

**Subject:** A Message from Dean Quick at the Beginning of the Fall Term



August 24, 2021

Dear Graduate Students,

Welcome back to our continuing students, and to our new graduate students: welcome to SMU! These are difficult times, and I know the recent surge in COVID-19 cases has created challenges for all of you. You come from many different backgrounds, are at many different stages of life, and have many different living and family situations. You also occupy many different and important roles at the University—not just taking classes but serving as teaching assistants, performing research, taking part in performances, etc. Many of the issues you face are different from those of SMU's undergraduate students, and they matter. I encourage you to bring any concerns you have about your health and safety to the attention of your program faculty and staff, and especially concerns related to the teaching, research, and other responsibilities you fulfill as part of your program. For our international students, I understand that many of you are still facing challenges with visa processing and travel delays, and I encourage you to stay in close contact with your program faculty and staff and with the [International Student and Scholar Services \(ISSS\) office](#) about any difficulties you are facing.

SMU, like other universities across the country, is adapting to a changing situation in the interest of protecting the health and safety of our community. I want you to know that University leaders are making decisions in consultation with health experts and local officials according to clear and carefully considered guidelines. You can find information about the University's operational levels as well as how the University's current operational level is determined on the [Mustang Strong website](#) and in the [2021 Operations Plan](#). As University operations are changing in response to changing conditions, it is important that you are well-informed about the University's response to the Coronavirus pandemic. I encourage you to pay attention to messages from President Turner and SMU Information, as they will provide the most current updates. You will find the latest information on the [Mustang Strong website](#). I will also be sending letters like this one throughout the year to highlight information that is important to you as graduate students. Below are pieces of information I would like to bring to your attention right now as we begin the fall term together:

**Masks Temporarily Required in Public Indoor Spaces:** [President Turner recently announced](#) that SMU is temporarily requiring masks in indoor public spaces, regardless of vaccination status. Please wear a mask (two-ply) over the nose and mouth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [offers helpful guidance on effective mask-wearing](#).

**COVID-19 Vaccinations Available at the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center:** SMU strongly encourages members of the campus community to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Many options are available for the administration of the vaccine and the kind you wish to receive. Please make sure to research each vaccine as well and their potential side effects and warnings before scheduling an appointment. More information on the Pfizer vaccine, which has received full FDA approval, and on the other vaccines approved in the U.S. through Emergency Use Authorization can be found on the [CDC's website](#). [COVID-19 vaccinations are available to all members of the SMU community](#) (ages 12 and older) and are now being administered inside the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center. All current and incoming students, SMU employees and their eligible spouse/dependents can book a vaccination appointment through the [SMU Health Portal](#) or by calling the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center at 214-768-2141 (option 1).

**Reporting Your COVID-19 Vaccination Status:** If you were vaccinated on campus, your information will automatically be uploaded into your health record under *immunizations* (no action is necessary). If you were vaccinated off campus, please upload that information directly to the [SMU Health Portal](#), even if you already voluntarily shared your status through the vaccine reporting tool last spring. One good reason to report: if you show you are fully vaccinated at the time of an exposure, you are not considered a close contact and do not need to quarantine.

**COVID-19 Testing:** If you have been exposed or have symptoms, COVID-19 testing is also available at the [Dr. Bob Smith Health Center](#). Appointments are required. Students who test positive must complete a [Caring Community Connections \(CCC\) Form](#) to report their status.

**Contact Tracing Continuing in the Fall:** All individuals testing positive for COVID-19 are contacted and confidentially interviewed to identify people who came into close contact with the infected individual. University employees from Human Resources, Student Affairs, Athletics and Campus Services are trained on contact tracing through Johns Hopkins University and follow county, state and federal guidelines. The trace assesses the class schedule, living situation, activities, work locations including offices and job sites, face-to-face meetings and any other situations that may have resulted in close contact from two days before the onset of symptoms or testing (if asymptomatic). More information about contact tracing and case management can be found in the [2021 Operations Plan](#).

**Student Emergency Fund:** 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 \(CCC\) 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. Your application will be reviewed and a decision made on support that can be provided in 3-5 business days. Please be aware that these funds are limited. The Student Emergency Fund also does not provide support for tuition or student fees. 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.

**SMU Libraries Are Open:** All campus libraries are now open, including Bridwell Library, which had been closed for renovations. Current information about locations and hours for SMU Libraries can be found on the [Libraries website](#).

As always, if there is anything I or my staff can assist you with, you are welcome to reach out to us by emailing [smugrad@smu.edu](mailto:smugrad@smu.edu) or calling 214-768-4345. If we are not able to assist you, we will direct you to the appropriate office to address your issue. We are glad to have you here with us for the fall semester at SMU, and we wish you all success in your studies this academic year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James E. Quick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James E. Quick

Dean

Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies