August 14, 2020

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 a safe and healthy reopening in fall 2020. Previous newsletters are available here. Today’s update falls into three categories: 1) Virtual Town Hall Follow-Ups, 2) Preparing for Fall 2020, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Virtual Town Hall Follow-Ups

- Faculty Town Hall – Thank you to all who joined me for the faculty virtual town hall on August 5. President Turner’s message this week to faculty and staff is a great resource for additional information on the University’s responses to the themes from that meeting. In response to your concerns, I wanted to highlight additional areas of progress and updates to our Fall 2020 Operations Plan.
  - Air Quality:
    - We now have the ability to increase the amount of fresh air pushed through our HVAC system. Most of the windows on our campus do not open, and it’s a balancing act to increase fresh air through our HVAC system without exceeding our central plant’s ability to support the added demand. Our traditional approach has been a 20% infusion of fresh air mixed with recirculated air, but we have determined that we can safely increase that to a 50% infusion of fresh air in most buildings.
    - As previously shared, we are upgrading air filters in all air handlers across campus to the highest level possible for our system. Thirty campus buildings have already been retrofitted with MERV13 air filters; installation in all RLSH and academic buildings will be completed by the start of classes. A detailed schematic of the installation may be found here.
    - More than half of our air handlers have commercial-grade ultraviolet light-filtering technology integrated...
into the system, which help to keep viruses and other microorganisms from reproducing and infecting indoor space.

- The Office of Facilities Planning and Management has developed the graphic below to illustrate our strategy for increased outside air intake and building circulation:

![50% Outside Air Strategy - Building Air Circulation Diagram](image)

- Concerning expanded COVID-19 testing, the campus contact-tracing protocol has been updated to provide more support, if needed, for a potential localized outbreak on campus. In that event, the University may use additional resources, including a requirement for localized targeted testing in a residence hall or University office space to address the situation.
- Lastly, if a student receives a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, our contact-tracing team has added a step in its process to alert the faculty who teach that student of a confirmed case in their class without identifying the individual. To protect privacy, no additional information will be provided unless a faculty member is also identified as a “close contact” during the contact-tracing process.

- **Additional Faculty/Staff Town Hall** – As we prepare to welcome students and parents to campus, President Turner has invited all faculty and staff to a virtual town hall on Thursday, August 20, to address issues and questions. Chris Regis, Vice President for Business and Finance, and Dr. Robert W. Haley, Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Division of Epidemiology in the
Internal Medicine Department at UT Southwestern Medical Center, will join President Turner and me as hosts for this event. The link to this virtual town hall will be sent to all faculty and staff closer to the day of the event.

- **August Commencement** – On Saturday, August 15, the all-University Commencement will assemble graduates and candidates from all of SMU’s schools and professional programs. Face coverings are required while inside Ford Stadium, and social distancing guidelines must be followed. Please see our [FAQ page](#) for answers to commonly asked August Commencement questions.

  While we are no longer able to accept additional reservations, we encourage people without tickets to watch the [livestream](#) on August 15. Graduates who do not obtain a ticket will be mailed a special graduation package a few weeks after the event, which will include the August 2020 Commencement program, a souvenir print, and other commemorative items in recognition of their important accomplishment.

- **Additional options for community members who need child care** – The Child Care Working Group is reviewing input provided by more than 120 faculty members who completed the survey sent last Friday. The group will synthesize these comments and communicate themes and suggestions next week to the academic leadership community. Department chairs are following up with faculty who requested to be contacted directly about immediate concerns to help identify solutions prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

**Preparation for Fall 2020**

- **Zoom Space preparation and reservation system** – Next week, facilities crews will be posting standard signage (based on room capacity) on all Zoom Spaces. See graphic below for an example of a single-occupancy Zoom Space.
Beginning on August 19, students will be able to make Zoom Space reservations. The following website provides additional information to guide students through the reservation process. Room schedulers and building managers are actively engaged with academic leadership to help ensure that all buildings and rooms are unlocked at 7:30 a.m. each day so that Zoom Spaces are easily accessible and equipped with adequate power supplies.

