



SMU®

Office of the Provost

April 16, 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](#). Today's update falls into three categories: 1) Spring 2021, 2) Road to R-1, and Research/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2021

- **Memo to faculty regarding final exams** – Faculty, please review my [email](#) from earlier this week with important reminders about University policies and procedures related to final exams and final grades. Thank you for your tremendous efforts in making spring 2021 a success.
- **Update on the Social Justice and Equity Task Force** – Late last week, Professor Jessica Dixon Weaver and I met to review nominations and applications for those interested in serving on the [Social Justice and Equity Task Force](#). Look for an announcement on the Task Force's composition and next steps before the end of the spring term.
- **School-specific May Commencement ceremonies in Moody Coliseum and McFarlin Auditorium** – School-specific commencement ceremonies will resume this spring in both Moody Coliseum and McFarlin Auditorium. Masks will be required in these facilities and, in keeping with current CDC and state/local guidelines, 5' – 6' spacing will be enforced. For those unable to participate in person, these events will be livestreamed as well. Please contact your Dean's office for additional information.
- **Important reminder about course materials:** For faculty teaching May or summer terms classes, if you have not reported your course materials yet, please do so this week at the new [Adoption & Insights Portal \(AIP\)](#). We highly recommend this 2-minute overview (click [here](#)) for a quick demo of the AIP Portal. All of the bumps in the rollout of the tool this spring have been smoothed out—we appreciate your patience!

Many of our students are on financial aid packages that rely on our use of this portal, which is committed to supporting our students in obtaining the most affordable options, including many Open Educational Resources and other low-cost solutions. It is a requirement to ensure SMU's compliance with Senate Bill (SB) 810 – the law relating to how the University provides information on course material (e.g., textbooks, packets, open educational resources) to our students. Please contact Rachel Russell at the SMU Bookstore, tm526@bncollege.com, with any questions.

- **Additional reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **On-campus vaccination update/communication about second-dose** – For those who received first doses of the Pfizer vaccine through SMU, be on the lookout for communication from the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center for instructions on registering for your second dose. Those who received an on-campus 'first dose' during the week of April 5th should have received a message yesterday.

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 also now eligible to register.

- **Methodist Health System (MHS) registration for COVID-19 vaccine** – Methodist Health System (MHS) is also offering more appointments to SMU students, faculty and staff. Vaccine appointments 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. To schedule an appointment, [click here](#).
- **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 the first and/or second doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.

As of April 16, over 360 faculty and 730 staff (approaching 50%) have reported receiving at least a first-dose of the vaccine.

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.](#)

- **Reminder: Guidance for staff and students who are able to schedule vaccine shots during working or class hours** – SMU encourages you to schedule a time to get your COVID vaccination as soon as you are eligible and can find one. While staff 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 remind 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.](#)
- **May commencement** – SMU is currently solidifying plans for the [May Commencement](#) ceremony in Ford Stadium and will provide updated information as it becomes available. We anticipate following the same health and safety guidelines put in place during our previous commencement ceremonies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As always, your participation in commencement means a great deal to our graduating students and their guests, but it is very much voluntary. Please access the [May Commencement RSVP](#) webpage to reserve your seat. The deadline to RSVP is **today** by 4:00 p.m. Confirmations with important information regarding entry, security screening and prohibited items will be sent to you closer to the ceremony date.

If you are unable to attend May Commencement in person, you may also view the ceremony virtually at smu.edu/live. Whether you attend in person or watch the webcast, I hope you will join with your colleagues in support of these events and the values they represent.

- **Registration for summer/fall underway** – Enrollment commenced last week for returning undergraduate students for the May, summer and fall 2021 terms. Open enrollment, for visiting, new and readmitted students, and continuing non-degree students began on Wednesday, April 14. Click [here](#) for more information.
- **Summer operations and preparing for fall** – We are currently planning for the continued utilization of Virtual and SMUFlex modalities during the May and summer terms, with plans of a return to normal, in-person operations in fall 2021.

The University's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is also revising our COVID-19 Operations Plan to reflect changes, and we plan to share those

updates with you before the end of the spring 2021 semester. If faculty have ideas or questions, we encourage them to reach out to any of the four representatives of Academic Affairs on the EOC: Dean Sam Holland, Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation Peter Moore, Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware, or directly to me.

Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **Call for research cluster proposals for 2021 – 2022** – The Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII) offers a home for informal, collaborative research clusters of scholars who wish to meet together to discuss shared interdisciplinary interests. These clusters must have at least two faculty and/or graduate student conveners who are responsible for the cluster’s activities, and they should be open to faculty and graduate students from across campus. DCII also welcomes participants from other universities in the DFW area as well as from the broader community. The DCII provides space for meetings in Ford Hall, staff assistance to organize the meetings and events, and up to \$4,000 in funding to support the activities of the cluster.

Those interested in forming or renewing a research cluster for 2021–2022 should submit a proposal via this [link](#). The deadline for applications is **Friday, May 21**. For examples of previous and current research clusters sponsored by the DCII, visit [here](#).

- **SMU faculty member receives NEH summer funding** – Congratulations to Kristina Nielsen, Assistant Professor of Musicology, who was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Award for her project, “Aztec Music and Dance in Los Angeles.” She will focus on the performance of Aztec dance in Los Angeles and how it integrates Indigenous culture alongside Mexican nationalism. Drawing on research with dancers in Los Angeles, her project looks at how they perceive history, tradition, and identities through music and dance performance. These competitive NEH awards support individual faculty in pursuing advanced research in the humanities.
- **SMU faculty member provides expert testimony before the United States Senate** – This week, Dr. Dominique Baker, Assistant Professor of Education Policy in the Simmons School, represented SMU in front of the United States Senate. At the invitation of Senator Elizabeth Warren, Dr. Baker testified before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs as an expert on student loans and racial justice.
- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**
 - **Virtual town hall debrief and reminder to sign up for additional sessions** – On Monday, April 5, nearly 30 faculty members joined me and Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School, in a virtual townhall to discuss 3-5 areas of distinction for SMU. Our hope is that being able to hire additional, interdisciplinary clusters of faculty in

strategic areas of strength, coupled with SMU's emerging capabilities in data science and high-performance computing, will set SMU apart in these fields.

Please see [last week's newsletter](#) for a longer description of the event. Or, click [here](#) to access a recording of last week's session.

All faculty are encouraged to attend either of the remaining sessions. Click [here](#) to register.

- **Workload Policy update and next steps** – My office is currently reviewing drafts and will return comments as quickly as possible so that department chairs and faculty will have the opportunity to make revisions through the month of May.

Be on the lookout for additional information once draft workload policies are finalized. We plan to provide SMU's faculty access to all department-level and school/college-level workload policies through the Provost Office's website.

News and Noteworthy

- **Faculty Senate dinner with Provost Office leadership team** – I would like to recognize and thank the [2020-2021 members of the Faculty Senate](#) for their service to SMU – especially during this challenging academic year. Each spring, the Provost's Office hosts a dinner for Senators. While we were unable to convene last year, this year's event took place outdoors at the Dallas Arboretum in a safe and beautiful setting.
- **Sharroll and Bryan S. Sheffield '01 commit \$15 million to the Cox School of Business** – A \$15 million [gift from Sharroll and Bryan S. Sheffield '01](#) to SMU's Edwin L. Cox School of Business will empower future entrepreneurs by creating new technology-equipped collaborative spaces. Their generous commitment will establish Bryan S. Sheffield Hall, part of the future Cox School renovation and expansion project, which will provide students with innovative learning environments, enabling Mustangs to develop critical skills that are vital to success in today's evolving workplace.
- **SMU undergraduate selected Truman Scholar** – Congratulations to Austin Hickle (class of '22) for his selection, [announced this week](#), as one of this year's class of 62 Truman scholars. Austin is currently studying economics and public policy as both a Hunt and Tower Scholar. The Truman Foundation reviewed 845 files from 328 institutions. Students were nominated by their institution based on their records of leadership, public service, and academic achievement.
- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **Call for faculty participation in Summer 2021 Common Curriculum Assessment** — SMU is committed to ensuring that its general education curriculum includes a regular, rigorous assessment and quality assurance process. SMU has adopted a post-hoc (juried) model of student learning outcomes assessment in general education, where a sampling method is used to collect and assess students' work anonymously after a term is completed. Faculty involvement is critical to the post-hoc success and the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness is recruiting faculty and/or doctoral students to serve as raters. A stipend will be awarded to each rater for one week of work. Most stipends will be \$2,500 but may be reduced if sample of work to be assessed is minimal. The work will take place during May 17 – 21, or May 24 – 28. Two components per week.

If you are interested in serving as a rater on one of the four CC components assessed this summer, please click [here](#). The deadline for sign-up is **Monday, April 19**. If you have any questions, please email assessment@smu.edu.

Sincerely,



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