



SMU[®]

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

July 23, 2021

Dear Faculty and Staff:

With just about a month before the start of the fall 2021 semester, I hope your summer remains restful, healthy and productive. Whether you are teaching, conducting research, or preparing exhibits or performances, your contributions are vital and valued in our quest for even greater academic quality. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support of this lofty but achievable goal.

As mentioned in the [final weekly](#) of the spring 2021 semester, my plan is to send only one update in the month of July. 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) Summer/Fall 2021, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Summer 2021/Fall 2021

- **SMU announces Fall 2021 safety protocols** – Offering in-person instruction and full campus activities, as planned and previously announced, will require that our community maintain the healthy behaviors, learned over the past year, to keep the virus spread under control. Please see the full [message](#) concerning SMU's plans for a return to regular operations for Fall 2021.

As noted in that communication, faculty who want to require masks in their classrooms are able to do so. To facilitate, faculty will receive an email from my office next week with a link to a simple survey. Faculty requesting that masks be required in their classroom will just need to make that selection on the survey and provide some basic information (e.g., class name, room, and teaching schedule). To ensure consistent communications, provision of masks to those classrooms, and to keep our students informed about classroom expectations, this information will be available to department chairs, deans, and the Provost's Office.

Survey responses will be due two weeks prior to the first day of class (August 2 for Dedman Law and the Cox School of Business; and August 9 for the remainder of the campus). Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success, will be meeting with the following college/school representatives to develop the survey and to execute distribution and completion tracking:

- Lyle School of Engineering: Jim Dees, Assistant Dean of Assessment, Data and Graduate Studies
- Dedman School of Law: Becca Henley, Assistant Dean for Administration and Chief of Staff
- Cox School of Business: Julie Maass, Executive Director of Graduate Student Enrollment and Engagement
- Perkins School of Theology: Joe Monroy, Registrar and Director of Academic Services
- Dedman College: Tom Carr, Associate Dean for Curriculum and Professor of Mathematics
- Meadows School of the Arts: Gretchen Smith, Division of Theatre Chair, Head of Theatre Studies, Associate Professor
- Simmons School of Education: Tim Jacobbe, Professor and Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning

Along with Paige, Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, will be meeting today and Monday with department chairs and the college/school point people listed above to draft the language to be included in all faculty syllabi regarding classroom mask policy. I will work with the deans and the Faculty Senate to finalize the language and, once approved, will send to all faculty as quickly as possible. Instructors must clearly define their classroom mask requirement in the course syllabus prior to the start of classes.

We recognize that our response to the pandemic continues to require flexibility and a spirit of cooperation and care for our entire community. This week, Dr. K.C. Mmeje, Vice President for Student Affairs, and I again drafted a charge to the SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN) to support our efforts to adopt and adhere to effective safety protocol measures. Read more below.

- **Remobilizing SMU CAN** – Last summer, the SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN) was established to support a greater understanding and adoption of the personal responsibilities needed to keep our campus safe and healthy. As a first step, SMU CAN developed a community “pledge to protect,” signed by all faculty, staff and students, to confirm a shared understanding and commitment to our personal responsibilities in response to the pandemic. The group met regularly throughout the year, serving as a sounding board for key decisions and supporting the adoption of many health and safety protocols, such as COVID-19 testing, vaccinations, and vaccine reporting – including the gift card to incentivize student reporting. Dr. K.C. Mmeje and I will send this [revised charge](#), pending any further

edits that we will share in future communications, next week to a reconstituted SMU CAN in preparation for Fall 2021.

- **The Mustang Strong website is the most up-to-date source of information regarding SMU's COVID-19 response** – Please continue reviewing the [Mustang Strong website](#) for information on SMU's COVID-19 response. Here, you can find answers to frequently asked questions, access the latest [campus announcements](#), review information on receiving and reporting the [vaccine](#), and monitor the latest data on [confirmed COVID-19 cases on campus](#).
- **SMU in Four and Canvas use for Fall 2021** – A team of faculty and administrators from all five undergraduate schools has built out a strategy to support our students in on-time, four-year graduation plans. One aspect of that approach is to utilize Canvas to support students' access to course syllabi, assignment due dates, and grade standing in class. Starting this fall, all 3-credit courses offered as part of the undergraduate curriculum (with the exception of independent studies) are required to include three technical tools in Canvas: syllabus, assignment/gradebook, and calendar:



