August 7, 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** – On August 5, the Faculty Senate invited me to a faculty town hall. Thank you to Faculty Senate President Aurelie Thiele and senate members for organizing this event, as well as to the faculty who joined me for active dialogue and a question/answer session. Effective University governance is a shared venture, and faculty engagement and partnership will remain vitally important to us all for effective policy development and decision-making. Along with members of my team, most notably Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware, I will expand faculty communication and engagement opportunities.

- **Additional options for community members needing child care** – I would like to thank the working group who volunteered to help address faculty concerns related to child care. This week the working group has been drafting a voluntary survey that Paige will send to all faculty next week for a better understanding of needs. Thank you to faculty members Crista DeLuzio, Colleen Logan, Dan Moss, Anna Offit, Daniel Reynolds, Elizabeth Russ, Elizabeth Stringer, Aurelie Thiele, Annie Wilhelm and Alicia Zuese for their service, particularly with such a short timeline, on this working group.

- **Fall 2020 operations plan now in place** – As President Turner announced earlier today, SMU has finalized and submitted its fall 2020 operations plan to Dallas County. This plan, developed by the EOC in consultation with SMU faculty and staff, is guided by science and common-sense expectations while adhering to Texas and Dallas County orders and

requirements to promote a safe and healthy on-campus instructional experience. The plan went into effect on August 5.

Preparing for Fall 2020

- **Return-to-work training** – SMU continues to be committed to bringing its faculty, staff and students back to campus in a safe and healthy way. As a reminder, before you return (or even if you have been back and have not done so yet), please make sure you complete the required "COVID-19 Return-to-Work Training" on Canvas here.

- **Update on student outreach** – This week, Associate Provost Sheri Kunovich sent a message to undergraduate students letting them know they now have until August 14 to request a fully remote experience. Faculty will continue to see additional students appear on their course rosters coded as "REMOTE" until August 21. Courses previously coded as REMOTE in my.SMU are now called VIRTUAL. We have created a VIRTUAL course database that will be updated weekly to make it easier for students and advisors to identify these courses. We are continuing to identify classrooms and additional open spaces on campus to designate as Zoom rooms for students to reserve when they are unable to return to their on- or off-campus residences to engage virtually in their courses. Students will be able to reserve these Zoom rooms in advance, but not for an entire semester. We are still working to determine the appropriate length of time and how far in advance students will be able to schedule Zoom rooms, and will provide additional information prior to the start of the semester.

- **Update on SMU's response to BlackAtSMU** – Work and conversations continue in our efforts to address the concerns expressed by our Black faculty, staff, students and alumni. I know that this is an important topic for the entire community, and while the deliberate pace of this work may be frustrating to some, it is important that we are listening first, critically reflecting, and finally, responding in ways that provide sustainable and meaningful change. The BlackAtSMU groups have come together to form Black Unity Forum and wrote President Turner yesterday to inform him they were working to consolidate and prioritize their demands/requests, would appreciate a delay in responding, and asked that SMU leadership not respond until after August 30. I understand they will be submitting their revised demands/requests on August 30.

  I am pleased to announce that CIQ@SMU has now released faculty training dates for August 18, 21, and 25. Hidden Scripts, SMU's implicit-bias training, is an excellent way to show your support for creating a more inclusive campus learning environment. You can sign up at www.ciqatsmu.com.

- **Additional time between classes** – To accommodate faculty requests for 15 minutes between classes in the fall semester and to preserve the regular start times for all classes, the fall schedule has been adjusted. This adjustment:

  o Ensures that there are 15 minutes between all daytime classes to set up technology and clean work stations.
  o Avoids the likelihood of chaotic schedule shifts.
  o Accommodates all classes equally. Classes that meet off-grid cannot be accommodated without adding further disruption.
  o Avoids late-night classes. Classes that normally begin at 6 p.m. could otherwise get pushed to 7 p.m., ending at 10 p.m.

  The academic continuity subcommittee voted on this recommendation, and the Faculty Senate executive committee provided feedback to help refine the implementation. To achieve this, faculty will end class five minutes prior to the normal ending time. All courses will replace the in-person contact time with students in a variety of ways, including through offering study and review sessions, peer review sessions, and asynchronous content options. The replacement time for fall 2020 totals 3.5 contact hours and can take place across the semester, including during the period of VIRTUAL learning after Thanksgiving break. Paige Ware will be working with CTE and OIT to gather faculty input for ideas on ways to support this accommodation. Note: The Dedman School of Law's schedule already includes a 15 minute transition period between classes so this adjustment does not apply to their courses.

- **Red-Blue rotation schedule** - SMUFlex courses will follow a Red-Blue rotation schedule. Students will attend class in-person on their assigned day and will engage remotely on the alternate days. In the event that a SMUFlex class has been assigned to space with sufficient seating to accommodate all students, the faculty may choose to meet in-person on all assigned class days. A student however has the ability to decide if they want to strictly adhere to their assigned Red-Blue schedule or if they would like to attend in-person when the option is presented by the faculty member. Students will find out their assigned Red or Blue rotation schedule next week. Students may not request to change their rotation schedule. Students who have requested to be fully REMOTE will not be assigned to the Red-Blue rotation schedule. We will publish the Red-Blue calendar to the SMU website and it will be a feature on each student's course calendar in Canvas.

