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

**Fall 2023**

**Call for nominations: Faculty Teaching Awards & Academy of Distinguished Teachers**

On Monday, I sent a letter to all faculty calling for nominations for SMU’s teaching awards. One of the features that makes these awards special is that the candidates are nominated by their fellow faculty members. Each year, I look forward to recognizing teaching-award recipients during the spring general faculty meeting because they reflect our collective commitment to excellence in teaching.

Nominations are now open for this year's awards. I ask you to take a few minutes to nominate a deserving colleague today. Please send the name(s) of your nominees to the Center for Teaching Excellence, cte@smu.edu by Friday, September 15, 2023, at 5 p.m.

**Call for proposals: Summer 2024 online course development**

SMU Intersessions is partnering with the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), Office of Information Technology (OIT), and SMU Global and Online (SMU GO) to develop select online undergraduate courses for the upcoming summer 2024 session. As mentioned in my Tuesday email to faculty, the project aims to enhance access to undergraduate courses during summer months when students are balancing course needs with internships, the desire to return home, and other factors that make an online modality desirable.

Proposals are open to all full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty from the undergraduate schools/colleges. We invite faculty to submit a course proposal by Friday, September 8, 2023. If you
have any questions regarding proposal submittals, please see
https://www.smu.edu/Intersessions/Faculty-Online or reach out to SMU Intersessions at
intersessions@smu.edu or 214-768-1009.

Awareness: Accommodations for students needing to miss class due to illness

As was the case during the pandemic, we anticipate seeing an uptick in student illness at the
beginning of the semester, including but not limited to COVID-19. SMU policy allows individual
faculty to make their own procedures for supporting students during medical absences; however,
these procedures must be clearly laid out in all course syllabi.

The Faculty Senate collaborated with faculty administration last year to establish these guidelines for
the use of technology/Zoom for any absences. Also, as of last year, we no longer have an explicit
COVID-19 policy statement; rather, the language around absences due to illness (including COVID-
19 and other medical-related issues) can be found here as part of the required syllabus statements.

Thank you for accommodating students who report the need to miss class for short periods of time
due to illness, even in classes with strict attendance policies. And, as a final reminder, students
experiencing medical conditions with longer-term impacts should request temporary
accommodations through Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS) following the

Awareness: Upcoming opportunities to submit feedback on the Social Justice and Equity and Urban Research Faculty Cluster Hire task forces

As mentioned in last week’s newsletter, two faculty task forces have been hard at work to further
define our current and future goals for inclusive excellence. After two years of deliberation, the Task
Force on Social Justice and Equity has submitted their final report. One of the report’s key findings
was the need to continue expanding the diversity of SMU’s faculty. We are hopeful that this year’s
search for at least eight new faculty in an urban research cluster will help us attract a diverse pool of
world-class scholars to augment SMU’s areas of emerging strength. To guide the search, onboarding
and implementation stages of this cluster hire, the Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Force has
also submitted their final report. Starting next week, we will invite all SMU faculty to participate in a
brief survey to help inform our next steps.

Reminder: Wear Red Fridays

Starting today, “Wear Red Fridays” has officially begun! And, I can think of no better way to celebrate
this tradition than with today’s announcement about SMU’s invitation to join the ACC in 2024! In line
with President Turner’s letter to campus last week, I encourage everyone to wear red on Fridays to
support our fellow Mustangs and create a tradition that symbolizes our collective strength as a
campus community. See below for a photo taken today of members of the Provost Office team
getting in the spirit.
Reminder: Applications for open Provost Faculty Fellow position

As mentioned in last week’s newsletter, the Provost Faculty Fellows program has an open role starting this fall to focus on Equity and Inclusion initiatives. We encourage all full-time faculty, including non-tenure line faculty and tenured faculty, to consider applying. Applications include a two-page statement of interest and a current CV. The new faculty fellow will join a great cohort of current Provost Faculty Fellows that includes focuses on the areas of Strategic Communications overseen by Gordon Law, Executive-in-Residence in the Temerlin Advertising Institute; Communications and Research Infrastructure overseen by Lin-Lin Lipsmeyer, Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning; Graduate Assistantships in the Moody School overseen by Karen Lupo, Professor in the Department of Anthropology; and SMU Internationalization Steering Committee overseen by Susana Solera Adoboe, Senior Lecturer of Spanish in the Department of World Languages and Literature.

Faculty should obtain agreement from their chair or dean that their full University service contributions can be allocated to this role during the period of service. Recipients can choose either a $10,000 stipend annually or a course release and a $3,000 stipend. Applications are due by Friday, September 15. Applications and questions can be emailed to facultysuccess@smu.edu.

