



SMU

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

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Dear Faculty and Staff:

I hope that each and every one of you had a wonderful holiday season and am pleased to have this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and healthy new year.

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 four categories: 1) SMU's Road to R-1, 2) Spring 2021, 3) Closing out fall 2020, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

SMU'S Road to R-1

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 Budget Process** – 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. Deans and Associate Provosts have done an outstanding job coming together this year to prioritize their requests and to strategize ways, using transparent data, to collaborate. Final budget proposals will be reviewed by members of SMU's senior leadership team in January and February with final budget decisions announced in March 2021.
- **Academic Analytics implementation update** – As a reminder, last fall SMU signed an agreement with [Academic Analytics](#) as a way, currently utilized by many R-1 institutions, to help faculty and academic leadership identify additional opportunities for faculty funding, honorific awards, and/or collaborations. The Deans, Associate Deans for Research, Associate Provosts, and I will have University-wide access to the data so that we can look for interdisciplinary opportunities for faculty research support. Department chairs will have access to data first at the department level followed by their college/school level to look for similar areas of interdisciplinary alignment.

Individual faculty members will have access to their own profiles, which will include the ability to add information, seek collaborations, and view recommended honorific awards and grants.

Early in the spring term, faculty should be on the lookout for invitations to webinars to promote awareness and to generate ideas about using the tool to support the pursuit of funding, collaborations, and honorific awards. In the meantime, if you are interested in learning more about Academic Analytics, please reach out to Associate Provost for Faculty Success, Paige Ware at pware@smu.edu.

Spring 2021

- **Faculty welcome-back video** – As we prepare for the start of the spring semester, I would encourage all faculty to watch this brief (2-minute) [video](#) highlighting some of the key ways you can stay informed and safe this spring. Our success in navigating fall 2020 was a credit to SMU's outstanding faculty and staff, and I hope this video will be a useful source of encouragement and information at the beginning of the new year.
- **COVID-19 vaccine plan** – [SMU is now an approved provider](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine. We have not yet received any vaccine allocations, but the first (1A) phase allotment is expected to arrive soon. The Dr. Bob Smith Health Center will follow state and local guidelines in making the vaccine available to the campus community.
- **No extra 5-minute break in classes for spring 2021** – In fall 2020, SMU extended the passing period between SMUFlex/in-person courses to 15 minutes to allow students and faculty additional transition and preparation time between classes. In response to feedback from faculty and students across the fall semester, we are responding to the recommendation to return in spring 2021 to the standard 10-minute passing period between classes. This return to the typical passing period schedule is reflected in my.smu.edu.
- **Syllabus language for spring 2021** – Members of my office, working in partnership with the Faculty Senate and Student Senate, have developed language to address policies such as classroom participation, attendance, face coverings, and safety for faculty to include in their spring 2021 course syllabi. See my [e-mail](#) to faculty sent yesterday for specific information and a number of informational attachments.
- **Plans for May/Summer 2021** – 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.

- **Important requirements about spring term instruction** – We have 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, as was done for the spring term.
 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.

Closing out fall 2020

- **Approved fall 2020 transcript language** – Following review and feedback from Deans, Faculty Senate, Student Senate, and Legal Affairs, the Educational Programs Committee (EPC) has approved the following language for inclusion on fall 2020 transcripts:

“For fall 2020, SMU’s course instruction and scheduling included protocols for safety and flexibility in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. SMU taught many courses partially or fully virtual.”

- **December Commencement recap** – The December 19 Commencement ceremony took place as planned in Ford Stadium with 260 graduates attending the event. Thanks to the faculty and staff who made this important milestone memorable for our graduates.

News and Noteworthy

- **New Faculty in Residence Appointments** – Dr. K.C. Mmeje, Vice President for Student Affairs, and I are pleased to [announce](#) the appointment of three new Faculty-in-Residence (FiR) to begin their service July 1, 2021. Please join us in congratulating Carol Dickson-Carr, Professor of Practice in Dedman College; Jack Levison, W.J.A. Power Chair of Old Testament Interpretation and Biblical Hebrew in Perkins School of Theology; and Alberto Pastor, Associate Professor of Spanish and General Linguistics in Dedman College's Department of World Languages and Literatures.

The selection process was very competitive, and we were excited to have received so many applications for these positions from a very talented pool of faculty. Each FiR family will reside in one of our [Residential Commons](#) and will work with the respective Residential Community Directors (RCD) and student leaders to enhance the educational experiences of their residents.

- **Message from President Turner on violence at the Capitol** – I encourage you to read this [message](#) from President Turner regarding the terrible incidents of violence that took place this week in Washington D.C.

Sincerely,



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