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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 four categories: 1) Campaign Launch, 2) Fall 2021, 3) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Campaign Launch:

President Turner made a major announcement today that we expect will have significant impact on our pursuit of R1 research status, as well as endowing more faculty positions and programs. SMU is launching a \$1.5 billion fundraising campaign, *SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow*, that will focus on scholarships, meaningful research and teaching, and enhanced community support. Aiming for the largest fundraising target ever set by a private school in Texas, the campaign is positioned to accomplish three major objectives:

- Transform the lives of high-achieving students by enabling them to come to SMU regardless of means. The University will offer more need- and merit-based scholarships, including meeting full financial need for high-performing Pell Grant-eligible students from North Texas and providing a financial safety net for students who can be derailed by sudden financial crises. ***\$450M+ goal***
- Enrich teaching and research by investing in faculty pursuits that have substantial societal impact. The University's plan to reach the highest level of research capability recognized by the Carnegie Classification system also will support excellent teaching, corporate and industrial partnerships and Dallas' emergence as a technology hub. ***\$600M+ goal***
- Enhance the campus and community by increasing partnerships with corporations and nonprofits, such as the West Dallas STEM School and Dedman School of Law legal clinics for those who cannot afford representation. The University will also bring more people together on campus for diverse

programming and to cheer Division I athletic teams, investing in facilities, programs, student-athlete success and community outreach programs. *\$450M+ goal*

If you missed the announcement on the Main Quad earlier today, you can find out more about the goals of the campaign [here](#).

### Fall 2021:

- **Board of Trustees meeting recap** – This week’s Board of Trustees meeting featured a Committee of the Whole presentation on Thursday afternoon. This presentation, following from a request last spring from the Board’s Strategic Task Force, articulated Academic Affairs’ initiatives, and the costs/funding plans associated with them, that will help us meet our goals for greater academic quality over the next three to five years.

Chris Regis, Vice President for Business and Finance, and I discussed the following agenda items during the meeting:

- SMU’s four academic priority areas for the next 3-5 years:
  - Academic Excellence/USNWR Top 50
  - Road to R1 and Scholarly and Creative Excellence
  - SMU’s 2016 – 2025 Strategic Plan
  - Inclusive Excellence Initiatives
- The process followed to identify and rank the initiatives that will help us reach our goals in these four areas
- The key initiatives, aligned to our four priority areas, that are of highest impact
- Resources required for these initiatives, parsed by those SMU can contribute through diligent allocation and reallocation and those requiring philanthropic support.

Following Thursday’s Committee of the Whole presentation, the Committee on Academic Affairs met to discuss informational and action items such as: faculty appointments/reappointments, faculty terminations/resignations/retirements, endowed chairholders and professorships, and faculty salary comparisons. The meeting concluded with an enrollment update from Dr. Wes Waggoner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management.

During Friday’s presentation to the Full Board, Chris Regis and I shared a Committee of the Whole meeting recap, and I provided an enrollment update. Now that we have reached census, I am pleased to share final figures for this year’s incoming class and to thank Dr. Waggoner, and Elena Hicks, Dean of Admission and Executive Director of Enrollment Services, the entire Division of Enrollment Services, the Deans and the college/school recruiters for their outstanding work.

- Overall University enrollment 12,391 – Up slightly from last year when we surpassed 12,000 for the first time.
  - 6,914 Undergraduate students
  - 5,477 Graduate students (strengthened by increases in Cox and Dedman Law)
- In terms of retention and graduation metrics for undergraduates:
  - First year retention was up to 90.6% from 90.3% last year
  - 4-year graduation was up to 76.2% (a record high) from 75.2%
  - 6 year graduation – up to 82.3% (also record high) from 80.9%

- **New FAQ posted concerning President Biden’s executive order** – SMU has been reviewing [President Biden’s COVID-19 Action Plan](#) last week concerning mandatory COVID-19 vaccines for employees. An updated [FAQ](#) has been posted to reflect our current situation.
- **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 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.
- **Voluntarily Report Your Vaccine to SMU** – Having accurate vaccination information helps to inform SMU’s COVID-19 response. The process is quick and easy. Please take a few minutes to report your COVID-19 vaccination status today through the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center.

Also, SMU’s Community Action Network (SMU CAN) has asked that all faculty spend a few minutes at the beginning of a couple of their classes to review this year’s “[Pledge to Protect](#)” and to walk your students through how to upload their vaccination information. They have created a [graphic](#) with a QR code to help guide this process. Basically, it explains:

- If you were vaccinated on campus, your information will automatically be uploaded into your health record under *immunizations* (no action is necessary).
  - However, if you were vaccinated off campus, please upload that information directly to the [SMU Health Portal](#), even if you already voluntarily shared your status through the vaccine reporting tool last spring.
- **Mask requirement extending week to week** – As President Turner shared in his August 24 [message to campus](#), SMU will continue its indoor mask requirement on a week-to-week basis. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will review the situation each week using our assessment tool to measure the impact of the pandemic on our campus while taking into consideration the most up-to-date health guidance from local, state and federal authorities. Factors such as the number of cases at SMU and in the county; infection and vaccination rates; local hospitalizations; and campus isolation capacity will help determine when the mask requirement should be lifted.
    - **Supplemental masks available through Deans’ offices** – Faculty in need of additional masks to provide to students who forget them should consult their respective Dean’s office. Deans’ office also have the ability to arrange for delivery of additional masks by submitting a service request through [STABLE](#).
    - **COVID-19 testing resources for faculty, staff and students** – To focus on student COVID-19 testing, the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center is currently unable to accommodate testing for SMU employees. As offered last year, [SMU is still providing access to convenient 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** – 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.