Reminder: University Testing Center (UTC) to enter phase two of opening this fall

The 2022-23 academic year brought many changes on the SMU campus, including a three-phase opening of the University Testing Center (UTC) in Clements Hall beginning last August. During phase one, the center began providing accommodated testing services previously proctored by Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Phase two will start this fall and expand testing services to student-athletes during their sport’s competition season, which necessitated the migration to test scheduling software from DASS Link to increase student group access. The new software will offer a comprehensive, streamlined approach for delivering additional academic testing and credit-by-exam services not only to SMU students but also to local community partners during phase three expansion in Spring 2024. Watch our new video overviews for students and professors to learn more about our new system. Professors can schedule one-on-one consultations to be oriented to the new platform.

The UTC is certified by the National College Testing Association (NCTA) and adheres to professional standards ensuring exam integrity and accessibility for both examiners and examinees.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Dedman School of Humanities and Sciences’ Department of Mathematics faculty member awarded $1.4M in funding for three projects from the U.S. Department of Energy

Congratulations to Dan Reynolds, Professor and Chair in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences’ Department of Mathematics, who has been awarded $1.4M in grant funding as part of a multi-year $30M grant from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Scientific Discovery through Advanced Computing (SciDAC) program and Fusion Energy Sciences Partnerships program. The SMU-specific funding will support the following three projects over the course of the next four years:

1. FRONTIERS in Leadership Gyrokinetic Simulation
2. Computational Evaluation and Design of Actuators for Core-Edge Integration (CEDA)
3. Developing Multiscale Simulation of Boundary Plasma Dynamics
Reminder: Call for Provost Research fellowships

This week the Office of the Provost sent an email requesting nominations for the Provost Research Fellowships, which support the research of tenured SMU faculty with $15,000 stipends for the current academic year. Prospective candidates for FY 2024 Provost Research Fellowships may be nominated by their deans and Faculty Senate. Letters of nomination, in PDF format, are due by September 15, 2023, and should include the reason for the nomination as well as a detailed evaluation of the nominee’s contribution relative to others in the field.

Once nominations have been received and nominated faculty members have submitted their research proposals (due by October 13, 2023), the University Research Council will evaluate all nominations and select six names to forward to the Office of the Provost for final selection. Those selected (up to four) will be announced before the end of the fall 2023 semester.

Key leadership searches underway

Peter O’Donnell Jr. Director of the O’Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute

We have completed our final round of on-campus interviews with each of the finalists. Thanks to all who participated in this strategic search. We are currently gathering feedback from campus stakeholders on all three candidates with hopes of naming our new director this fall.

As always, thank you to Suku Nair, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer, for chairing the search committee, and to Peter Moore, who is serving as the ad interim Director for Data Science and Research Computing Institute, until the new Director arrives.

News and Noteworthy

SMU researcher receives national coverage for groundbreaking lunar research

Matt Siegler, Research Professor in the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences has garnered national attention for his research investigating a 30-mile underground granite formation on the moon. His research team has concluded that their findings support evidence of an ancient lunar volcano. This research has been recently covered by multiple prominent media outlets, including The New York Times, Forbes, The Economist and The Dallas Morning News.

Digital Badges for Lifelong Learners Connect Students with Marketable Skills

Since late 2021, SMU has issued almost 2,000 digital credentials to students who have participated in noncredit courses offered by SMU Continuing and Professional Education (SMU CAPE), Perkins School of Theology’s Office of External Programs, and Cox School of Business’ Executive Education. In total, SMU currently offers 66 digital badges via Credly, a digital badge platform.

Digital credentials validate students’ achievements in tangible and shareable ways, and students can showcase their badges on digital resumes, in their email signatures, and on social media sites like LinkedIn. Badges include verified metadata to describe the qualifications and processes required to earn them. More than 80% of SMU’s badge earners have shared their digital credentials, demonstrating our programs' value in supporting students’ professional development goals.

Visiting Writer-in-Residence and Hughes Fellow in Creative Writing in the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences’ Department of English wins 2023 Auburn Witness Poetry Prize

Samyak Shertok has won the 2023 Auburn Witness Poetry Prize for the poem Mother Tongue: A Haunting. The poem was praised by Judge Joy Harjo, former Poet Laureate of the United States,
who wrote that the work is “a tight construction that embodies the haunting of language displacement amidst liminal familial memory. Mysterious essences of ghost presences ride the weave. Even language itself is a ghost because what is spoken can haunt you forever, even as it dissipates in consciousness.”

Samyak’s work will be celebrated in the next issue of the Southern Humanities Review.

**SMU Guildhall hosts annual GameJam as part of Orientation Weekend**

SMU Guildhall hosted its annual GameJam on August 19, 2023 as part of Orientation Weekend. The event brought incoming Cohort 33 students together with senior students in Cohort 32, faculty, staff, and VIP guests to foster community. Participants were divided into teams and given one day to create a game with an assigned name and theme. At the end of the 12-hour event, each team presented their game and the impressive results of their hard day’s work.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth G. Loboa, PhD
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
https://www.smu.edu/provost

**World Changers Shaped Here**