



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

October 15, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Thanks to each of you for the ways you advance our educational mission in support of our students. These weekly updates will serve as a tool to keep you informed and engaged with SMU's Academic Affairs division as, together, we work toward a safe and healthy fall semester. 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) Fall 2021, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2021:

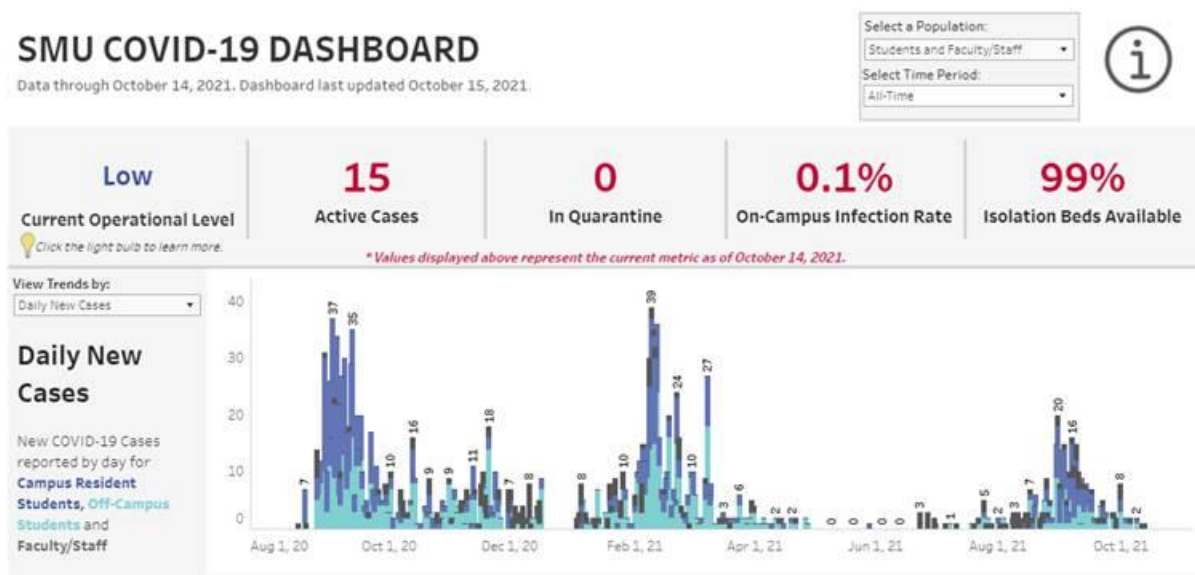
- **Reminder: Mask optional began October 11th** – As President Turner [announced last week](#), SMU transitioned to a mask-optional status effective Monday, October 11. Faculty, please note that you can still require masks in your classrooms and academic spaces. See [this email](#) from earlier in the week with additional information and resources. The [faculty FAQ](#) has also been updated.
- **Revised signage regarding latest COVID protocols** – To re-enforce messaging regarding the most current COVID-19 safety protocols, we are

returning to exclusive utilization of the QR code signage put in place to start the fall 2021 semester.



Click [here](#) to print copies of these signs for posting as needed.

- **COVID-19 case trends** – The most recent update of the [Mustang Strong dashboard](#) shows that we have a total of 15 active cases on campus (9 students, 6 employees) with zero persons in quarantine and zero students in on-campus isolation. Daily new cases remain in the single digits.



The Dr. Bob Smith Health Center continues to provide COVID-19 testing for students. Of the 268 tests administered to students September 20 – October 8 at the Health Center, only eight were positives. Of the 75 tests administered last week, there was only one positive (late Friday).

- **Supplemental masks available through Deans' offices** – Faculty in need of additional masks to provide when students forget them should consult their respective Dean's office. Supplemental masks have already been delivered to the schools/college for distribution on an as-needed basis. Deans' offices have the ability to arrange for delivery of additional masks by submitting a [service request](#).
- **Vaccinations available through the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center** - To receive COVID vaccinations on campus, appointments (required) can be booked through the [health portal](#) or by calling 214-768-2141.
 - Third vaccination doses (not booster) are currently available for moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals (as defined by CDC and FDA guidelines) who are fully vaccinated with either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.
 - The Health Center is also now offering booster shots (Pfizer only) for individuals who meet the [CDC criteria](#).
- **Voluntarily report your COVID vaccine to SMU** – The Dr. Bob Smith Health Center is actively consolidating and verifying vaccine records for our community. While actual numbers are likely higher, we can confidently report that more than 70% of faculty, 63% of staff, over 70% of on-campus residents, and more than 63% of total students have reported receiving the vaccine.

