August 13, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back to the 105th Fall Term on the Hilltop! We are excited to welcome the Class of 2023. As a group they come from 49 states and 25 countries and have attended 824 different high schools and 103 different colleges. There are 87 students forging an unparalleled path by being the first in their family to attend college. There are 295 students who are considered a legacy, having family who attended SMU. Six students have served in the armed forces. These new first year and transfer students will be joining our current student body, bringing the total number of undergraduates on campus to more than 6,600.

While this letter is one that you always receive from my office to begin the fall semester, and thus easily ignored, there are some new features related to our emphasis on retention and graduation that warrant your attention. Please read!

Many of our students are completing multiple majors and minors. A recent study on double majors by Richard Pitt and Steven Tepper recommended that “faculty should explicitly encourage students to provide the perspective of their other major” in their classes. I encourage you to consider this recommendation. Information about students’ majors and minors is available through your class roster.

Engaging our returning students in their academic interests will help SMU meet its retention and graduation goals. The SMU Strategic Plan for 2016-2025, sets a first-year retention target of 94%. Using retention data from the last four years, SMU currently averages 91%. Meeting the Strategic Plan’s goal will require more active intervention by faculty through the completion of early and mid-term academic progress reports, encouraging student participation in campus programming such as the First5 initiative (https://www.smu.edu/studentaffairs/newstudent/first5), and connecting students to campus resources such as the Academic Center for Excellence (https://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/SPA/AcademicCenterforExcellence).

Faculty syllabi are another effective way to demonstrate our support for new and returning students. As you finalize your syllabi for this academic term, please communicate the information below to your students. Sharing this information in writing will create a record that you have outlined the accommodations provided for by University policy. This also provides students with a reminder not only of the policies themselves but also of how to access the services and accommodations available. Also, please make sure your syllabus is uploaded to https://sites.smu.edu/des/syllabus/. (The Syllabus Library is a resource for SMU faculty, staff, and students, and can only be accessed with an SMU ID and password.)
Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS to begin the process. Once approved and registered, students will submit a DASS Accommodation Letter to faculty through the electronic portal DASS Link and then communicate directly with each instructor to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence (https://www.smu.edu/StudentAffairs/Chaplain/ReligiousHolidays).

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (See 2019-2020 University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Student Learning Outcomes: Please include in your syllabi all student learning outcomes, both those specific to your course, as well as those that satisfy major and general education requirements.

Student Academic Success Programs: Students needing assistance with writing assignments for SMU courses may schedule an appointment with the Writing Center through Canvas. Students wishing support with subject-specific tutoring or success strategies should contact SASP, Loyd All Sports Center, Suite 202; 214-768-3648; https://www.smu.edu/sasp.

Final Exams: Final course examinations shall be given in all courses where they are appropriate, and some form of final assessment is essential. Final exams or final assessments must be administered as specified in the official examination schedule, and shall not be administered during the last week of classes or during the Reading Period. Please state clearly in the syllabus the date/time and form of the final exam or assessment.

Caring Community Connections (CCC) program: This is a resource for anyone in the SMU community to refer students of concern to the Office of the Dean of Students. Faculty play a critical role in identifying students who are experiencing challenges, as you may be the first to notice a change in behavior such as class attendance or performance. The online referral form can be found at smu.edu/deanofstudentsccc. After a referral is submitted, students will be contacted to discuss the concern, strategize options, and be connected to appropriate resources.
Additionally, should you have concerns about students and are unclear about what to do, please see the CCC Reference Guide, or contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 214-768-4564.

In the attached, I have provided additional recommendations and resources that should improve the classroom experience for you and your students. Additionally, you may wish to share the attached pages (2019 Know What to Do and the DASS informational sheet with your students).

You may also choose to include the following statement regarding the “campus carry” law: “In accordance with Texas Senate Bill 11, also known as the “campus carry” law, following consultation with entire University community SMU determined to remain a weapons-free campus. Specifically, SMU prohibits possession of weapons (either openly or in a concealed manner) on campus. For more information, please see: http://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/Police/Weapons_Policy.”

Thank you for your help in promoting a great start to the fall 2019 semester. A copy of this letter and the attachments will be posted on the Office of the Provost website under “Provost’s Communications.”

Sincerely,

Peter K. Moore
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs ad interim
**DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS & SUCCESS STRATEGIES**

**WHAT WE DO**

DASS coordinates the provision of classroom accommodations and disability access on campus. As part of the new Student Academic Success Programs (SASP), DASS operates under the University Provost’s office. The DASS team:

- reviews documentation to determine eligibility for services
- creates accommodation letters for students to share with faculty*
- facilitates test proctoring services when faculty are unable to provide this*
- offers disability awareness training for campus departments
- provides academic coaching for students with learning differences
- refers students to on and off-campus support

Please review our website for more details, and read our faculty newsletter, the *DASS Insider*, which comes out by email twice a semester and can be found on our website.

