greatly to the life of the University. Thank you to Dr. Randall Griffin, professor at Meadows School of the Arts Division of Art History and SMU's 2024 Faculty Career Achievement Award recipient, for serving as this year's featured speaker. Congratulations to the 538 students who were recognized for their academic excellence during this year's event. See a full list of [award recipients here](#).

Annual Faculty Senate Dinner

On Thursday, April 18, my office hosted the Annual Faculty Senate Dinner at the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden. This long-standing tradition honors Faculty Senate members for their work done on behalf of the University and our faculty during the current academic year. My thanks to all who attended and for your service to SMU's academic enterprise as Senators this year.

Call for applications: Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII) research clusters for 2024–2025

The Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII) has [announced a call for applications for research clusters](#) for the 2024–2025 academic year. Both new and existing research clusters should [apply/reapply for designation here](#) by Friday, May 17.

The [research cluster program](#) provides a home for informal, collaborative groups of scholars who wish to meet together to discuss and advance shared interdisciplinary interests. The DCII provides space for meetings in Ford Hall, staff assistance to organize cluster meetings and events, and up to \$4,000 in funding to support cluster activities. Clusters should have at least two SMU faculty (tenured, tenure-track or teaching and professional/NTT), staff, and/or graduate student conveners who are responsible for the cluster's activities, ideally from different academic disciplines. Conveners must also submit an end-of-year report on the cluster's activities.

For more information about the DCII's research cluster program, how to apply/reapply, examples of past/current clusters and previous events [click here](#).

Questions about the program or application process should be addressed to Dr. Karisa Cloward, Ruth Collins Altshuler Director of the Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute at kcloward@smu.edu.

Reminder: Report from the SMU Internationalization Steering Committee Townhall

The SMU Internationalization Steering Committee invites members of the SMU Community to a virtual townhall on April 24, from 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. via Zoom to give feedback on the Steering Committee's results, findings, and recommendations. The [draft of the internationalization report is available for review here](#) and the [executive summary is available here](#).

[Use this Zoom link to join the townhall](#) at 3:00 p.m. on April 24.

Academic Excellence

Three SMU schools rank in U.S. News & World Report's top 50 graduate programs for second consecutive year

For two years running, three SMU graduate schools are ranked within the top 50 graduate schools in the [U.S. News & World Report 2024 Best Graduate Schools](#).

[The Simmons School of Education and Human Development](#) moved up one spot to #48, placing it among the top 19 percent of participating public and private graduate schools of education around the country. Simmons maintains the #11 spot among all private universities on the list.

[Dedman School of Law](#) moved up three spots to #42, positioning it among the top 21 percent of U.S. law schools. Additionally, the school has five subject-specific programs that are also in the top 50: criminal law – #33; health care law – #36; tax law – #40; contracts/commercial law – #41; business/corporate law – #42.

[The Cox School of Business full-time MBA](#) ranks #34, placing it in the top 27 percent of such programs in the country and making it SMU's highest-ranking school.

Three SMU undergraduates receive prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship award

Three SMU undergraduate students have received prestigious [Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship awards](#) for the 2024-2025 academic year. The student winners are Colton Fontenot, who will travel to the Slovak Republic; Noah Randall, who will journey to Spain; and Victoria Romanczyk, who will go to Poland.

Colton (Cole) Fontenot graduated in May 2022 with a B.A. in economics, history, philosophy, and public policy and achieved the rare feat of completing three distinction theses during his senior year. Eager to learn more about educational systems in other countries, the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in the Slovak Republic will support Cole's long-term goal of crafting more equitable education policy in the United States.

Noah Randall is a senior studying theatre and physics who will spend the coming year teaching English in the Canary Islands. The Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship will allow him to build on his experience as a youth gymnastics coach and STEM tutor. Having studied Spanish from a young age, Noah is excited to connect with local *Canarios* through interactive art projects and community theatre.

Victoria Romanczyk will graduate this May with a B.S. in economics and statistical science and a B.A. in international studies before using her Fulbright award to travel to Poland. She currently serves as a Teach for America Ignite Fellow, where she teaches small groups of students with the support of a veteran educator, and as a tutor for Mustangs for Hope, a student-run organization that provides free one-on-one tutoring to K-12 students in Dallas.

The Department of State's Fulbright U.S. Student Program promotes mutual understanding through study, research, and teaching in partnership with more than 140 countries worldwide. Awardees are selected in an open, merit-based competition that considers leadership potential, academic and/or professional achievement, and a record of service. Fulbright alumni include 62 Nobel Prize laureates, 80 McArthur Foundational Fellows, 89 Pulitzer Prize recipients, and 41 individuals who have served as heads of state or government.