Having accurate vaccination information helps to inform SMU's COVID-19 response. We were able to move to a mask-optional status, in part, because of the confidence gained from the number of confirmed vaccinations, which has now surpassed 10,000 (faculty, staff, students). The process to report your vaccination is quick and easy. Please take a few minutes to

[report your COVID-19 vaccination status](#) today through the Health Center.

- **COVID-19 testing resources for faculty and staff** – SMU is still providing access to convenient and free-of-cost COVID-19 testing for employees and their families [through Virtual Care for Families locations around the DFW area](#). Testing is also available free of cost to you and your benefits-eligible dependents through your SMU benefits at pharmacies, health care providers and testing sites off campus.
- **Reminder: consult Mustang Strong for the most up-to-date source of information regarding SMU's COVID-19 response (case counts, FAQs)** – 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](#). This unique [FAQ](#) for faculty also maintains the most recent information concerning academic and classroom issues.
- **College/School Executive Board meetings now underway** – Each fall and spring, the college/schools host meetings with their Executive Boards to provide university and unit-specific updates. For this round of Executive Board meetings, which began this week, our university update includes a review of the academic initiatives, shared with our Board of Trustees in September, that will help us meet our goals for greater academic quality over the next three to five years and will inform our *SMU Ignited* campaign. Thank you to President Turner, Brad Cheves, Vice President for Development and External Affairs, and to the Deans for the chance to share this important information.

Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

- **Recap: Town Hall for Faculty in the Arts and Humanities** – My thanks to all faculty participants and to Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, Holly Jeffcoat, Dean of SMU Libraries and Sam Holland, Dean of Meadows School of the Arts, for facilitating Thursday’s Town Hall to focus on incorporating the arts, humanities, social sciences and professional schools into our ongoing and future conversations around academic excellence and resource allocation for later rounds of cluster hires. A recording of this week’s session is available [here](#). We will provide additional information in future newsletters.
- **Workload procedures finalized and uploaded** – Over the past year, faculty have worked diligently to design and develop department-level and unit-level workload documents that make our SMU policies clear and transparent at the unit level.

Click [here](#) to access the approved documents, with the Cox School of Business forthcoming. My thanks to the Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs and faculty for their hard work and commitment throughout this past year to this important project.

- **Reviews underway to develop enhanced research support processes and services** – Reaching our research aspirations will require additional research support. Beginning this week, the Offices of Research and Grants and Contracts Accounting will be meeting regularly to identify, design and introduce new and improved offerings. As they begin this process, they will be engaging faculty for an understanding of current strengths, challenges and growth opportunities. Be on the lookout for opportunities to provide your feedback.

[News and Noteworthy:](#)

- **Search process for Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness** – The application window closed today for the Associate Provost for the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness position. Thank you to all who applied. Over the next few weeks, my leadership team will be reviewing applications and conducting interviews. We will provide additional updates before the end of the fall semester.
- **Update: 2021 – 2022 Provost Faculty Fellows** – We are pleased to congratulate and welcome the following individuals as Provost Faculty Fellows for the 2021 – 2022 academic year:
 - Jared Schroeder, Meadows School of the Arts, Journalism (Faculty Fellow for Faculty Awards and Honorifics)
 - Kiersten Ferguson, Simons School of Education and Human Development, Department of Education Policy and Leadership (Faculty Fellow for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)
- **SMU researchers partner with CAE USA to improve pilot training** – Suku Nair, University Distinguished Professor in the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Eric Larson, Associate Professor in the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Computer Science, have partnered with CAE USA, a technology company specializing in flight simulation and other digital immersion technologies, to use cognitive load sensing and machine learning to capture how pilots react to various scenarios in a flight simulator. This includes measuring pupil size, heart rate, and other physical reactions to determine the pilot's levels of interest, stress, or fatigue. The findings are expected to yield the first real-time analysis of student situational awareness and will be used to improve flight training.
- **SMU CAPE team members recognized by the Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE)** – Mandy Caulkins and Lauren LaRocca received two awards from ACHE. For marketing (including a suite of print pieces, email messaging, radio spots, webpage, webinars, and organic social media content) promoting SMU College Prep, Mandy and

Lauren received honorable mention for ACHE's [Crystal Marketing Award](#). Lauren was also recognized with the individual [ACHE Rising Star Award](#), for her outstanding work as a professional with fewer than 5 years working in continuing education. Congratulations to Mandy and Lauren for their excellent work in supporting SMU's continuing and professional education efforts.

I would like to end with another thank you for the extraordinary community you create at SMU. We are preparing several future Friday updates, each with an exclusive spotlight on faculty and students. If you have individuals, programs, or initiatives that you would like to see featured, I encourage you to reach out to us through facultysuccess@smu.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Loba', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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