

## Weekly Update | November 17, 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, 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 five categories: 1) Fall 2023, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 4) Inclusive Excellence, and 5) News and Noteworthy.

### Fall 2023

#### **Holiday message from the Provost**

On Monday, Dr. Mmeje, vice president for student affairs, and I [sent a message](#) to the SMU community about the upcoming holiday season. While this can be a wonderful and exciting time of year, it can also be stressful for many members of our community. SMU has multiple support resources for both employees and students to help alleviate stress and uplift community that are further detailed in my original message.

With the Thanksgiving holiday fast approaching I hope that everyone is able to enjoy the break and rest. Since the holiday break will extend over November 23 – 24, I will not distribute a newsletter next week but will return to the normal cadence starting December 1, through the remainder of the fall 2023 semester.

#### **Important upcoming dates on SMU's academic calendar**

To prepare for the shortened work and class schedule next week, I would like to highlight some important upcoming dates pertaining to the fall 2023 semester.

- **November 21, Tuesday:** Last day to declare a course pass/fail, withdraw from a course (grade of W), and withdraw from the University (grades of W). This date does not apply to courses in which the last class meeting and final exam have already occurred.
- **November 22, Wednesday:** No classes held.
- **November 23 – 24, Thursday – Friday:** Thanksgiving holiday. University offices closed.

Please reference [SMU's academic calendar](#) for further information regarding important University dates.

### **Call for President's Partners grant proposals**

The President's Partners Program was created by President R. Gerald Turner to support faculty and staff in pursuing innovative teaching initiatives and collaborative research opportunities for students. All full-time faculty and staff are invited to apply for grants, which will range between \$500 – \$5,000.

Priority areas for President's Partners grants include equipment, materials, or supplies that have the potential to impact a broad reach of students and enhance student engagement opportunities both within and beyond a single course. Competitive applications will describe how the project aligns with the SMU Strategic Plan. Collaborative projects are encouraged. Applications should be submitted by Friday, December 15, through [a DocuSign application form](#). Applicants should prepare to attach a proposal narrative of no more than four pages that includes the following four components: 1) a list of equipment or materials requested (e.g., academic, research, administrative); 2) a summary of how the resources will enable the larger project; 3) how the project will impact SMU's strategic initiatives; 4) an itemized list of the projected costs with hyperlinks to the items when/if feasible.

A faculty/staff committee will review all applications and make recommendations to President Turner to finalize award decisions before Friday, January 26, 2024. We very much hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity that the President's Partners Program fund offers to enhance the student experience at SMU. For questions, please reach out to [facultysuccess@smu.edu](mailto:facultysuccess@smu.edu).

## **Academic Excellence**

### **Moody School Doctoral Candidacy Ceremony recognizes an important degree milestone**

On Friday, November 3, eighteen doctoral students (pictured below) from departments across campus participated in the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies' Doctoral Candidacy Ceremony in Frances Anne Moody Hall. Advancement to candidacy marks the point in a doctoral student's progress when they have completed all coursework and qualifying examinations and have been judged by their program faculty to be capable of completing an original and significant research project worthy of the doctoral degree. The Moody School Candidacy Ceremony honors Ph.D. and other doctoral students who have passed this significant milestone.



### Rees-Jones Library of the American West update

Earlier this year, Jan and Trevor D. Rees-Jones '78 made [a remarkable gift to SMU](#) that will strengthen our reputation as a vital place for education and research related to the American West. In addition to committing \$30 million, they have also gifted a substantial portion of the Rees-Jones Collection featuring 30,000 items, including rare books, manuscripts, maps, photographs and ephemera of the American West.

With this gift SMU expects to begin constructing the Rees-Jones Library in 2024, with an anticipated completion date of 2027.

### Moody School Three Minute Thesis Competition recap

SMU's [Three Minute Thesis \(3MT\) Competition](#) organized by the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies took place last week in Frances Anne Moody Hall. Twenty-five SMU graduate students from a range of fields participated in the competition which tests students' ability to present their research clearly, concisely, and compellingly to a non-specialist audience.

The winners of this year's 3MT competition (pictured below) are:

- **First Place:** Murphy "Keller" Young, Education Ph.D. Program, "Examining Teacher Candidates' Instructional Moves During a Simulated Writing Conference: A Case Study"
- **Second Place:** Melissa Sitton, Psychology Ph.D. Program, "Caregiver Emotional Support in Relation to Adolescent Functioning After Sexual Abuse: Findings with Enhanced Methods"
- **People's Choice:** Yaofang Hu, Statistical Science Ph.D. Program, "Variational Bayesian Semi-Supervised Keyword Extraction"

As first-place winner, Young will now have the opportunity to compete in the [Conference of Southern Graduate Schools regional 3MT competition](#) in Greenville, South Carolina in March 2024.

Congratulations to this year's award winners and to all the students who participated in this year's competition!



### **Graduate Writing Center appointments available**

The Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies has resources available for graduate students working on academic writing projects. As the semester wraps up and graduate students are completing final writing projects, please consider encouraging students to take advantage of the [Graduate Writing Center](#), where they can receive support at all stages of the writing process. Graduate Writing Consultants advise students working on many academic writing projects, including coursework or class assignments, conference abstracts or presentations, research papers or journal articles, and theses or dissertations. Students can book appointments [here](#). Appointments are available in person in Frances Anne Moody Hall and remotely via Zoom.

