

Weekly Update | February 24, 2023

Elizabeth G. Loba, Ph.D. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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 toward achieving the goals that fall within our four priority areas through 2025: 1) Academic Excellence/*US News and World Report* top 50, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 3) 2016 – 2025 Strategic Plan, and 4) Inclusive Excellence.

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) Spring 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2023

Board of Trustees February meeting recap

This week, I had two opportunities to provide Academic Affairs updates to members of SMU's Board of Trustees.

Committee on Academic Affairs

During Thursday's committee meeting, I reviewed our three-year strategy for undergraduate academic excellence/*US News and World Report* Top 50 – including how this strategy aligns with our inclusive excellence and strategic plan goals. The Opportunity SMU fund supports our strategy for academic excellence by providing donors opportunities to expand scholarship, financial aid and student support programs that help us recruit, retain and graduate meritorious undergraduate students. Current undergraduates were featured in a video, which we shared during our committee meeting, to illustrate the powerful impact Opportunity SMU has had on their university experience.

I also reviewed our three-year strategy for research excellence and invited Stephen Arrowsmith, Hamilton Chair in Earth Sciences and Associate Professor in Dedman College's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, one of his doctoral students, one of his undergraduate students and a postdoctoral researcher, to provide a real-life example of how research teams are better able to pursue research with impact.

I concluded the meeting by introducing SMU's newest deans – Mike McKee, Dean *ad interim* of the Perkins School of Theology and Nader Jalili, Dean of the Bobby B. Lyle School of Engineering.

Full Board

In this morning's meeting, I shared a consolidated version of my presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs.

\$20M gift to Lyle School of Engineering expands research excellence and educational impact

To conclude this week's Board meeting, SMU announced a landmark [\\$20M gift](#) that creates the Mary and Richard Templeton Engineering Excellence Program that includes research support for faculty and fellowships for postdoctoral scholars and doctoral students, undergraduate scholarships – especially for women and students from

underrepresented populations – and an endowed chair in electrical and computer engineering. The gift will also endow the Mary and Richard Templeton deanship in the Lyle School, with Nader Jalili to serve as the inaugural dean.

Taos Executive Board meeting recap

This week, President Turner, Vice President for Development and External Affairs Brad Cheves, and I met with the Taos Executive Board. I made three leadership announcements, emphasizing their impacts to Taos, during my remarks: 1) SMU's search for the Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Data Science Institute Director, 2) Nader Jalili's appointment as the next Dean of the Lyle School of Engineering, and 3) Suku Nair's appointment as SMU's inaugural Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer.

I also shared that I have charged a Taos Strategic Planning Task Force to flesh out a strategy and business plan for Taos that will integrate our Taos campus even more fully into the life of the university. This task force, with representatives from across our offices of research, student recruiting and retention, facilities, and business and finance, will bring forward recommendations that will shape Taos' holistic strategy for instruction, research, conference services, and infrastructure. David Lee, Assistant Vice President for Curricular Strategy and Operations and William P. Clements Jr. Endowed Executive Director of SMU-in-Taos, will be leading this group and we will provide additional updates in subsequent newsletters.

Provost to participate in informal conversations with college/school faculty this spring

Over the course of the spring semester, I will be visiting the college/schools for informal conversations open to all their faculty. The purpose of these meetings is to listen and to engage in a conversation with no set agenda. My first visit is planned in the Lyle School of Engineering on Friday, March 3, and my second visit is planned in the Perkins School of Theology on Friday, March 10. Be on the lookout for information on subsequent visits, and I hope you will be able to attend.

Reminder: Invitation to participate in campus dialogue on ChatGPT and Generative AI

If you are new to this conversation, you can learn more by reading this [brief introduction \(co-authored by ChatGPT\) in University Business](#). We invite interested faculty and staff to join in conversations throughout the spring term across four different areas: classroom instruction and pedagogy; research innovations; the world of ChatGPT and AI; and legal/policy implications. If you are interested in learning more or in helping us shape the discussion, please email facultysuccess@smu.edu.