Undergraduate students interested in applying for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program should contact Dr. Brandon Gray Miller, assistant dean for University Honors Program and Fellowships at bgmiller@smu.edu. Interested graduate students should write to Dr. Rachel Ball-Phillips, director of Graduate Fellowships and Awards at rmball@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

SMU-led Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub collaborates with FBI

FBI Dallas Special Agent in Charge Chad Yarbrough and SMU Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer Dr. Suku Nair announced plans to [exchange resources and information with components of the SMU-led Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub \(TSTH\)](#). In a series of meetings earlier this month, key stakeholders from both entities discussed the future of information and cybersecurity, insider threats, risk management strategies, and additional opportunities for partnership with the FBI.

The partnership seeks to increase communication at both the academic and law enforcement levels. Moving forward, the FBI will be able to provide transparent and timely intelligence to the TSTH, who, in turn, can make informed decisions on national security risks. This will allow both entities to protect their institutions and intellectual property in more effective ways.

Reminder: Provost's Summer Research Grant Applications

The review process for Provost's Summer Research Grants applications will commence Monday, April 22, and continue on a rolling basis thereafter.

These awards provide up to \$5,000 per student for dissertation research-related expenses during the summer, including living expenses (if the student does not have a summer stipend from their department), travel to research sites, lodging at research sites, research equipment, technology purchases, software purchases, survey research expenses, etc. For more information, including application materials and instructions, [read the message sent from Robin Poston](#), dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and associate provost for graduate education.

Questions about the grants can be sent to Dr. Alan Itkin at aitkin@smu.edu.

Simmons School of Education and Human Development professor named Poet Laureate for City of Dallas

Mag Gabbert, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Human-Centered Interdisciplinary Studies in the Simmons School for Education and Human Development was [announced as the new Poet Laureate for the City of Dallas](#) by Mayor Eric Johnson on April 10, at City Hall. In her official role as poet laureate Professor Gabbert will undertake various initiatives in partnership with the Dallas Public Library and the city's Office of Arts and Culture. She hopes to inspire and unite the people of Dallas through her service in this capacity.

Congratulations to Professor Gabbert on this incredible accomplishment and thank you for your commitment to positive community impact.

Professor in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences co-authors research in top economics journal's forthcoming issue

Santanu Roy, University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Economics at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, recently published his collaborative research with Professor Ayca Kaya, University of Miami, entitled "[Repeated Trading: Transparency and Market Structure](#)" in the [American Economic Review](#). The study focuses on markets where buyers may purchase repeatedly but rarely from the same seller. Their findings indicate that in designing institutional innovations and regulations to improve market transparency, one must follow a nuanced approach that takes market fundamentals such as competition and expectations into account.

The *American Economic Review* is the flagship journal of the American Economic Association and is regarded as one of the field of economics most prestigious journals.

American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) accepts Meadows School of the Arts faculty member into ACLS Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

Eric J. Schmidt, lecturer at Meadows School of the Arts' Division of Music, has been awarded a fellowship from the [American Council of Learned Societies](#) (ACLS). The [ACLS Fellowship Program](#) supports outstanding scholarship in the humanities and interpretive social sciences and is the longest-running program in the ACLS portfolio. The fellowship will support Professor Schmidt as he works on his current project entitled "[The Cultural Production of Displacement: Capitalist Reckonings in 21st Century Tuareg Music](#)".

Lyle School of Engineering research team awarded one-year National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to address Dallas infrastructure inequities

Lyle School of Engineering research team, which includes Principal Investigator Dr. Barbara Minsker, Bobby B. Lyle Endowed Professor of Leadership and Global Entrepreneurship, along with Co-Principal investigators Dr. Janille Smith-Colin, assistant professor, and Dr. Eric Larson, associate professor, have

been awarded a one-year, \$145,000 [National Science Foundation Smart and Connected Community \(S&CC\) planning grant](#). The grant will support their research team in developing and researching a community engagement plan to address infrastructure needs that impact residents' well-being in the local Dallas community. Their project's objective will be to design a smart toolkit that combines crowd-sourced data and ideas, machine learning, social and infrastructure network analysis, agent-based modeling, and community-engaged infrastructure decision-making to improve neighborhood equity and well-being.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' professor and director of clinical training and team publish study on racial discrimination's impact on adolescent mental health in justice system

Ernest Jouriles, director of clinical training in the Department of Psychology at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, and his team, Professor David Rosenfield and Associate Dean Renee McDonald, both in the Department of Psychology, along with colleague P. Priscilla Lui, University of Washington, and Melissa J. Sitton, a doctoral student in the SMU Clinical Psychology program, have [recently published a study](#) in the [Journal of Interpersonal Violence](#).

