



# SMU

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

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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**

- **Call for faculty engagement to discuss 3 – 5 academic areas of distinction** – I have asked the deans to work with their faculty this spring and summer to discuss 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 additional cluster(s) of accomplished faculty members, would set SMU apart as world-class in those fields. This will require significant investment and also will provide 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 Dean Jim Quick to coordinate this important activity with the deans. To facilitate these conversations, we are scheduling a series of Zoom calls – open to all faculty – this spring. Click [here](#) to register.
- **SMU faculty member elected to the National Academy of Education** – Congratulations to Richard Duschl, Executive Director of the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education and Texas Instruments Distinguished Chair, on his recent [election into the National Academy of Education](#).
- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**
  - **Research Days 2021** – Research Days events occurred virtually this week, March 15 – 19. In addition to a student research video competition, activities included live talks and online panel discussions. Student video presentations are now 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 the Associate Provost for Faculty Success, Paige Ware, at [pware@smu.edu](mailto:pware@smu.edu).

## **Spring 2021**

- **Report your COVID-19 vaccination** - Each week, SMU continues to request to receive an allotment of 1,200 vaccines for COVID-19 from the State of Texas. This amount aligns with the number of vaccines the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center can administer in a week. 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.

If you have already received your vaccine, we need your help. Once you are partially or fully vaccinated, 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 of this information is important for two primary reasons:

- It will help the University understand how many vaccines to request from the state of Texas each week.
- It may also help inform decisions about when it may be appropriate to make changes to campus wide pre-pandemic operations.

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.](#)

- **New individuals now eligible for COVID-19 vaccine** – Even though SMU is still waiting to receive the COVID-19 vaccine on campus, you might still be eligible to receive it elsewhere. In the last few weeks, the state of Texas has made a handful of changes to its qualifying groups:

- Phase 1B in Texas [was expanded](#) to include individuals who teach or are staff members in K-12 schools, day cares, or preschools.
- As of this week, [individuals who are 50 years old and older can now sign up to receive the vaccine](#) under new Phase 1C rules.

If you are unsure which phase you fall into, [the eligibility survey on the Mustang Strong vaccine page](#) may be a helpful resource for you. If you qualify now, check with your primary care doctor, participating pharmacy or county website to sign up for the vaccine. [You can view a list of helpful resources and vaccine portals here.](#)

For those interested in tracking how many individuals in the state have received the vaccine, the Texas Department of State Health Services provides [information through their website](#). National numbers are available [through the CDC](#).

- **Planned reduction in isolation capacity on campus** – SMU is reducing its isolation capacity from 147 to 131 units while maintaining the flexibility to quickly add more if needed. The change comes amid reduced COVID-19 cases on campus, and to accommodate a small number of students displaced by February’s winter storms.
- **Change in COVID-related restrictions for some residential housing and student events** – Late last week, Student Affairs eased restrictions for some residential housing and student events. Here are some highlights:
  - Guest Policy Update: Students living in the Residential Commons and upper-division housing are now allowed to have guests in their residential facilities with some conditions. Students with questions about what this change means are encouraged to contact their Residential Community Director for location-specific guidance.
  - Student Events at Yellow: Student events now follow yellow designation. This means certain indoor activities for student events are now allowed with proper social distancing and COVID-19 protocols. [All yellow designation details are available on the Student Affairs website.](#) The student event category range – red, orange, yellow, green – is separate from the overall University Operational levels, but aligns closely with them.
- **Request to complete mid-semester feedback surveys** – [Mid-Semester Feedback](#) enables faculty to fine-tune a course that is already in progress. Gathering this type of feedback sends a message to students that you care about their success in the course.

To assist you, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has created two editable mid-semester feedback instruments which consist of mid-semester related questions. These instruments are available as downloadable PDFs, Canvas Quizzes, and Qualtrics surveys. Additional information, including detailed instructions for accessing and creating a mid-semester feedback survey, is available on the [CTE website](#).

- **Information about textbook and course resource adoptions** – We are excited to announce the launch of a [new portal](#) using the SMU ID for sign-on to place textbook and course materials orders: Barnes & Noble College Adoption & Insights Portal (AIP).

We highly recommend this 2-minute overview (click [here](#)) to see a quick demo of the AIP Portal. May and Summer terms are already loaded into the system; all fall classes should be loaded by early next week.

This new portal, replacing FacultyEnlight, is very easy to use; you have options to re-adopt from past course adoptions, navigate through the adoption process with easily searchable databases, build course packets for non-textbook resources, or simply indicate that you will not be using materials for a particular course.

Access the portal from this [link](#) that uses single-sign on with your SMU ID and password:

- Discover affordable alternatives to traditional course materials like Open Educational Resources (OER)
- Meet the deadline of April 2<sup>nd</sup> for submitting course materials for May, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms.

**Important reminder:** SMU is required to communicate all book and course materials adoptions to our bookstore partner 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. Many of our students are on financial aid packages that rely on our partnership with the SMU Bookstore, which is committed to supporting our students in obtaining the most affordable options, including many Open Educational Resources and other low-cost solutions.

● **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **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.
- **A new my.SMU experience for students** – SMU has 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](mailto:help@smu.edu) or by calling 214.768.HELP.

### **News and Noteworthy**

- **In memoriam: Ruth P. Morgan, Ph.D.** – Dr. Ruth P. Morgan passed away on Monday, March 8, 2021. Dr. Morgan faithfully served SMU for 29 years, beginning in 1966 as assistant professor of political science in Dedman College of Humanities & Sciences. In 1974 she was promoted to full professor and was named SMU's first female provost in 1986. Dr. Morgan retired in 1995 as provost and professor emerita. Her memorial service took place on Thursday, March 18, at 3:30 pm, at Highland Park United Methodist Church. We send our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Dr. Morgan.
- **Announcing: Fellowships and President's Scholars Offices Transition** – Effective today, Dr. Rachel Ball-Phillips, formerly Director of National Student Fellowships and President's Scholars, has transitioned into a newly-created role in the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, as the Moody School's Director of Graduate Fellowships and Awards. You are welcome to direct your graduate students to her for assistance in applying for external fellowships or to speak with her yourself about how she can support your graduate students. Undergraduate students impacted by this change have been notified, and a transition plan is in place to ensure continuity of service until Dr Ball-Phillips' replacement has been identified.
- **Five SMU undergraduates invited into the Joint Admissions Medical Program (JAMP)** – [JAMP](#) is a unique, state-funded program, created by the Texas legislature in 2003, to provide opportunities for economically disadvantaged Texas students who aspire to become physicians. Once accepted, these highly qualified students receive financial support, mentoring, and guaranteed acceptance to a JAMP-participating Texas medical school (pending additional requirements met). Recently, five SMU students were accepted to JAMP. This was an exciting and unexpected outcome, since private institutions typically only receive one selection each year, and it speaks to the caliber of SMU's applicants.
- **Update: Social Justice and Equity task force selection process** – Thank you to the 22 faculty and 8 staff who have expressed interest in serving on the [Task Force on Social Justice and Equity](#). My office continues to review nominations and, working in

consultation with Jessica Dixon Weaver, Associate Professor of Law in the Dedman School of Law and task force chair, will make determinations on the task force's composition. Look for more information in April.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth G. Loba", written in a cursive style.

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