Road to R1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence

SMU geologist named American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellow

Congratulations to Robert Gregory, a geologist in SMU's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, who has been named an AAAS Fellow for distinguished contributions to his field, particularly for his research on the earth's dynamic systems and his teaching on how the solar system and the cosmos impact the world around us.

Call for Proposals: University Research and Travel grants

All faculty and emeriti faculty are reminded that the deadline to apply for University Research Council (URC) research and travel grants is Monday, March 6, by 5:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information.

Research and Innovation Week, March 20-25

[Research & Innovation Week](#) is SMU's annual showcase and celebration of the outstanding research being done by SMU students and other members of our community. This year's events will take place **March 20-25** and include a keynote talk, undergraduate and graduate poster sessions, a panel on "Graduate Education and the Future of

Research in North Texas” featuring faculty at SMU and other North Texas universities, and the Master of Fine Arts Qualifying Exhibition.

Please encourage undergraduates, graduate students, and postdocs who are conducting research at SMU to be a part of this exciting event by participating in the poster sessions, which will take place on **Tuesday, March 21** (undergraduate poster session) and **Wednesday, March 22** (graduate and postdoc poster session), from **2:00 – 5:00 pm**, in the **Hughes-Trigg Student Center Ballroom**. You can find more information, as well as the link to register for the poster session, on the [Research and Innovation Week website](#).

Key leadership searches underway or completed

Data Science Institute Director

I recently appointed a search committee for SMU’s inaugural Peter O’Donnell Jr. Director of the Data Science Institute with plans to fill the position by the end of the spring 2023 semester. The search committee’s kickoff meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, March 9. Suku Nair, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer, has agreed to chair the search. Be on the lookout for additional information in subsequent newsletters. Continued thanks to Peter Moore for serving as Data Science Institute Director *ad interim* until our new director arrives.

Lyle School of Engineering Dean

On January 11, 2023, SMU [announced](#) Nader Jalili as the next Dean of the Lyle School of Engineering effective March 1, 2023. Dr Jalili joins SMU from the University of Alabama, where he has been Professor and Department Head in Mechanical Engineering since 2018.

News and Noteworthy

Meadows faculty member receives the Dwight L. Freshley Outstanding New Teacher Award

The Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) has selected Pui Charoensap-Kelly, Assistant Professor of Organizational Communication in the Meadows School of the Arts’ Corporate Communication and Public Affairs division, as this year’s recipient of the Dwight L. Freshley Outstanding New Teacher Award. She will receive formal recognition during the 93rd annual meeting of the SSCA, which will be hosted in St. Petersburg, Florida this April.

Thank you to SMU faculty for supporting this year’s National Science and Engineering Fair

The 2023 Beal Bank Dallas Regional Science and Engineering Fair (DRSEF) took place on Saturday, February 18, 2023, at Fair Park, Dallas. For those who do not know, DSREF is one of the largest in the country and DSREF winners commonly receive more than 40% of the awards granted at the national level. Kudos and thank you to Fred Olness (pictured, below), Dedman Distinguished Professor of Physics in Dedman College; J.C. Chiao, Mary and Richard Templeton Centennial Chair in the Lyle School of Engineering’s Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering; and Heather Hankamer (pictured, below), Assistant Director for Special Programs in the Lyle School of Engineering, for their leadership in this event.



Annual Austin Symposium of Molecular and Structural Dynamics (ASMD) concluded this week

As mentioned last week, SMU's Computational and Theoretical Chemistry Group (CATCO) hosted the 28th Austin Symposium on SMU's campus. Events concluded on Monday night with a banquet. Several international attendees from Brazil, Portugal and the United Kingdom extended their stay through today to collaborate on potential research collaborations and graduate student exchanges. Thanks again to Dr. Elfi Kraka, Professor and Chair of Dedman College's Department of Chemistry, and to CATCO for overseeing this high-profile international event.



Sincerely,

Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

World Changers Shaped Here