- **Student return-to-campus training** – All students who will engage in SMUFlex courses during fall 2020 must complete an approximately one-hour return-to-campus training course in Canvas that includes signing the Pledge to Protect. The course has been assigned to all students who were not approved for remote-only instruction. To encourage timely course completion, students who do not complete the training by August 24, will receive a registration hold that will only be removed (in near real-time) once the training has been completed.

- **Update on student outreach** – Associate Provost Sheri Kunovich sent a message to students last week letting them know that their required COVID-19 return-to-campus training is now available in Canvas, that the submission deadline to be fully remote is August 14, and that the entire campus community should review and sign SMU CAN’s Community Pledge to Protect.

Dr. Mindy Sutton, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, sent a very important message to students on
August 13, detailing fall 2020 requirements, expectations, and accountability measures for them to consider during their final days of preparation for returning to campus. I have asked all deans to communicate this information to their graduate and professional students as well.

- **Requirements on recording courses** – We are requiring that synchronous components of courses that cover any material upon which students will be tested, in both the VIRTUAL and SMUFlex models, be recorded. Links to the recordings should be stored through the password-protected Canvas learning management system so that students who cannot attend synchronously can view the recordings to maintain academic continuity in the fall 2020 semester. The links should be made available to students during the course, and the files will be deleted at the end of the semester. To improve Zoom’s course-recording capabilities in time for fall, OIT has implemented a new integration that allows Zoom class recordings to be automatically copied into Canvas’ video-sharing tool Panopto. Faculty are encouraged to save live course recordings directly into Canvas/Panopto using Zoom’s “Record to the Cloud” feature. Each school’s ATSD is available to demonstrate or answer any questions. Rest assured that the University will not use the recordings as any part of promotion and tenure or evaluation decisions, nor will they be viewed or used unless requested through a formal digital records examination for policy or legal purposes. SMU is not claiming ownership to instructional video content prepared or contributed by faculty members for VIRTUAL and SMUFlex courses as a necessary response to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, except in those cases in which there is a separate agreement between the University and the faculty member related either to the specific course materials or to an initiative to create online graduate programs through SMU GO, the University agrees to not reuse for other purposes the digital materials created for courses offered in spring, summer, and fall 2020 without the permission of the corresponding faculty member.

- **Additional time between classes** – Here are some important clarifications to the announcement last week about the additional time between classes. Changes to the times on the official schedule were made only for classes that are scheduled in a room (SMUFlex). This means that the time adjustment was not made in the system for Virtual or Online courses. Faculty who have been building their virtual courses will remain on the original time frame without the five minutes removed from their scheduled class time. Additionally, law school classes already have 15 minutes between classes and will therefore not be impacted. We welcome faculty input on instructional
strategies for how to infuse their courses with the cumulative 3.5 hours (approximately 15 minutes/week) of contact time needed to make this accommodation for SMUFlex courses during the unique circumstances of fall. This time can be accommodated in any number of creative ways and options. As noted in the Friday update, the Office of the Provost will work with CTE/OIT/SMU Libraries to gather faculty input and ideas, so if you are interested in participating, please contact Paige Ware at pware@smu.edu. This topic will also be included as part of the SMUFlex support that CTE/OIT/SMU Libraries have been preparing and offering. Initial ideas suggested by faculty include offering study and review sessions, creating brief asynchronous content summaries to help students synthesize material, and assigning breakout group assignments for students to work in teams between classes.

- **Red-Blue rotation schedule** – This week, Red/Blue assignments were made for all SMU students who will be participating in their courses via SMUFlex. Students are now able to see their Red/Blue assignments in my.SMU. Faculty will also see their students’ Red/Blue assignments in the “status” column of their class rosters. The University’s official Red/Blue calendar will be available for download and printing next week. I will provide location details in next week’s newsletter.