Their study investigates how interpersonal racial discrimination and other forms of violence can impact the mental health of adolescents in the justice system. The research advocates for a more holistic approach to mental health intervention, emphasizing the importance of considering adolescents' experiences of interpersonal racial discrimination alongside other more recognized forms of violence. By acknowledging and addressing these intersecting factors, stakeholders can better tailor support systems to meet the unique needs of adolescents of color in the justice system.

Inclusive Excellence

Engineers Without Borders' SMU chapter brings clean water to Kenyan community

Lyle School of Engineering student Caroline Corbin and her team members, Hayden Wilson and Chloe Moore, are embarking on an eight-day Engineers Without Borders-SMU mission on May 15. The students will travel to a community in Kenya to address contaminated water wells and resulting health problems these cause for the local area. The students will apply the technical skills they have learned in the classroom to address the infrastructure problems they encounter within the local community.

News and Noteworthy

Meadows School of the Arts professor receives prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship and a feature on KERA North Texas

Division of Music Professor at Meadows School of the Arts Xi Wang has been awarded the prestigious [Guggenheim Fellowship](#) for the 2024 academic year. The Guggenheim Fellowship is "intended for mid-career individuals who have demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts and exhibit great promise for their future endeavors." Each year the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation receives approximately 3,000 applications and awards approximately 175 fellowships.

Professor Wang's fellowship also earned her a [feature in KERA News' Art&Seek](#) by veteran reporter Jerome Weeks.

Special issue of research journal released in honor of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' faculty member

A [special issue of Computational Chemistry](#) has been dedicated to Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences Department of Chemistry Professor Elfi Kraka in honor of her 70th birthday. The issue contains “more than 30 scientific articles by recognized scientists from all over the world. The topics cover a very broad area of theoretical chemistry, and they mirror the wide-ranging interests that have been on display throughout Professor Kraka’s career in the field of theoretical and computational chemistry. The issue also contains a forward co-authored by Adelia Aquino, Hans Lischka and Gernot Frenking to recognize Professor Kraka’s dedication to her work, her remarkable achievements, and her accomplished career. Congratulations and happy birthday Elfi!

Dedman School of Law’s moot court team takes national championship

SMU law students Matthew Mussalli (3L), Jordon B.V. Smith (3L), and Johanna Pang (2L) were named national champions at the [2024 American Bar Association National Appellate Advocacy Competition](#) (NAAC) in Philadelphia on April 7, 2024.

The NAAC is the largest moot court competition in the United States with over 178 teams competing from law schools across the country. Participating student teams are immersed in a hypothetical appeal to the United States Supreme Court and tasked to write a brief as either respondent or petitioner. They then argue their case in front of a mock court. This challenging exercise helps students develop oral advocacy skills through realistic experiences.

Congratulations to our students and their great coaches, Lance Caughfield and Haleigh Jones, on this significant accomplishment.

SMU Debate Team wins national title at International Public Debate Association Championship tournament

SMU Debate Team member Brandt Vernon won the national championship for the International Public Debate Association (IPDA) professional division debate at Mississippi State University, April 12-15, 2024. He defeated 40 other competitors from across the nation to win the title. SMU also won 3rd place in the Founders Sweepstakes award. This year’s competition included 48 other universities and 350 individual competitors and represents the largest national championship tournament in the history of IPDA.

SMU took 11 competitors to the tournament. Evangeline Bulick finished as a semifinalist in the junior varsity division after earning the top seed for the tournament by going undefeated in the preliminary rounds (8-0). Vaughn Androłowicz was 5-3 and achieved quarterfinalist in the novice division among more than 120 student competitors nationwide. He was 11th in the nation for season-long points. Varsity debater and team president Hailey Hazen was undefeated on the first day (5-0) and advanced to the octafinals of her division.

This year the team was coached by Dr. Ben Voth, Keith Milstead, Ryan Booth, Kaleb Simes, Ross Sloan, and UcheChukwu Agbo. The SMU debate squad completed more than 250 debate rounds in this academic season, with topics ranging from artificial intelligence, popular movies, Irish national politics, and Israel to women’s sports, cocoa production in Ghana, and the soundness of theories expounded by Sigmund Freud.



Sincerely,

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

SMU.