

## Weekly Update | September 15, 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) Fall 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

### Fall 2023

#### Board of Trustee 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

In Thursday's committee meeting, my update covered four topics. We began by reviewing SMU's plans to establish a University-wide Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) model at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Wes Waggoner, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Chief Enrollment Officer, and his team in the Division of Enrollment Services have established a leading class SEM model for SMU's undergraduates. In a similar vein, I have asked him to partner with Robin Poston, Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education, to develop a multi-year roadmap for expanding SMU's SEM model into the realm of graduate education. For our second topic, I reviewed the impact of the recent [O'Donnell Foundation gift](#) to endow the Data Science and Research Computing Institute and introduced [Neena Imam, the new Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Director](#).

Third, I reviewed some follow-up data requests from last year, including the timeline and milestones for the comprehensive tenure/tenure-track and teaching/professional faculty salary study underway during this 2023 – 2024 academic year. I concluded my remarks by reviewing SMU's strategy for academic excellence. One of our main goals for academic excellence has been to achieve and sustain top-50 status in [US News & World Report](#) (USNWR). USNWR is set to release its annual

rankings early next week, and I will send a campus-wide memo at that time with initial analysis and observations, followed by more detailed updates in newsletters this fall as we dive more deeply into the data.

### **Full Board of Trustees**

In this morning's meeting, I shared a consolidated version of my presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs and introduced Neena Imam to the Full Board.

### **Moody Hall Dedication**

Board week concluded on a high note as we formally dedicated Frances Anne Moody Hall, which houses SMU's eighth degree-granting school – the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies. Made possible by a [historic \\$100 million gift from the Moody Foundation](#), the Moody School began operations in the fall of 2020 and has been an indispensable asset in achieving SMU's goals for research and scholarly excellence.

### **AT&T Data Science event to be held in the newly dedicated Moody Hall**

SMU faculty, students, and staff are invited to attend an event about the emerging field of data science, presented by [AT&T](#), at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 27, in the auditorium of Moody Hall. Four AT&T data scientists, three of whom are SMU alumni, will speak about their journey and work in this rapidly evolving field, as well as the impact data science has on today's society. For the past two years, SMU and AT&T have partnered on the University's [Data Science Scholars Program \(DSSP\)](#), which graduated its second cohort of undergraduate and graduate students this past August.

For more information about the event or DSSP, please contact Tim Angell, Director for Corporate Engagement, at [tangell@smu.edu](mailto:tangell@smu.edu).

### **Global media and internet pioneers Megha and Nirav Tolia to co-direct SMU's Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership**

Proven Dallas entrepreneur couple [Megha Tolia and Nirav Tolia have been named co-founding directors of the William S. Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership](#) in SMU's Cox School of Business. Megha Tolia is president and COO of [Shondaland](#), and Nirav Tolia is the founder and former CEO of [Nextdoor](#) (NYSE: KIND) – the world's largest local social networking service. Under the direction of the Tolias, the Spears Institute will encourage business creation, leadership development and economic growth, strengthening areas that are critical to the future of the Dallas business economy and undergirding SMU's – and Cox's – entrepreneurial spirit. This institute launched in April 2022 after William S. Spears, founder and CEO of [Cenergistic](#), gave the largest gift by a non-alumnus in the history of SMU.

### **Findings: Faculty Survey - Equity & Transparency in Workload**

Last April, the Equity and Transparency in Workload Working Group sent an email survey to all faculty to gather campus feedback on efforts toward improving equity and transparency in faculty workload. My thanks to all faculty who took the time to respond. Please [click here](#) to review key findings from the survey and [here](#) to find more information about the working group's five-year plan.

### **Request for participation: Faculty Internationalization Survey**

The SMU Internationalization Steering Committee, as part of SMU's participation in the [American Council on Education \(ACE\) Internationalization Lab](#), will be conducting a faculty survey to gather information about faculty experiences with internationalization at SMU. The survey, which will open on September 25 and close on September 29 at 5 p.m., is an important part of the information-gathering process the Internationalization Committee is using to understand the current internationalization practices and processes at SMU and to identify opportunities for improvement. The survey will be sent to all SMU faculty via email on the morning of September 25. I encourage SMU faculty of all ranks and departments to complete the survey. Individual responses will be kept

confidential, and aggregated results will be shared through the internationalization self-study and the faculty internationalization town hall, which will be held in the spring of 2024.