Syllabus



Gradebook



Calendar

Our Instructional Technology colleagues have developed a number of supports over the summer and into the early fall to help faculty with this initiative:

1. Self-help, all-in-one website – This [online resource](#) went live in June to inform specific support resources available to help faculty more easily and quickly find pathways for self-service, how-to videos, downloadable guides, and how to directly connect to the appropriate academic technology service director (ATSD) for personalized support.
 2. Campus-wide (macro) workshops and training event – These will start today and continue past Labor Day and are available to the entire faculty community. These events are posted to the [website referenced above](#) and the OIT training website, and were communicated in the IT Connect newsletter [HERE](#). In addition, each school's ATSD office is communicating these directly to faculty in their schools.
 3. Individualized, School/College-based Supports – Each ATSD is communicating the resources above to their specific faculty. They are also coordinating and offering unit-specific learning/orientation sessions as well as 1:1 appointments.
 4. Workshops the week of August 16-20 – OIT is coordinating focused Canvas structured training sessions (both virtual and in-person) as well as walk-in consultation sessions out of the two Fondren Library computer labs. Faculty can walk in and simply ask questions to receive hands-on help.
- **The Center for Teaching Effectiveness' Annual Teaching Effectiveness Symposium** – Make sure to register for CTE's 29th Annual Teaching

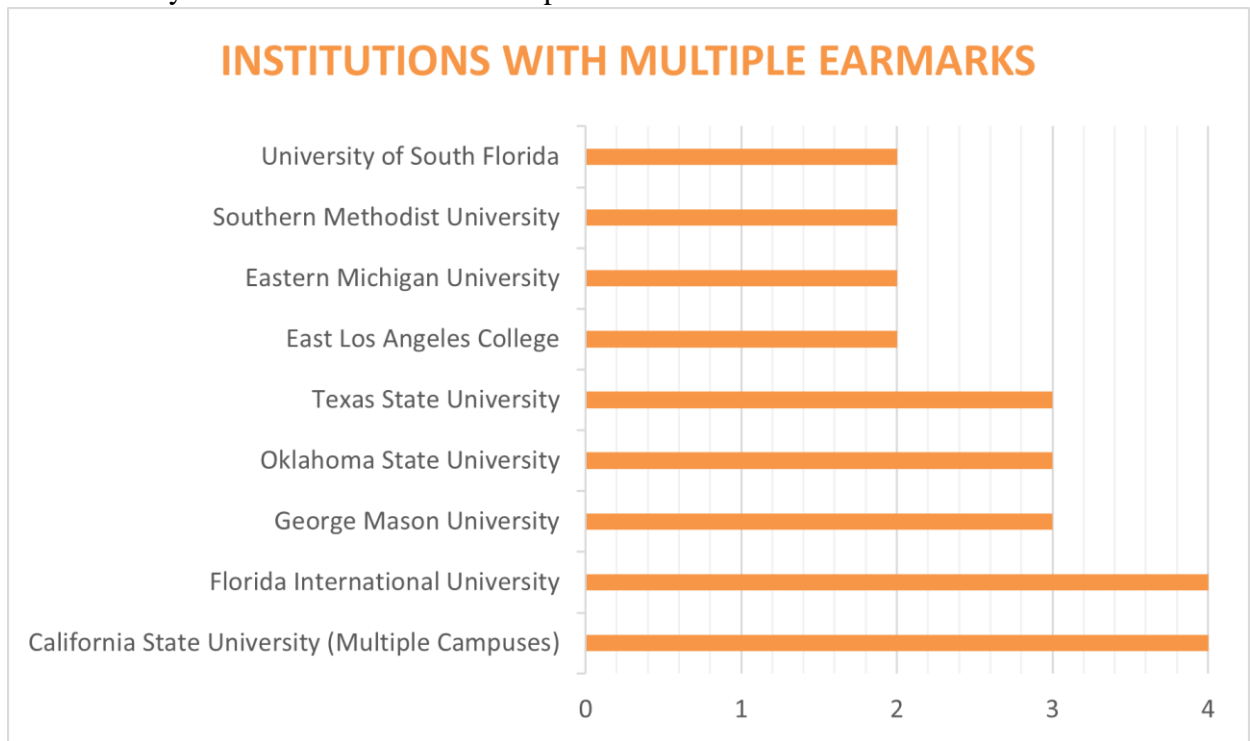
Effectiveness Symposium! This event will be held the morning of Thursday, August 19, 2021, from 9:00 until 11:30 am, and will be held in-person at the Great Hall of Prothro Hall. Check in for this event begins at 8:30 am. Breakfast tacos and coffee will be available.

At this event, you will hear from Altshuler Distinguished professors and other faculty colleagues to learn and discuss practical teaching tips to kick off the 2021 academic year! To register, please visit

<https://booking.smu.edu/calendar/cte/TES21>. For faculty attending, you are invited to meet and mingle with our newly hired SMU faculty immediately after the symposium; [fill out this form so we can order your lunch](#).

Scholarly and Creative Excellence/Road to R-1

- **House Appropriations Committee’s earmark list released** – As referenced in this week’s Inside Higher Ed [article](#), the House Appropriations Committee has approved more than \$272 million in funding through earmarks that would go to projects at 228 colleges and universities. SMU is identified in the article as one of only nine universities with multiple earmarks.



The appropriation bills will require approval by both chambers of Congress and signature by President Biden prior to receipt of funding; however, this is a promising first step and well-deserved recognition for SMU’s research with impact.

- **Three strategic external searches to begin in early Fall 2021** – Jim Quick, Dean of the Moody School and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies has announced his plans to retire at the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. Under his outstanding leadership, SMU has progressed from R3 to R2 in the Carnegie Classification of Research Universities and launched the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies. His contributions will be sorely missed.

In recognition of his tremendous workload and the importance of leadership in the areas of research and graduate studies, SMU will launch two national, external searches this fall for his replacements: 1) Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer and 2) Dean of the Moody School and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies. Early in the Fall 2021 semester, we will launch two search committees, one for each position. Be on the lookout for additional information in future newsletters.

SMU's Data Science Institute (DSI) was launched in Fall 2020 to coordinate and facilitate interdisciplinary research teams and programs in Data Science across the University. As the DSI's Inaugural Director, Dr. Lynne Stokes, Professor in Dedman College's Department of Statistical Science, has served SMU by establishing and positioning the DSI for lasting sustainability and success. In Spring 2022, SMU will conduct a national search for her successor, and we will call on our data science faculty at that time to inform and support the search process.

- **Strategic internal searches in Fall 2021:** Having established the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness and admirably shepherded SMU through our decennial reaffirmation of accreditation with the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Patty Alvey, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, has announced her plans to retire from SMU in December 2021. We plan to conduct an internal search this fall for Patty's replacement.

Dr. Michael Harris, Professor and Department Chair *ad interim* in Simmons' Department of Education Policy and Leadership and Director of SMU's Center for Teaching Effectiveness (CTE), has announced his desire to transition out of his director position with CTE. We will conduct an internal search for Michael's replacement as well. Michael has served all of us for over 6 years as the CTE Director, and we are grateful for the innovative contributions and positive impact on our community through his leadership.

Two of our inaugural Provost's Faculty Fellows have accepted exciting leadership positions at SMU so we will conduct searches this fall for two new faculty fellows to replace them. Dr. Johnitha Johnson, Clinical Assistant Professor in Simmons' Department of Teaching and Learning and Provost's Faculty Fellow for Equity and

Inclusion, will partner with Chief Diversity Officer Maria Dixon Hall for a fellowship with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion; and Gordon Law, Visiting Professor of Practice in Advertising and Provost's Faculty Fellow for Strategic Communications, will serve as chair *ad interim* of Meadows' Temerlin Advertising Institute. Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success, will open a call for new faculty fellow applications early in the fall 2021 semester.