- **Qualtrics and Pathcheck** – As I shared last week, OIT is partnering with consultants from Ernst and Young to implement a technological solution to manage COVID-19 symptom checking, case management (for employees), and digital tracing before August 14. The team has built a daily

questionnaire along with instructions for individuals who have tested positive or are showing symptoms. Early next week, several staff members will test the daily questionnaire to ensure it works as expected. OIT has configured a Path Check server for the SMU Health Authority and soon SMU will 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.

- **Faculty preparation for online-only course delivery** – As of Wednesday, 554 faculty had enrolled in the two courses (one focused on Canvas, one focused on online teaching) to support faculty members in their delivery of high-quality instruction through fully-online modalities. 313 have finished the Canvas technology course and 212 have finished both courses. Thank you all for participating and for your dedication to offering the best online experience possible for our students. The deadline for completion has now been extended until August 10.

- **More Resources for Fall Instruction: Advancements in EdTech Virtual Conference -** OIT is working with CTE 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. The week will culminate with CTE's Teaching Effectiveness Symposium with virtual resources on humanizing teaching in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting inclusive teaching practices to ensure all SMU students are successful. If you can spare 45 minutes and are willing to help other faculty prepare for fall instruction by sharing your experiences, tips and tricks, please fill out the survey here. Contact your ATSD if you have requests for particular topics you would like to have covered in that week. A full schedule will be posted soon on the Keep Teaching website.

- **SMUFlex 1, 2, 3** – Plan for SMUFlex instruction now! Your faculty support partners in OIT and the CTE have been busy all summer preparing and communicating to you about new classroom technologies and teaching support resources to help you prepare for SMUFlex instructional readiness. First, please visit the Keep Teaching website which features a wealth of self-service information, literature and videos for orienting to SMUFlex. The CTE has created a Faculty Guide to SMUFlex that is available here. The guide includes additional information about SMUFlex as well as some suggestions and strategies to be successful in the fall. Second, please connect with your school's ATSD who is hosting group SMUFlex orientation sessions in your school. Third, please visit your assigned classroom space as quickly as possible to begin practicing and orienting to use the new technology as you plan and adapt your course for this unique mode of instruction. If you have any questions or need help, your OIT and CTE partners still have plenty of time to get you up to

speed with the new technology and consult with you about teaching challenges.

- **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. I will distribute this language to faculty in a separate email early next week.

- **Exams, tests, and quizzes to be delivered exclusively online in fall 2020** – In response to a recommendation by the academic continuity subcommittee, 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. Several faculty members have asked if they can conduct paper-based testing if they are teaching in a modality that permits all students to be in the same room. We are discouraging in-class testing because of the flexibility that everyone might need in case health issues arise. To fulfill this requirement in the most constructive way, particularly for first-year students with little/no previous exposure to online and/or high-pressure exams, the academic continuity subcommittee has also recommended that faculty consider, when pedagogically appropriate for their disciplines and contexts, that the syllabus include practice exams to make sure all procedures and technology function properly, and that faculty minimize the use of non-Canvas or non-SMU supported technologies when possible. Consult SMU's "Keep Teaching" website for additional information and support for this important interim requirement.

- **Changes to building access** – As a reminder, beginning August 10, ID card swipes will no longer be required during business hours to access most buildings on campus.

- **Clarification on required face coverings in classrooms** – Students must wear face coverings such as masks, not face shields, in classrooms to provide the best protection. Some faculty may choose to wear face shields instead of masks because if they are lecturing, it may be easier for the students to hear and understand them. Faculty will be distanced from students and may also be behind plexiglass partitions for extra protection.

- **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. The course has been assigned to all students who were not approved for remote-only instruction, and students will have access to the course today. 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. Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. K.C. Mmeje sent the following [message](#) to students on Wednesday with more details.

- **SMU CAN and community "pledge to protect"** – SMU CAN has developed a community "pledge to protect." Prior to the start of the fall semester, all faculty, staff and students will be asked to review and sign the pledge to confirm our understanding and commitment to our personal responsibilities during these challenging times. Click [here](#) to review and sign. Please note that to submit, we request that community members provide their names and SMU IDs. This is not an effort to identify individuals who have not signed, but rather to understand the level of commitment in the different segments of our campus community. This pledge is also included in the student return-to-campus training.

News and Noteworthy

- **Faculty Senate recognizes extraordinary faculty and staff** – During the August 5 town hall, the senators presented Jason Warner (OIT, Academic Technology Services Lead), Jennifer Culver (Academic Technology Services, Simmons), and Addy Tolliver (Center for Teaching Effectiveness) with the Faculty Senate's newly created Extraordinary Staff awards. They also recognized Michael Harris (Center for Teaching Effectiveness) with an Extraordinary Faculty award. These awards are well deserved recognition for the efforts of these exceptional faculty and staff members in support of our faculty's need to transition to remote and online learning strategies in response to COVID-19.

- *Diverse* **ranks SMU's graduate programs in engineering and mathematics** – In the July 23 issue of *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, the publication's annual rankings of Top 100 Producers of Minority Graduate Students in STEM were [released](#). SMU ranked:

  - 15th in the nation in mathematics and statistics
  - 39th in the nation in computer and information sciences
  - 48th in the nation in engineering

  Please join in me in congratulating SMU's faculty, staff and students in these departments for this significant accomplishment.

- **On the Horizon: New Faculty Fellowship Program** – The Faculty Fellows program is creating a new pathway for faculty and graduate students 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 encourage faculty members and graduate students to

be on the lookout for specific job descriptions and application details as early as next week. This will be open to tenured and non-tenure-track faculty.

Sincerely,

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