



SMU

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

March 12, 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) Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence, 2) Spring 2021, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

SMU'S Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **Fiscal-year 2021-2022 budget process** – Last week, units within the Provost's Office received preliminary notification of their budgets for fiscal year 2022 which begins this June. The focus throughout our budget deliberations this year included faculty/staff hiring requests and how those requests will help us attain SMU's goals within the 2016–2025 Strategic Plan and Black Unity Forum (BUF) Action Plan, as well as *U.S. News & World Report* top 50 ranking and R1 status.

To further align current resources with our strategic objectives, the academic units requested \$6.7M. To meet these needs, I am pleased to report we preliminarily identified funding for the entire amount from the reallocation of one-time funding from the Provost discretionary budget and resources within the college/schools. Contingent upon Board approval, the \$6.7M includes 16 faculty positions and 22 staff positions, many of which will be filled using existing vacant positions that will be re-allocated. The case for these strategic allocations was strengthened by the collaborative approach taken by the Deans as well as the Associate Provosts in setting priorities.

- **Call for faculty engagement to identify 3–5 academic areas of distinction** – I have asked the Deans to work with their faculty this spring and summer to identify the 3-5 key academic areas of distinction of SMU – in particular around our strengths in data science and high performance computing – that, with the ability to hire an additional cluster(s) of accomplished faculty members, would set SMU apart as world-class in those fields. This will require significant investment and also allow opportunities for endowments to provide ongoing support. Because of his uniquely informed perspective as Dean of the Moody School and Associate Provost for Research, I have asked Jim Quick to coordinate this important activity with the Deans. To facilitate these conversations, be on the lookout for an invitation to a series of faculty zoom townhalls this spring.

- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **Research Days 2021** – Research Days events will be virtual and will occur March 15 – 19. In addition to a student research video competition, there will be live talks and panel discussions available online. Events will begin at 6:00 p.m. on **Monday, March 15**, with a keynote talk by Dr. Ian Bogost, an author, award-winning game designer, and Ivan Allen College Distinguished Chair in Media Studies and Professor of Interactive Computing at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Dr. Bogost’s talk will be titled “The Enduring Victory of Lo-Fi Technology.” You can register for Dr. Bogost’s talk [here](#). Student video presentations and a schedule of live events are available on the [Research Days website](#).
- **Department-level workload policies revised and approved by May 2021** – This is a reminder that SMU is committed to developing and approving department-level workload policies by May 2021. To meet the late-May timeline, drafts should be submitted by **Wednesday, March 31**, so that feedback can be provided. Chairs and faculty will have an opportunity to make revisions through May, and we will continue to iterate across the academic year ahead.

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. 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 Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware at pware@smu.edu.

Spring 2021

- **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. Once you’ve received the vaccination, please [remember to update your status and report it through the reporting tool](#). We also encourage faculty to be supportive of students who are able to acquire their vaccination during classroom time.
- **Test of SMU’s emergency notification system scheduled next week** – On Wednesday, March 17, at 3:50 p.m. (a passing time between classes on that day), we will be testing the mass notification systems in the buildings listed below. By doing this during a passing period, we will avoid disturbing classroom instruction. The test will only take a few minutes and will take place in the following buildings:
 - Ford/Loyd
 - 3004 SMU BLVD
 - Martin Hall
 - Meadows Museum
 - Perkins Chapel
 - 3035 Dyer
 - 3058 SMU Blvd

- Dedman Life Science
- Fondren/Heroy
- 3064 SMU Blvd
- Service House
- 3005 Dyer
- Blanton
- Collins Exec. Center
- Dallas Hall
- Dedman Sports
- Embrey
- Junkins
- Hillcrest Parking Garage
- Daniel (Law) Garage
- Indoor Practice Center (IPC)
- Aquatic Center
- Child Care Center
- Bridwell Library
- Ford Research Center
- Daniel House
- Hughes Trigg

- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **SMU to continue current campus safety protocols for COVID-19** – SMU will [continue to follow](#) our current guidelines requiring masks and social distancing on campus through the remainder of the spring semester. In light of the [Governor’s executive order](#) to lift the state mandate on masks as well as other restrictions, we will continue to monitor and review industry-specific guidance and recommendations from the federal Centers for Disease Control and state public health authorities before implementing any changes to our safety guidelines.
- **Scheduling missed classes for spring 2021** – Please see my [message](#) from March 2, to faculty, staff and students for information on SMU’s approach to recovering the almost five days of instruction lost due to last month’s extreme winter weather.
- **SMU’s new COVID-19 vaccine self-reporting survey** – Each week, SMU requests to receive an allotment of vaccines for COVID-19 from the State of Texas. To tailor that request 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. Please take a minute to fill out the self-reporting tool survey [on this page](#) – and keep it up to date – to report your vaccination progress.

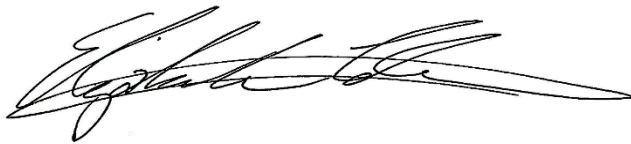
Providing information for this survey is voluntary, and your willingness to assist SMU’s planning efforts by sharing your vaccine status is appreciated. Therefore, even if you receive the vaccine in the future at an off-campus location, please update your vaccination status by retaking the survey. If you have not received the vaccine and are still unsure about which eligibility phase you fall into, the guided survey on the same page may also be helpful for you.

- **A new my.SMU experience for students** – Last week, SMU launched a new dashboard within my.SMU focused on improving the student experience. Now, students can access their suite of tools from my.SMU in one centralized location – from viewing academic progress, to an all-new scheduling tool, to managing their financial accounts. Thanks to the staff across the university, most notably in the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success (SAES), for their leadership on this important project which has already received favorable reviews from our students.
- **Resource for understanding students' academic anxiety** – Last week, the Office of SAES released the following [video](#) and sent supporting [materials](#) to all SMU faculty with information to assist faculty in identifying and mitigating students' academic anxiety. Thank you to Cori Hill, LPC, for sharing her expertise through this important resource.
- **Using Canvas on your phone** – The Canvas Teacher mobile app is available for both Android and iOS devices as a way to help you stay connected with your students even when normal devices are not usable. Click [HERE](#) for Canvas Teacher Android guide, [HERE](#) for Canvas Teacher iPhone/iPad guide. If you need assistance, please contact the main OIT Help Desk at help@smu.edu or by calling 214.768.HELP.

News and Noteworthy

- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**
 - **SMU to remain test-optional for upcoming undergraduate recruiting cycle** – After consultation with the Faculty Senate, the PEC affirmed the recommendation that SMU will remain test-optional for undergraduate students applying in fall 2021 and spring 2022.

Sincerely,



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

