

**Subject:** Fall 2020 Home Stretch: Information and Resources for Graduate Students



November 19, 2020

Dear Graduate Students,

As we enter the home stretch of the fall semester, I want to personally thank you for your resilience and the care and support you have shown each other during this difficult time. I also want to assure you that your faculty understands that you are continuing to face challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic and that we are committed to doing all we can to help you achieve academic success despite these challenges. To that end, I am writing to share some information with you about the University's response to the Coronavirus pandemic and available resources that will be particularly relevant to you as graduate students.

**Reporting a Positive COVID Test:** If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have come into close contact with an individual who has tested positive, please submit a [CCC form](#). You will receive a phone call from a member of the SMU contact tracing team to discuss symptoms, current living situation, isolation procedures, close contacts and academic support. Your health and the health of our community are very important to us.

**Free Flu Shots:** Minimizing your chances of contracting influenza this year is one of the most important steps you can take to stay healthy and keep our community healthy. SMU is providing free flu vaccines on campus as supplies become available. The Dr. Bob Smith Health Center [flu vaccine website](#) will be updated as vaccines become available. Free flu shots are also available at Walgreens, Kroger, Costco, CVS and CVS-Target pharmacies with your student or family health insurance.

**Spring 2021 Calendar:** As President Turner recently announced, the spring semester will start one week later than originally planned and will not include a week-long spring break. This decision was made in the best interest of the health and safety of our campus community. We understand, however, that rest and relaxation are essential to graduate students' wellness and academic success. My office and I are committed to providing additional healthy and safe student life activities in the spring open to all graduate students, so that you can take a mental break from your studies. I also encourage you to submit ideas for ways we can support graduate students' mental health during the spring term via the [University's Spring 2021 Suggestion Box](#).

**Spring 2021 Remote Status Change Requests:** Accommodations for graduate students seeking to study remotely are handled by their programs in conjunction with their home school dean's office. If you wish to change your remote status for the spring—if you are currently full remote for fall 2020 but wish to no longer be fully remote for spring 2021, or vice versa—please complete the Remote Status Change Request form, which can be found [here](#), and please also

work with your program administration to determine whether and how they are able to accommodate your request. International students in the US on student visas, please remember that you cannot be fully remote and must register for at least one hybrid or in-person class for the spring semester.

**October 2020 Survey:** Thank you to all of you who completed the recent survey about your experience so far this semester. Your responses are essential to helping us make sure we are addressing graduate students' concerns and providing the best educational experience for you. 1,193 graduate students responded to the survey, and the responses are being used both to make adjustments to SMU's operations this term and in our planning for the spring. You can find the full results [here](#).

**Zoom Spaces:** SMU has set aside specifically designated Zoom spaces for graduate students in Ford Hall. These are quiet spaces for you to participate in online classes and coursework. You can find more information and reserve a Zoom space [here](#).

**Friendship Program for International Students:** For international graduate students, both those who are in Dallas and those studying from their home country, finding a community and support network at SMU is especially challenging at this time. For this reason, the International Student and Scholar Services office is offering the Buddies Beyond Borders friendship program, which matches students based on their interests. This is just one of the ways ISSS is working to support our international graduate students at this difficult time. We encourage you to check the program out [here](#).

**Student Emergency Fund:** The Student Emergency Fund is continuing to provide support to SMU students in need. Students experiencing financial hardship or food insecurity may request support from the Student Emergency Fund. To initiate the application process, please complete a [Caring Community Connections form](#) for yourself and select "economic hardship" at the very bottom. An application for support from the Student Emergency Fund will then be sent to you. Please note that these funds are limited. We are striving to meet urgent needs as best we can, but we will not be able to fulfill all requests or to provide the level of support requested in all cases.

**Career Development Resources for Graduate Students:** Recognizing that the challenge of finding a job and launching a career at this time is a top concern for graduate students and a contributing factor in mental health difficulties graduate students may be facing, the Moody School is ramping up our career development resources specifically for graduate students. The [Hegi Family Career Development Center](#) provides excellent resources and career advice for all SMU students. In addition, the Moody School is now contracting with a career-development specialist with extensive graduate career advising experience to meet one-on-one with our Ph.D. students. We are also subscribing to the Aurora career development platform by Beyond the Professoriate for all graduate students. You can find more information about the career development resources we offer as well as other career development resources available outside of SMU [on our website](#).

As graduate students, you are an essential part of the SMU community. I hope the information above will be helpful to you, and I wish you all a productive and safe last few weeks of the semester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James E. Quick". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

James E. Quick

Dean

Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies