Dear Colleagues:

As the end of the autumn semester approaches, I write to continue my tradition of sending periodic newsletters to the SMU community to provide information on new developments, planning, appointments, and projects. In this edition, updates fall into five major sections (click on the link to move directly to a specific section):

- [Campus-wide Dialogue on Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature of SMU](#)
- [Faculty Achievement](#)
- [Faculty Development and Resources](#)
- [Recent Administrative Appointments](#)
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An archive of previous newsletters and communications is available [here](#).

**Campus-wide Dialogue on Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature of SMU**

As I mentioned in the letter to the Campus on 18 October 2017, the campus-wide dialogue on “Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature of Southern Methodist University: Analyses and Opportunities” is following an inclusive process to obtain feedback from across the University community. Throughout the autumn term and continuing until 15 January 2018, we have provided a series of electronic and in-person opportunities to solicit your questions, comments, and suggestions.

Regarding our campus-wide dialogue on academic quality, I will address three questions:

1. Why are we engaged in a campus-wide dialogue about academic quality?
2. What aspects of the dialogue have we already completed?
3. When and how will we conclude the process?

**Why are we engaged in a campus-wide dialogue about academic quality?**

In 2015, the University issued a strategic plan entitled, “Launching SMU’s Second Century, Shaping Leaders for a Changing World, 2016-2025 Strategic Plan.” Goal One in the plan focused on measures and strategies for enhancing SMU’s academic quality and stature.

Mindful of SMU’s current momentum and significant achievements during our first one hundred years, we are positioned to envision and articulate even greater aspirations for the University that build upon the University’s Second Century strategic plan. To reach these
aspirations, each of us will need to coalesce around a shared vision and to chart a new path together. A refreshed and shared vision requires the community’s input, commitment, and partnership.

A key aspect of the feedback process is to ensure that members of the SMU community recognize that this is “our” collective vision of the future of the University and not simply the University administration’s, or the faculty’s, vision being delivered to you for implementation.

As we look to the future, we hope that our faculty and staff will have their heart and soul behind our renewed trajectory. This is key because each of us will be asked to coalesce around the renewed vision and align our efforts with the University’s strategic goals and metrics that we will be pursuing during the next several years.

In short, in helping to jointly craft a shared vision for ever-higher aspirations for our academic excellence, I hope that we all will be inspired by the University’s exciting new trajectory. Together, we take SMU to new heights!

What aspects of the dialogue have we already completed?

During the past 18 months, task forces delivered reports to the Provost related to our goal of enhanced academic quality and stature. With these reports as input, my office prepared an accompanying discussion document entitled “Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature of SMU – Analyses and Opportunities.”

The “Academic Quality” discussion document went through an extensive review process with the President and SMU’s senior leadership team this summer with over 300 comments and suggestions reviewed and addressed.

The inclusive dialogue process began this autumn with the release of task force reports and the draft version of “Enhancing the Academic Quality and Stature of SMU” to the SMU community and will continue until mid-January 2018. Our community dialogue has combined a series of in-person and electronic avenues for promoting discussion.

For example, I held two town hall events in November that were open to all faculty and staff. During the two town halls, nearly 200 participants shared dreams and ideas for the future of the University. In partnership with Kelly Compton, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of SMU’s Board of Trustees, we have also engaged SMU’s board members this autumn (both in small group settings, in December’s meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee, and in December’s presentation to the full board) for their thoughts and perspectives. At the invitation of Paul Krueger (Faculty Senate President and Professor of Mechanical Engineering), I recently made a presentation before the Senate to address questions and to receive their ideas and suggestions. Plans are underway to engage SMU students as well during this community engagement period.
Additionally, our deans are holding eight smaller group gatherings of 30 or fewer faculty and staff. Nearly 200 people have signed up to participate in these discussion groups, and I am receiving very positive feedback from community members about this exercise.

Lastly, we are providing three avenues to solicit your feedback electronically. Our dedicated email address, academicquality@smu.edu, is the best way to submit comments and suggestions in long-form. Our online discussion board (SMU ID and password required) provides opportunities to engage in the conversation with colleagues. And, our online feedback form is a means to submit your comments anonymously.

When and how will we conclude the process?

As mentioned earlier, the comment period on the Academic Quality document will conclude on 15 January 2018. Then, during the New Year, and based on the feedback received through in-person and electronic outlets, we will distill the feedback into a shorter document with specific priorities, recommendations, and the financial resources required. That information will be delivered to President Turner and the Board in the New Year with distribution to the full community during the spring term.

Faculty Achievement

Faculty Hiring, Promotion, and Tenure

Sixty-one permanent, full-time instructional faculty were hired to begin in autumn 2017, including three professors, three associate professors, 21 assistant professors, and 34 non-tenure track faculty. Senior faculty were formerly at institutions such as Tulane University, University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill and Charlotte), Cleveland State University, University of Texas at Arlington, and Argonne National Laboratory. Among the new tenured and tenure-track faculty hires, there are 52% females, 48% males, and 44% from under-represented minorities (7% Black or African American, 11% Hispanic, and 26% Asian). In 2017, there were 12 newly tenured professors, including 67% males and 33% females and 33% under-represented minorities (8% Black or African American, 17% Hispanic, and 8% Asian). Five tenured professors were promoted to full professor, including 60% males and 40% females.

Faculty Research

At a meeting this November before the Dallas Federal Reserve, President Turner announced a new multi-year commitment by SMU – a transformational era of teaching and research fueled by a powerful digital and computational infrastructure involving data science and analytics.

The University’s five-year investment of $85 million in high speed computing, data science, and the planned Gerald J. Ford Research and Innovation Center demonstrate, our strong commitment to this emerging area. As SMU aims to generate $50 million a year in research, the infusion of data science into research across disciplines – combined with important work accomplished in University traditional labs – will help SMU achieve this objective.
Faculty Development Resources:

*National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity*

Effective 1 June 2017, SMU became a member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD). Our institutional membership symbolizes the University’s ongoing commitment to faculty development – particularly for under-represented minorities.

As an institutional member of the NCFDD, all interested SMU faculty or graduate students may take advantage of the services offered by visiting [www.FacultyDiversity.org](http://www.FacultyDiversity.org) to register for a free membership to access the center’s online resources which include workshops, webinars, and seminars on topics related to faculty life, such as increasing writing productivity, managing time, cultivating mentors, securing external funding, and maintaining work-life balance.

*Campus Cultural Intelligence Initiative*

In our joint memo to the SMU community dated 27 November 2017, President Turner, Maria Dixon Hall, and I announced the formal launch of our Campus Cultural Intelligence Initiative (CIQ@SMU). This new strategic initiative represents SMU’s innovative approach to address issues of difference within higher education. CIQ@SMU emphasizes effective and practical ways to equip faculty, staff, and students to collaborate and communicate in today’s complex cultural environment. The letter may be accessed [here](http://www.smu.edu).

**Recent Administrative Appointments**

*Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness*

Patty Alvey has agreed to continue and expand her service to SMU through my office as Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness.

As SMU’s first director of Assessment and Accreditation and SMU’s Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Liaison, Dr. Alvey has spent the past five years helping SMU move toward a culture of intentional outcomes, planning and assessment. Most recently, she led SMU’s successful first Fifth-Year Interim Report to SACSCOC.

Dr. Alvey will continue to lead SMU’s accreditation efforts and, in line with best practices in institutional planning and effectiveness, she will merge the management of Academic Program Review into the University’s overall planning and effectiveness process. This change in Dr. Alvey’s title involves no new financial expenditures.

*Dean of SMU Libraries*

To support our quest for greater academic quality, SMU’s libraries merit prominent consideration because they uniquely intersect all aspects of the University’s academic enterprise. On 14 November 2017, I [announced our plans](http://www.smu.edu) to conduct an international search...
for a new library dean who will oversee an inclusive and ambitious visioning and strategic planning process that aligns with SMU’s broader strategic plan.

Search activities for the Dean of SMU Libraries began in November as we convened the Search Committee under the leadership of Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences. Interviews will commence in early 2018 and will continue throughout most of the spring 2018 semester. By summer of 2018, I hope to recommend the appointment of a new Dean of SMU Libraries to the President and Board of Trustees.

I wish to thank Elizabeth Killingsworth for her ongoing effective leadership as Central University Library Dean ad interim as we go through the search process.

In Conclusion

This is an exciting and promising time for our University! The opportunity to articulate and implement an enhanced vision for Academic Quality is one that does not come regularly over the course of one’s academic career. Success in these bold aspirations to “Enhance the Academic Quality and Stature of SMU” will require broad contributions and commitment by each of us.

For those who have not yet participated in the campus dialogue on Academic Quality or for anyone with additional ideas to contribute, I encourage you to visit our website for a summary of remaining opportunities.

Your feedback is important. Should you have any questions or suggestions for my office, please contact us by email at provost@smu.edu. All best wishes for the Holiday Season.

Warm Regards,

Steven C. Currall, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
David B. Miller Endowed Professor
Professor of Management and Organization
Professor of Psychology
Professor of Engineering Management, Information, and Systems