**WHERE WE ARE**

*Office and Student Support*

The DASS team is located within the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (A-LEC) at: **202 Loyd Ctr. or 5800 Ownby Dr.**

Entrance to our building is adjacent to Gate 3 of Ford Stadium. Take the elevator to the 2\(^\text{nd}\) floor. Parking for faculty/staff is behind and under the Meadows Museum.

*Test Proctoring Services*

We strongly encourage students and faculty members to work out test accommodations themselves. In the event that a faculty member is not able to provide the accommodations, DASS serves as a back-up (at a cost to the University). Our administrative assistant coordinates this process with faculty and students. Please contact our office for more details, or review the information on our website under “Test Proctoring.” Exception: Students in Dedman School of Law should contact Dean Yeager.

**WHO WE ARE**

Director: Alexa Taylor
Learning Specialist: David Tylicki
Accommodations Coordinators: Michelle Bufkin, Karen Turbeville, Tomasine Sam
Administrative Support: Candy Brown & Chandler Gobin

*The DASS office utilizes an online database system, called *DASS Link*, for all accommodation files, letters of accommodation as well as scheduled test proctoring held at the DASS office. Please log in to:

[https://shibboleth-smu-accommodate.symplicity.com/sso/faculty](https://shibboleth-smu-accommodate.symplicity.com/sso/faculty)
GET INFORMATION & KNOW WHAT TO DO DURING AN EMERGENCY

- Ensure you will receive SMU emergency notifications: Update your cell phone # in My.SMU.edu.
- During an emergency, look for information updates through texts, www.smu.edu, Twitter (@SMU), or Facebook.
- View safety videos at www.smu.edu/emergency

LOCKDOWN
Run, Hide, or Fight

WHEN
You will receive this notice if there is an intruder with a weapon or the threat of another type of violence on campus.

ACTIONS (Depending on your personal situation and location)
• RUN – go to a safer location, if that is an option
• HIDE – get out of sight, remain quiet; lock doors when possible
• FIGHT – confronted with the violence, collaborate with others to distract the intruder and get away or defend yourselves
• Warn others and call 214-768-3333 if you have information for Police
• Wait for campus officials to notify you when to return to normal activities

SEEK SHELTER
Find a safe place in a building

WHEN
Outdoor warning sirens sound to signal there is severe weather or environmental danger outside

ACTIONS
• Go Inside a building, to bathrooms or interior halls, away from glass doors and windows
• Monitor one or more media sources
• Wait for campus officials to notify you when to return to normal activities

EVACUATE
Leave your building immediately

WHEN
Indoor alarms sound or strobe lights flash to signal there is a danger inside or near the building, such as fire

ACTIONS
• Go Outside the building; assist those who are disabled
• Take valuables and cell phone with you
• Proceed to the assembly area outside
• Wait for campus officials to notify you when to return to normal activities.
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

• **Attendance:** Faculty are encouraged to take attendance. Please state clearly in the syllabus how attendance will be taken and how the attendance information may be used in determining a student’s class participation or final grade. You may find using the attendance function in Canvas particularly helpful so that you and the student have an accessible record of their attendance. Taking attendance not only encourages classroom engagement but also helps to identify potentially at-risk students. In accepting the recommendations of the President’s Commission on Substance Abuse, President Turner has asked that all faculty “announce and utilize an attendance policy, emphasizing the importance of attendance in meeting academic expectations and enabling faculty to take note of frequent or long absences, a potential sign of student distress.” If you find that a student is frequently absent from class, stops attending class, or has a period of non-attendance, please contact the student’s records office or access the Caring Community Connections website at [www.smu.edu/deanofstudentsccc](http://www.smu.edu/deanofstudentsccc) to notify the Dean of Student Life of non-attendance.

• **Early and Midterm Progress Reports and Grading:** Faculty are encouraged to have quizzes, tests or other forms of assessment throughout the semester. The official midterm grade is due Week 11 of classes, but it is recommended that students be assessed by Week 6 or 7 so they may make adjustments. Throughout the semester, you will receive Progress Reports for a variety of student populations (ex: first year students, student athletes, students on probation). The requests include links to provide information that advisors and students use to identify courses in which the student is academically at-risk. It is particularly important for you to report a student with a midterm grade of C- or below.

• **Course Grade:** In your syllabus, please inform students about how final course grades will be determined, including information pertinent to your grading decision, such as class participation.

• **Office Hours:** Faculty are expected to have designated office hours. Please state your office hours in the syllabus.

• **Academic Misconduct:** Academic misconduct of any kind is prohibited by the SMU Student Honor Code. Faculty who suspect plagiarism or cheating should consult [http://smu.edu/honorcouncil/](http://smu.edu/honorcouncil/) for appropriate actions and options.

• **Syllabus Repository:** After you have finalized your syllabus please upload a digital copy to the SMU syllabus repository ([https://sites.smu.edu/des/syllabus/](https://sites.smu.edu/des/syllabus/)) which can only be accessed by members of the SMU community.