January 6, 2022

Welcome back to Spring 2022 on the Hilltop! We look forward to the semester ahead. As you finalize your syllabi and make preparations for this academic term, I want to ensure we all have an opportunity for clear and consistent communication. Therefore, as with the fall semester, we are providing faculty with ongoing access to the required university syllabus statements. At any time throughout the academic year, you can access the university syllabus statements at this evergreen site.

Sharing this information with students on your syllabi reminds them of critical policies as well as how to access services and accommodations. I would like to draw your attention to the addition of a new statement, approved in the fall 2021 term by the Faculty Senate, that reminds our community of mental health and counseling resources on campus, that you should be sure to include. As a final step, please make sure your syllabi are uploaded to the required Syllabus Library, which serves as a resource for SMU faculty, staff, and students and can only be accessed by community members with an SMU password.

We appreciate your efforts in helping support our SMU-in-Four goals, which have been designed by dedicated teams of faculty and academic leadership to improve student graduation rates and to close persistent equity gaps. A key step for spring 2022 is to continue making use of Canvas in support of our students. All 3-credit courses offered as part of the undergraduate curriculum should now have integrated three tools within Canvas:

- Syllabus tool so that students have access to all their course syllabi on Canvas
- Calendar tool so that students can keep up to date on time-sensitive course information
- Gradebook tool so that students have access to their ongoing progress

If you need additional support to include these three features, please reach out to our colleagues in the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and your designated school/college ATSD’s, who have created this new, simplified web support portal that includes detailed help guides as well as a schedule of past and upcoming support and training events.
As we continue to respond to COVID-related challenges, we will update you with the most recent communications and decisions through my Friday updates and through the Mustang Strong website. As with the fall 2021 term, all classes are being held in person, and if you need to isolate or quarantine, you can work directly with your designated school or college contact to request a temporary move to Zoom for the needed period of time. Faculty may also request a reasonable accommodation on the basis of a disability through the Office of Institutional Access and Equity as outlined in the Needs of Persons with Disabilities Policy (3.2). Students with a disability may request an exemption through the DASS office. In student cases, approved accommodation options will be shared with the appropriate faculty.

Faculty can require masks in instructional spaces, as in the fall term, and can choose whether to attach compliance as part of the professionalism/participation grade (for up to 10% of the overall grade). In either case, mask requirements must be communicated in writing in the syllabus at the beginning of the term, and must be documented at this link so that everyone can help reinforce faculty expectations. In the event that you would like to have backup masks available to students, please reach out to your dean’s office, which have been provided with sufficient masks to distribute on an as-requested basis.

Thank you for your help in promoting a good start to the spring 2022 semester. A copy of this letter will be posted on the Office of the Provost website under “Provost’s Communications” and will be linked in the next several Friday updates.

Sincerely,

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

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