



# SMU

*Office of the Provost*

January 15, 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) SMU's Road to R-1, 2) Spring 2021, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

## **SMU'S Road to R-1**

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 Budget Process** – Final budget proposals will be reviewed by members of SMU's senior leadership team this month and next with final budget decisions announced in March 2021. The focus throughout our budget deliberations this year, including faculty/staff hiring requests, has been on how budget requests will help us attain SMU's goals within the 2016–2025 Strategic Plan, Black Unity Forum (BUF) Action Plan responses, *U.S. News & World Report* top 50 rankings, and Road to R1.
- **SMU researchers are developing a new, faster COVID-19 antibody test** – Kudos to Lyle School of Engineering's Professors Ali Beskok and Jungchih Chiao for their work in leading a research team to develop a new, faster and possibly more accurate [COVID-19 antibody test](#) than what is currently available.

## **Spring 2021**

- **Faculty welcome-back video** – Our success in navigating fall 2020 was a credit to SMU's outstanding faculty and staff, and I hope this [video](#), also shared in last week's newsletter, will be a useful source of encouragement and information as we prepare for the start of the spring 2021 semester.
- **COVID-19 vaccine plan updates**– As announced last week, [SMU is now an approved provider](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine. We have not yet received any vaccine allocations and do not yet have a definitive timeline, but we'll be ready to go when it does arrive. The Dr. Bob Smith Health Center will follow state and local guidelines in making the vaccine available to the campus community. The [first phase \(1A\) allotment](#) of a limited supply of doses is designated for campus health care workers and police. What remains of that allotment and as additional supplies arrive, distribution to the campus community will follow [the state's 1B](#)

[guidelines](#) (people over 65 and/or with an underlying medical condition). Initial priority will be given to faculty, staff and students in those categories who are physically on campus.

We encourage you to take advantage of the first opportunity to receive the vaccine regardless of whether it is through SMU or another provider. Check with your primary care physician or pharmacist or visit the [Texas COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Locations map](#) for additional vaccination sites and availability.

- **Updates to guidelines for student events** – The Division of Student Affairs has made updates to the student event [guidelines](#) for spring 2021. As a reminder, these guidelines will govern any activity, event, meeting, gathering, practice, ceremony, etc. planned by a SMU student or student group.
- **No extra 5-minute break in classes for spring 2021** – As mentioned in last week’s newsletter, we will return to the standard 10-minute passing period between classes for spring 2021. This decision comes in response to feedback from faculty and students across the fall semester. This return to the typical passing period schedule is reflected in my.smu.edu.
- **Syllabus language for spring 2021** – See my [e-mail](#) to faculty last week for specific information and a number of informational attachments to address policies such as classroom participation, attendance, face coverings for faculty to include in their spring 2021 course syllabi. This language was developed by members of my office working in partnership with the Faculty Senate and Student Senate.
- **Plans for May/Summer 2021** – As announced last week, we are planning for the continued utilization of Virtual and SMUFlex modalities during the May and Summer terms with hopes of a return to normal operations in fall 2021.
- **Scheduling process for fall 2021 classes** – Earlier this week, President Turner [announced](#) SMU’s plans to return to a primarily in-person fall 2021 semester. Taking lessons learned and best practices from our experience developing fall 2020 and spring 2021 schedules, Peter Moore, Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation and Policy, will begin working with Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and class schedulers to develop the schedule for fall 2021.
- **Important requirements about spring term instruction** – As a reminder from last week, SMU has received confirmation from the US Department of Education via the SACSCOC accreditation agency that we are approved to continue to teach in the Virtual and Flex modalities for the spring, May, and summer terms. Please be reminded that this approval is connected to several conditions at SMU:
  1. All courses must stay in the same modality across the semester. Courses that begin in the Flex or Virtual modality cannot be shifted at any point in the semester to a different modality.
  2. The University determines which courses will be offered in which modalities based on course scheduling decisions made by Deans and Department Chairs.

3. When the University returns to its regular course schedule, only those courses and programs that had been approved to be taught online (e.g., Masters in Data Science, OMBA, etc.) can continue to be offered online. All other courses must return to their pre-pandemic offerings as fully in-person instruction. Any decisions to move courses or programs fully or partially online (Virtual) must be part of the established, formal processes for curricular changes through the [Educational Programs Committee](#).
4. Contact hours must be met every week. In SMUFlex classes, synchronous instruction must take place at the regularly scheduled times. Classes cannot be shifted partially to asynchronous or Zoom-based-only instruction during any of the regularly scheduled class times.
5. New attendance options are available for faculty at this [link](#). Decisions about which options to use should be made at the faculty member's discretion, and if included, they must be added to the course syllabus published in Canvas.

We appreciate your efforts as we continue to navigate these important considerations. Thank you, again, for all you have done and continue to do in providing excellent instruction for our students during these challenging times.

### **News and Noteworthy**

- **Call for faculty volunteers for Hunt Leadership Scholars selection** – The Hunt Leadership Scholars Program is seeking additional faculty volunteers to assist with selection of scholars for the class of 2025. Faculty can volunteer in two ways: first, by serving as application readers from January 25 through February 8, and second, by interviewing scholarship finalists on March 12. Both of these duties will be performed online. Additional details and a volunteer sign-up form may be found [here](#). Questions or submissions to volunteer can be directed to Lindsay Davis, Program Director, at [lrDavis@smu.edu](mailto:lrDavis@smu.edu). **Please reply by Wednesday, January 20.**
- **Reminder: Spring faculty meeting now scheduled for Wednesday, January 27** – I hope you saw this week's updated [invitation](#) from Judy King in the Office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Success to the Spring General Faculty meeting, now scheduled for Wednesday, January 27 at 3:45 p.m. in Crum Auditorium as well as by Zoom.

We were able to change the date for the faculty meeting from January 20 to January 27 so that it aligns, as per tradition, with the first week of the spring semester. My thanks to Faculty Senate President Aurelie Thiele for this recommendation and for the willingness to make this change. Please note that limited seating is available in Crum Auditorium. If you prefer to attend in person, e-mail [jaking@smu.edu](mailto:jaking@smu.edu) to make a reservation. A Zoom link to this meeting will be forthcoming as well.

- **Celebrate the birthday and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.** – I would ask everyone to read President Turner's [message](#) this week to the campus community. As we commemorate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday on Monday, January 18, we do so as a nation that is sadly divided along many fault lines. I have been comforted by SMU's ability to come together in response to the unspeakable and inequitable experiences of our Black community members.

As President Turner pledged, we are focused on delivering on the commitments made in response to the Black Unity Forum's Action Plan. I look forward to providing updates in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,



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