## **Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence**

### **Lyle School of Engineering professor awarded National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant to make gene therapy safer**

Professor MinJun Kim, the Robert C. Womack Chair in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Lyle School of Engineering and principal investigator of the [BAST Lab](#) and his team have been awarded a

\$1.8 million R01 grant from the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) for research related to gene therapy. NIH R01 grants are extremely competitive, with fewer than 10 percent of applicants selected.

The four-year grant will allow Professor Kim to develop a simpler, more effective and more accurate way to determine whether viruses intended for gene therapy contain their full genetic cargo. [Read more about his research here.](#)

Congratulations to Professor Kim and his team for winning this prestigious research grant!

### **SMU's Chief Diversity Officer and two Meadows School of the Arts professors presented their research at the National Communication Association's Annual Convention in Washington, D.C.**

Professors in the Division of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs (CCPA) at Meadows School of the Arts Maria A. Dixon Hall, chief diversity officer; Doric Earle, professor of practice; and Owen Hanley Lynch, director of the CCPA Honors Program and SMU-in-London internships, were selected to present their research findings at the [National Communication Association Annual Convention](#) in Washington, D.C.

The trio facilitated a full-day workshop on November 15 from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. entitled “Organizing Freedom 101: Learning to Collaborate, Curate, and Create Culturally Intelligent Community Organizations and Partnerships that Make a Difference.” This workshop was based on the professors' community-based research projects, Union Coffee and Restorative Farms, and convened scholars interested in directly engaging their communities as consultants, activists, or founders of social innovation/non-profit organizations.

Congratulations to Maria, Doric and Owen, and thank you for taking the opportunity to translate your research into community outcomes!

## **Inclusive Excellence**

### **Sister2Sister Exchange Program 2023 recap**

This past summer, SMU hosted participants from the [Sister2Sister Exchange Program](#), a partnership between Pakistan's American University and the U.S. State Department that aims to empower Pakistani female college students.

This summer's two student participants, Khushi Kumar and Ayesha Awan, were invited to experience SMU's summer sessions by Dr. Wes Waggoner, vice provost for enrollment management and chief enrollment officer. Jennifer Ebinger, director of the Office of Engaged Learning, organized the experience for the two exchange students. She provides a detailed reflection on the fantastic experience on the [Student Academic Engagement and Success blog](#).

### **Second annual Place-based Community Engagement Symposium recap**

Last week's [second annual Place-based Community Engagement Symposium](#) had 114 registered participants for the two-day symposium. The registrants helped shape this year's symposium through the more than 60 questions submitted for the opening session and panel discussion.

Participants engaged in discussions around the theme “Listening, Learning, and Leading: A Place-based Approach to Promoting Public Responsibility and Community Engagement in a COVID-Impacted World.” The conference planning committee chose this theme due to observable challenges posed by COVID-19, including decreased volunteer participation and heightened community needs.

Building on the success of this year’s conference, the third annual symposium will take place in November 2024.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff who worked together with community partners to host this impactful event!

## News and Noteworthy

### **Meadows School of the Arts professor to discuss latest artistic work at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth**

As part of [The Artist’s Eye](#) program hosted by the [Kimbell Art Museum](#) in Fort Worth, Professor Brian Molanphy, chair of the Division of Art at Meadows School of the Arts, will be discussing his latest work *Let Them Be Left*. The program will be moderated by Jennifer Casler Price, curator of Asian, African, and Ancient American art.

This free event is scheduled for Saturday, November 18, 2023, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. in the museum’s Kahn Building.

### **Restorative Farms to host Food as Medicine event**

Professors in the Division of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs (CCPA) at Meadows School of the Arts Doric Earle, professor of practice, and Owen Hanley Lynch, director of the CCPA Honors Program and SMU-in-London internships, are co-founders of [Restorative Farms](#), an urban farm that fosters a community farm system to address food deserts and unemployment specifically in South Dallas.

In addition to our faculty working to support the farm program, SMU students volunteer on site through [SMU’s Engage Dallas program](#), and SMU supports the farm’s “Nourish Movement,” making Restorative Farms a significant community partner for SMU.

Restorative Farms is proud to announce their [Second Annual Taste & Learn “Food As Medicine”](#) event on Saturday, December 2, from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. The event will include local celebrity chef demonstrations, fresh food samples from the farm, local vendor tables and farm tours.

### **Dean Jalili's global outreach and strategic collaborations in Turkey**

Dean Nader Jalili is currently on an international student recruitment tour to promote SMU’s Lyle School of Engineering. He is representing Lyle at the 42nd International Education Fairs of Turkey in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, drawing interest from more than 240 institutions worldwide. Dean Jalili is engaging with prospective students – both undergraduates and graduates – and meeting with esteemed officials from the top three private universities in Turkey: Sabanci University, Koç University, and Bilkent University. His discussions center on specific collaboration agreements within the fields of artificial intelligence, energy, sustainability, and robotics. A detailed report on expected agreements and activities for Spring 2024 will be provided in December 2023.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth G. Loba".

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