



SMU

Elizabeth G. Loba
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Office of the Provost

April 1, 2021

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 to advance the goals of SMU's strategic plan and continue to move SMU forward and upward. If you have suggestions for what we should include in future communications, please send your ideas to this [email address](#). Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

This week's message comes a day earlier than usual, in observance of Good Friday. In response to this year's extreme winter weather, I recognize that some community members will be facilitating or supporting instruction tomorrow and want to thank those individuals for their service. For everyone, however you choose and are able to celebrate, I wish you a safe and happy holiday weekend.

Today's update falls into three categories: 1) Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence, 2) Spring 2021, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **SMU faculty member receives early career award** – Dr. Dominique Baker, Assistant Professor of Education Policy in the Simmons School of Education, received the 2021 [Early Career Award](#) from the Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP). Dr. Baker received the award in March at the association's annual conference. She also received a \$1,000 award for the promise and contributions she has shown to the field.
- **College/School Research spotlight** – Raytheon Intelligence and Space has [announced](#) a partnership with SMU and Virginia Tech on artificial intelligence and machine learning research. Congratulations to Dr. Eric Larson, Associate Professor in the Lyle School of Engineering and the Darwin Deason Institute for Cybersecurity, for his leadership in this collaborative project. SMU will receive \$175,000 over a multi-year agreement to focus on competency-aware machine learning and human machine learning.
- **2022 USN&WR graduate rankings** – This week, *US News and World Report* [released its 2022 rankings of graduate schools](#). I am pleased to highlight two of the most noteworthy gains made by our schools in 2022.

- **Dedman Law** – The Dedman Law School ranked 52nd this year, up four places from last year’s ranking of 56th among the best law schools in America. Congratulations to Dean Collins and Dedman Law’s faculty, staff and students for this recognition.
- **Simmons School of Education** – For 2022, *US News* ranked the Simmons School 59th in the nation. Just two years ago, in the 2020 rankings, Simmons placed 105th. This noteworthy accomplishment is a credit to Dean Stephanie Knight and to Simmons’ faculty, staff and students.
- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**
 - **Call for faculty engagement to discuss 3 – 5 academic areas of distinction** – We have scheduled three Zoom calls to facilitate campus discussion this spring and summer around an initial 3-5 academic areas of distinction for SMU – in particular around our strengths in data science and high-performance computing. Our hope is that the ability to hire additional cluster(s) of faculty members would set SMU apart as world class in those fields. All faculty are encouraged to attend any and all sessions. The first zoom session takes place on Monday, April 5. Click [here](#) to register.
 - **Department-level workload policies revised and approved by May 2021** – Thank you to the faculty, department chairs and deans for the time and effort represented in this week’s draft workload policy submissions. Having departments clarify and operationalize transparent workload policies will be a critical step in helping us reach our research goals. Additionally, establishing these workload policies by the end of spring 2021 is a commitment SMU made in response to the Black Unity Forum action plan as we seek greater transparency and equity.

Once my office has reviewed policy drafts and provided feedback, chairs and faculty will have an opportunity to make revisions through the month of May, and we will continue to iterate across the academic year ahead. Anyone who would like access to resources gathered from webinars and research focused on best practices on developing equitable workload policies can reach out to the Associate Provost for Faculty Success, Paige Ware, at pware@smu.edu.

- **Engaged Learning announces its summer 2021 research intensive program** - The Office of Engaged Learning’s summer research intensive program will match or fully fund undergraduate research assistants and provide specialized training for students in research methods, oral and written presentation techniques, and other professional development skills. Faculty with research projects that could engage undergraduates are [encouraged to apply](#) from now until the April 11 application deadline.

Spring 2021

- **On campus vaccinations this week** – Last week, SMU received 1,170 ‘first doses’ of the Pfizer vaccine and an equal number of ‘second doses.’ Thanks to the nearly 800 students and 400 faculty and staff who registered to receive an on-campus vaccination this week. SMU does not currently have second-dose vaccines available

for individuals who have already received their first shot of Pfizer or Moderna elsewhere, so please reach out to your initial vaccine provider to complete your treatment. Spouses and dependents of SMU employees and retirees are not currently eligible to register but may be at a later date.

- **Methodist Health System (MHS) offers SMU registration for COVID-19 vaccine** – In addition to the on-campus vaccinations, all SMU students, staff and faculty may also [register for the vaccine through the Methodist Health System](#). If the MHS system is full, please check that site frequently as more appointments will become available as supplies increase. Vaccine appointments at MHS are available Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. at Methodist Dallas Medical Center on 1441 N Beckley Ave.
- **Reminder to report your COVID-19 vaccination** – To tailor the University’s requests for vaccine allotments each week and assess the quantity of doses that best meet the needs of our campus, it is important to know how many people have already been vaccinated or are scheduled to get either a single dose of the Johnson and Johnson or the first and/or second doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.

If you have already received your vaccine, please remember to fill out the self-reporting tool – *and keep it up to date if a second dose is required* – on the [Mustang Strong vaccine page](#). Your voluntary submission will not be used to communicate to you directly about your own vaccine status. Unsure of what activities are safe after you are vaccinated? [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer guidelines for what vaccinated individuals may do](#).

As of March 31, over 30% of our faculty and staff have reported receiving at least a first-dose of the vaccine.

- **Supporting Technology Assets Building Logistics and Events (STABLE) project update** – As you may have heard, STABLE is a new enterprise software solution being implemented this year. STABLE will introduce new processes and tools to facilitate work orders for Facilities and OIT, event management, room reservations, key management, space management and more. There is a wealth of information about this project on our [website](#), including a revised project timeline and information about each module.
- **Additional reminders from previous Friday updates:**
 - **Planning for May/summer instruction** – As announced in previous newsletters, and [shared with undergraduate students this week](#), we are currently planning for the continued utilization of Virtual and SMUFlex modalities during the May and summer terms, with hopes of a return to normal, in-person operations in fall 2021. We are reviewing CDC guidelines to determine how recent changes might impact instructional delivery during May and summer terms and, working in consultation with the deans, are developing recommendations for the summer that will facilitate a return to normal fall operations. After reviewing these recommendations with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the

President's Executive Council (PEC), we hope to share additional communication within the next week.

- **Guidance for staff who are able to schedule vaccine shots during working hours** – SMU encourages you to schedule a time to get your COVID vaccination as soon as you are eligible and can find one. While you are not required to take vacation/sick leave to get your vaccine during working hours, you should notify your dean or manager if you miss time and also plan to make up any lost work. We also encourage faculty to be supportive of students who are able to acquire their vaccination during classroom time. Once you've received the vaccination, please [remember to update your status and report it through the reporting tool](#).
- **Adjusting isolation capacity on campus** – Throughout the pandemic, SMU maintained portable isolation pods and off-campus apartment spaces to supplement our on-campus isolation space capacity. Fortunately, these spaces have remained largely unused throughout the pandemic. As campus cases continue to decline, and as our current contracts with those providing these spaces come to an end, we have decided not to retain these options in our isolation space inventory. Reductions for the isolation pods went into effect on March 29, and will go into effect for off-campus apartments on April 22. While we have made the decision to reduce isolation capacity, we will maintain flexibility to quickly add more if needed. For those monitoring our [COVID dashboard](#), you will likely see a decrease in the percentage of isolation beds available as a result of this planned reduction.
- **Request from the Provost's Student Advisory Board** – During this week's meeting with the Student Advisory Board, student leaders reiterated their concerns about how challenging this spring semester has been, particularly for students and faculty, from a mental health perspective. I would encourage faculty to review the Center for Teaching Excellence's (CTE) quick reference guide for [ten pedagogical tips to reduce student anxiety](#). As mentioned previously, I would also encourage faculty to administer [Mid-Semester Feedback](#) surveys – [Mid-Semester Feedback](#) enables faculty to fine-tune a course that is already in progress. Gathering this type of feedback sends a message to students that you care about their success.

To assist you, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has created two editable mid-semester feedback instruments which consist of mid-semester related questions. These instruments are available as downloadable PDFs, Canvas Quizzes, and Qualtrics surveys. Additional information, including detailed instructions for accessing and creating a mid-semester feedback survey, is available on the [CTE website](#).

News and Noteworthy

- **SMU student receives Goldwater scholarship** – Congratulations to Gabrielle Gard for receiving a prestigious Goldwater scholarship. From an estimated pool of over 5,000 college sophomores and juniors, 1,256 natural science, engineering and mathematics students were nominated by 438 academic institutions to compete for this year’s Goldwater scholarships. Gabrielle was amongst the 410 students across the nation to receive this distinction. Special thanks to Dr. Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, and Dr. Rachel Ball-Phillips, Director of Graduate Fellowships and Awards, for the support and mentorship provided to Gabrielle’s nomination.
- **Announcing the SMU Wellpower 5k** – To promote health and wellness within the SMU community, the Department of Human Resources and Simmons’ Health Promotion Management team are coordinating [SMU’s Virtual Wellpower 5k](#). This event allows SMU faculty, staff, students, family and friends to complete the race on their own, any time during the week of **April 10th to April 17th, 2021**. The registration fee is \$10 and includes a free t-shirt and gift bag. A Pacesetter Award will also go to the department with the most participants.
- **Student Senate announces a new safety app** – Student Senate, in partnership with the University and LiveSafe, is excited to announce that the new SMU safety app is now live and available to download on your mobile phone. This easy-to-use mobile platform adds another important resource that students, faculty and staff can use to help keep SMU a safe learning and living environment. You can learn more about the SMU LiveSafe app by watching this [video](#) and [visiting this page](#). You can also download the SMU LiveSafe app today from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#). As always, please remember to call 911 in the event of an emergency.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Lobo
Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
P.O. Box 750221, Dallas, TX 75275-0221
egloboa@smu.edu
214-768-3219

