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DESIGN SPECIALIST JENNIFER ABERNATHY TAPPED AS SMU “MADI” FALL 2019 DESIGNER-IN-RESIDENCE

DALLAS (SMU) – Jennifer Abernathy, director of Innovation Research and Design at [Health Care Services Corporation](#), part of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, in Dallas, Texas, has been announced as the Fall 2019 Designer-in-Residence (DIR) for the [Master of Arts in Design and Innovation](#) (MADI) program at SMU.

Abernathy brings her expertise in product development, design thinking, brand strategy as well as user and trend research to her new role. Her industrial design career includes positions at IKEA, Newell Rubbermaid, Toppan Interamerica, Inc., and Vizient, Inc. In her current position at Health Care Services Corporation, Abernathy oversees the cross-functional design team, including graphic design, design research, data science, business analysis, project management, communications and client consulting. Her team at the C1 Innovation Lab partners with the company’s largest clients to develop customized user-centered solutions to customer-specific challenges through the facilitation of rapid design sprints.

“We’re excited for Jennifer to join our program as Designer-in-Residence and look forward to her sharing her vast background and expertise with design in major corporate settings with our MADI students and community,” said Jessica Burnham, director of the MADI program. “I’m eager to learn from her experiences and point-of-view about design and its applications in an ever-changing world of innovation.”

The MADI program is a multidisciplinary degree based on the concept of Human-Centered Design as an approach to problem-solving, valuable in fields ranging from engineering and business to the arts, advertising and the social sciences. The program appoints one DIR a semester to join and enrich the program inside and outside the classroom. Duties include on-going and consistent critique of a MADI class, assisting students with professional development, creating and conducting workshops or seminars, and developing new curriculum.

Abernathy received her B.S. in Industrial Design from the Georgia Institute of Technology, an MBA from Emory University, and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Interior Design from Savannah College of Art and Design. She also earned a certificate in Innovation of Products & Services from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

MADI launched at SMU in 2015. Coursework and project-based learning experiences teach students to combine what people need with the limitless possibilities of technology and the economic requirements for business success through design research, idea generation and rapid prototyping. The MADI program strives to fill a space that puts human need at the forefront of design and innovation.

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About SMU

SMU is the nationally ranked global research university in the dynamic city of Dallas. SMU's alumni, faculty and nearly 12,000 students in seven degree-granting schools demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit as they lead change in their professions, community and the world.

About the Lyle School of Engineering

SMU's Lyle School of Engineering, founded in 1925, is one of the oldest engineering schools in the Southwest. The school offers eight undergraduate and 26 graduate programs, including master's and doctoral degrees, through the departments of Civil and Environmental Engineering; Computer Science; Electrical and Computer Engineering; Engineering Management, Information and Systems; and Mechanical Engineering. Lyle students participate in programs in the unique Deason Innovation Gym, providing the tools and space to work on immersion design projects and competitions to accelerate leadership development and the framework for innovation; the Hart Center for Engineering Leadership, helping students develop nontechnical skills to prepare them for leadership in diverse technical fields; the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education, developing new methodologies for incorporating engineering education into K-12 schools; the Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, combining the innovative forces of Lyle and the Cox School of Business to integrate their expertise, resources and guidance to develop technology prototypes and create viable business plans; and the Hunter and Stephanie Hunt Institute for Engineering and Humanity, combining technological innovation with business expertise to address global poverty.