- **Thank you for your patience with parking challenges** – With a return to pre-pandemic parking levels, expanded on-campus visits and offline parking spaces due to construction, we recognize the difficulties many of you face finding a place to park. Please see this [email](#) from Parking Services with recommendations, and thank you for your patience during this challenging time.

Road to R1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence:

- **Search committees for Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer and Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education** – Last week, I invited committee members to serve on two strategic searches beginning this fall: 1) [Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer](#) and 2) [Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education](#). My thanks to Stephanie Knight, Dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development, for chairing the Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer search and to Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, for chairing the Dean of the Moody School and Associate Provost for Graduate Education search.
- **Reminder and update on cluster hire search committees** – We are pleased to soon begin advertising cluster hires this fall across two areas of strategic research excellence: 1) 21st Century Technology and Education and 2) Earth Hazards and National Security.

These clusters will enhance areas of established research strength at SMU and will serve as a model for future cluster hires to support our research and scholarly/creative ambitions.

Dedman College and the Simmons School of Education are using existing resources and funding lines within each of their schools to accomplish this first round of strategic cluster hiring to augment areas in which our SMU faculty are already engaged in these two high-impact research areas.

We recognize the value and importance of 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. We have scheduled a Town Hall for Arts and Humanities on October 14, to focus on these topics. That meeting will take place at 3:00 p.m. in Crum Auditorium. Tom DiPiero, Dean of Dedman College and Sam Holland, Dean of Meadows, will be facilitating the meeting.

- **SMU's electronic Institutional Review Board (IRB) management system launched September 1** – The Office of Research fully transitioned to an electronic IRB management system, Axiom Mentor, on September 1<sup>st</sup>. The customization and implementation of this electronic system, thanks to Heather McClary (Director of Research Compliance) significantly streamlines the Human Subjects Research oversight process, provides intuitive access and organized record-keeping, and facilitates SMU's growing research portfolio. Ms. McClary is now working to move the Animal Subjects Research (IACUC) and Financial Conflicts of Interest (FCOI) oversight processes to the Mentor system. Detailed user directions are available via the [newly migrated](#) SMU's Research Handbook.

News and Noteworthy:

- **Cox School of Business gains ground in Bloomberg Businessweek rankings** – Cox's MBA ranks 31 (up eleven points from last year) this year in Bloomberg Businessweek's ranking of full-time MBAs. Congratulations to Dean Myers and the Cox faculty for this well-deserved recognition.

- **Search process for Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness** – Dr. Patty Alvey, Associate Provost for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, has expressed her intention to retire from her position effective December 31, 2021. Dr Alvey has been an integral member of the Provost’s leadership team, and during her tenure, has done an outstanding service to the University both as accreditation liaison and in establishing and leading a robust Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness offering.

This week, I announced an [open call](#) to senior faculty members to apply for this position. Questions and applications (due October 15) can be sent to the [Office of the Provost](#).

- **Provost faculty fellows: call for applications** – All full-time faculty members can [apply](#) for two additional Provost Faculty Fellows positions during the 2021 – 2022 academic year: 1) Equity and Inclusion and 2) Faculty Awards and Fellowships. Our primary focus will be faculty who have demonstrated interest and experience in either of these areas (with priority for instructional/non-tenure track, or tenured faculty). Questions and applications (due September 24) can be sent to Dr. [Paige Ware](#), Associate Provost for Faculty Success. Past applicants are encouraged to apply.
- **Search process for Director for Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)** – This is a reminder that we currently have an [open call](#) for faculty to apply for a three-year (renewable) appointment for the Director of CTE position effective January 10, 2022. The position will be vacant due to Dr. Michael Harris’s decision, after six years of outstanding service, to transition into a new role as Department Chair for Education Policy and Leadership. Applications are due on October 1.
- **SMU undergraduate co-authors paper for publication in *Japanese Journal of Political Science*** – Congratulations to SMU undergraduate Saavni Desai – President’s Scholar, Tower Scholar, and Hamilton Scholar – for co-authoring a paper with Dr. Hiroki Takeuchi, Associate Professor in Dedman College’s Department of Political Science, that has been accepted for publication in the *Japanese Journal of Political Science*.

I appreciate everyone’s commitment to our student experience, substantive scholarly and creative contributions, and dedication to the SMU community. This is a very exciting time for our university.

Sincerely,



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