- **Reminder: Performance-based funding (PBF) fiscal year 2022 final results** – In consultation with the deans over the past academic year, my office developed a performance-based funding model to inform and promote the transparent distribution of discretionary funds annually from the Office of the Provost to SMU's academic units. Please see the first [summer 2021 update](#) for a detailed review of fiscal year 2022 (June 2021 – May 2022) results and click here for an [updated and final](#) distribution.
- **Reminder: Workload policies** – SMU is committed to developing and approving department-level and unit-level workload documents that make our SMU policies clear and transparent at the unit level, which will be a critical step in helping us reach our research and creative impact goals for R1 and our BUF goals around greater transparency and equity.

See the first [summer 2021 update](#) for a more detailed update, but our goal remains to approve and post final department-level workload policies early in the Fall 2021 semester. As we continue this work, click [here](#) for to review those documents that are close to full approval. We will let you know when more documents are finalized and posted to our website.

- **Memo to faculty regarding changes to faculty hiring deliberations for Fall 2021** – Click here to review last week's [memo](#) to deans regarding changes to the faculty search and recruitment processes to become effective beginning August 1, 2021. These changes were developed in close consultation with Samantha Thomas, Executive Director for Access and Equity; Maria Dixon Hall our Chief Diversity Officer; and Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success. These efforts are aligned with the university response to the [Black Unity Forum Action plan](#) as laid out in 1.3: Increase Black representation in hiring processes on campus and will be an important topic of conversation this month as I meet with deans to plan for upcoming faculty searches.

Last week's *Dallas Morning News* [article](#) highlights some of the challenges and disappointing results in our state's efforts to recruit Black faculty over the past decade.

News and Noteworthy

- **SMU DataArts receives significant funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies** – Last week, Bloomberg Philanthropies announced a \$2.5 million commitment, over the coming three years (2022-2024), to support SMU DataArts. This commitment represents a 25% increase over their previous level of 3-year support from Bloomberg. New for 2022-2024, funding will support SMU DataArts' participation in Bloomberg's Philanthropies' Digital Accelerator Program, which you can read more about [here](#). This program will "...help cultural non-profit organizations stabilize and thrive in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic through strategic improvements to their technology infrastructure." Congratulations to Dr. Zannie Voss, Chair and Professor in Meadows' Arts Management and Arts Entrepreneurship and Director of SMU DataArts, and the rest of the team for this recognition.
- **SMU schools ranked in Diverse Issues in Higher Education** – Four programs, Mathematics and Statistics in Dedman College and Computer and Information Sciences and Engineering in Lyle, are represented in the [July 8, 2021 edition](#) of Diverse Issues in Higher Education's prestigious Top Producers of STEM Minority Graduate rankings:

 - #14 in Mathematics and Statistics (Harvard #17, Carnegie Mellon #19)
 - #42 (tied with Harvard) in Computer and Information Sciences – Masters (UT #49, University of Dallas #58, UNT #98)
 - #45 in Engineering – Masters (UTA #24)
- **SMU's Chemistry program featured in Diversity magazine** – Kudos to Dedman College's dean, Tom DiPiero, Department of Chemistry Professor and Chair, Elfi Kraka, faculty, staff and students for this month's recognition in [Diversity magazine](#). To increase diversity, in 2017 Dr. Kraka and the late Dr. Dieter Cremer created an entirely new chemistry Ph.D. program in theoretical and computational chemistry. The program is now in its fourth year, with all of the first cohort close to graduation. Some have already accepted a postdoctoral position or a position in a research and development (R&D) department. Between 65% - 70% of the students are female, and the program recruits diverse students from all over the world.
- **Dedman College's team wins first place in competition sponsored by the International Statistical Institute** – From May 2020 through July 2021, the International Statistical Institute (ISI) launched the [International Year of Women in Statistics and Data Science](#) to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. As part of this year's celebration, the ISI created its Florence Nightingale Prize for Data Visualization to honor Florence Nightingale's exemplary use of data visualization to convey statistical information. A team of SMU undergraduates took first prize in the competition for their [work](#): Modeling

opioid use using Bayesian methods and understanding drug gateways through network analysis.

I hope you all continue to have a safe, restful, and productive summer. We look forward to coming together next month as we launch into a promising academic year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth G. Lobo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth G. Lobo, PhD
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>



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