- **Clarity around distribution of classroom materials and cleaning supplies** – My thanks to Lyle’s Deason Innovation Gym (creating face shields for SMUFlex faculty), Purchasing (obtaining markers and packets), and Facilities (restocking and maintaining cleaning supplies and masks each night) for securing materials our faculty will need in their classrooms this year. Faculty can obtain face shields and a personal supply kit (including markers and masks) from the office of their college/school dean later next week. Facilities will regularly stock each classroom with cleaning supplies. If faculty arrive at a room that needs cleaning supplies replenished, they can call the Facilities support center at 214-768-7000, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **Qualtrics and Pathcheck** – As I shared last week, OIT partnered with consultants from Ernst and Young to implement a technological solution to manage COVID-19 symptom checking, case management (for employees), and digital tracing. This week, several staff members participated in testing to ensure that the system is working as expected. SMU will soon be a registered health provider on the Path Check app. You can download the Path Check app from your app store at any time to see how it works, and can anticipate detailed instructions next week on how to configure and use the app.
• **More resources for fall instruction: Advancements in EdTech virtual conference** – OIT is working with CTE, SMU GO and SMU Libraries to host a virtual conference and training series (August 17–21) featuring faculty panelists who have online teaching or SMUFlex success stories. All of the sessions are free to the SMU community, but you must register for each session you wish to attend. To see the complete lineup of sessions and to register, visit the Keep Teaching website.

CTE has developed *SMUFlex: A Guide for Faculty* as a new resource to support faculty in their preparations for teaching via the SMUFlex model in fall 2020. While approximately 250 faculty members will be teaching in exclusively virtual modalities, more than 800 faculty members will be delivering their courses through SMUFlex. I want to thank all of our faculty for the incredible efforts you have taken to prepare for excellent instructional delivery in fall 2020.

• **Standard syllabus language** – Members of my office, working in partnership with SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN) and the Faculty Senate, have developed language to address policies such as classroom participation, attendance, face coverings and safety for faculty to include in their fall 2020 course syllabi. See my e-mail to faculty sent earlier this week for specific information.

• **Exams, tests and quizzes to be delivered exclusively online in fall 2020** – All exams, tests and quizzes will be delivered online this fall so that all students, regardless of mode of instruction, have equitable access to testing. We are discouraging in-class, paper-based testing because of the flexibility that everyone might need in case health issues arise. Consult SMU’s Keep Teaching website for additional information and support for this important interim requirement.

• **Update on college/school backup plans** – I have asked deans and department chairs to work directly with their faculty to create fall 2020 contingency plans in our efforts to maintain academic continuity in case a faculty member becomes ill or is otherwise unable to deliver instruction. By adhering to our Fall 2020 Operations Plan, I am hopeful that these backup plans will not be needed, but I want to extend my thanks to everyone for their thoughtful efforts to maintain academic continuity.

• **Update on SMU’s response to BlackAtSMU** – As I mentioned last week, we anticipate a resubmission of consolidated and prioritized demands/requests from the Black Unity Forum (previously
BlackAtSMU) on August 30. Until then, please join me in congratulating Dr. Maria Dixon Hall.

Dr. Dixon Hall, Senior Advisor to the President for Cultural Intelligence and Associate Professor of Corporate Communications in the Meadows School of the Arts, has agreed to accept the newly created full-time position of Chief Diversity Officer to head our University-wide commitment to open dialogue, diversity and inclusion.

Additionally, Dr. Dixon Hall will supervise an employee to be hired for the newly created position of University Ombudsperson. This position will provide confidential, neutral counsel for faculty, students, and staff who encounter conflicts relating to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

**News and Noteworthy**

- **SMU named among 25 best colleges for math** – GradReports has released its 2020 rankings of the best colleges, and SMU ranks as the 14th best college for math. The 25 schools listed offer the top bachelor’s degrees in mathematics based on graduates’ median salaries one year out of college and median debt loads as reported by the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Faculty-in-Residence positions** - The Offices of the Provost and the Vice President for Student Affairs are now seeking faculty candidates for two Faculty-in-Residence (FiR) positions. The successful candidates will begin a three-year appointment in the fall 2021 semester. Click [here](#) for more details on qualifications and the application process.

- **Faculty Fellows application process** – The Faculty Fellows program is creating a new pathway for faculty members to partner with the Office of the Provost. This program is designed to invite more direct faculty involvement, promote academic leadership opportunities, and provide support for strategic initiatives and priorities in the Provost’s Office. I will send position description details and a call for applications to SMU faculty next week.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Elizabeth G. Loboa