### **New EPC Forms and Expedited Board of Trustees Approval**

After careful review and based on feedback from faculty and several university offices, the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (IPE) will replace the existing Educational Programs Committee (EPC) proposal forms. Faculty have reported that the current forms (both “long” and “short” forms) are unclear, and often difficult to use. Moreover, the title and format of the forms often leads to confusion about what should be approved by EPC. IPE is replacing these forms with newly designated forms, each for a specific action or type of change (i.e., New Program Proposal, New Office Campus Instructional Site Proposal, Add Online Modality to a Program Proposal). These forms will be rolling out progressively during the fall term and will be available on the [EPC website](#).

Currently, forms are available in Word or PDF, but we hope to offer electronic versions of the forms by fall 2024. For academic year 2023-2024, EPC will accept both new forms and existing forms. However, starting in fall 2024, only the new forms will be accepted. As an additional process enhancement, the SMU Board of Trustees is now reviewing academic proposals four times per year, instead of two times per year as was done previously. These related changes (new forms and increased options for Board approval) should make academic approvals more streamlined. For information about what types of academic changes need approval and dates of scheduled EPC meetings, [please click here](#).

### **Council on General Education approved updates to the Common Curriculum Critical Reasoning rubric**

On Friday, September 1, operating within its [scope of authority](#), SMU's [Council on General Education](#) approved an update to the Common Curriculum's [Critical Reasoning](#) rubric.

Critical Reasoning was assessed for the first time in Summer 2021 by [the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness](#). Following that initial assessment, raters recommended reviewing and revising the rubric, which they found difficult to apply in many cases. In response, a faculty-led committee was charged to review and revise the rubric this past summer.

Further review of the rubric found that, although the learning outcome for Critical Reasoning is appropriate to the components (students will demonstrate University-level critical reasoning proficiencies through written expression), the supporting skills emphasize writing and are nearly identical to the supporting skills for the Common Curriculum's [Academic Writing requirement](#), which has a different learning outcome (students will develop competency, clarity, coherence, and organization in their writing). Plus, writing is assessed separately under the Common Curriculum's Academic Writing, and [Writing](#) requirements as well as within the [academic evaluation process](#).

The current design of the Critical Reasoning rubric has functioned as a barrier to the development of courses outside of the Writing and Reasoning Program (WRTR), mainly because of the primary focus on academic writing in the current iteration of the rubric. Therefore, efforts to revise the Critical Reasoning rubric have been joined with this effort to expand offerings in Critical Reasoning beyond WRTR 1313, WRTR 2304, and WRTR 2306.

Common Curriculum [course proposal forms](#) and the [online rubrics](#) have been updated with the newly-approved rubric.

### **Moody School Fellows Reception**

Last Friday, September 8, in Frances Anne Moody Hall, Robin Poston, Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, and I hosted a reception for doctoral student recipients of fellowships administered by the Moody School. More than 80 SMU doctoral students are funded by generous fellowships from the Moody School and the Office of the Provost. Moody Graduate, Mustang, University Ph.D., Moody Dissertation, Dean's Dissertation, and the newly established Provost's Doctoral Candidacy Fellowships support the outstanding scholarship and research

conducted by our doctoral students and allow them to complete their degrees in a timely fashion and transition to careers as leaders in their chosen fields. At the reception, we recognized the accomplishments of our continuing fellows and welcomed new fellows to SMU, where I am sure they will continue the tradition of making outstanding contributions to the University's scholarly and research mission.

## Reminders

### Request for participation in survey regarding the findings published by SMU's Task Force on Social Justice Equity and Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Force

The [Task Force on Social Justice and Equity's brief survey](#) is currently open to all SMU faculty and will close on September 29, at 5 p.m.

This survey is an important tool to collect feedback from faculty regarding the recommendations from the [Task Force on Social Justice and Equity](#) and the [Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Forces'](#) final reports. The data collected from this survey will help inform SMU's next steps for action items toward our inclusive excellence goals and support the Urban Research Faculty Cluster.

### Due today: nominations for Faculty Teaching Awards & Academy of Distinguished Teachers

Nominations for [Faculty Teaching Awards & Academy of Distinguished Teachers](#) are due today by 5 p.m. Nominee names can be sent to the Center for Teaching Excellence at [cte@smu.edu](mailto:cte@smu.edu). Award winners will be recognized during the spring 2024 General Faculty Meeting.

### Due today: Applications for Provost Faculty Fellow position

Applications for the Provost Faculty Fellows program's open position for Equity and Inclusion are due today by 5 p.m. to [facultysuccess@smu.edu](mailto:facultysuccess@smu.edu). Applications include a two-page statement of interest and a current CV. Recipients will be notified in the next few weeks and will choose either a \$10,000 stipend annually or a course release and a \$3,000 stipend.

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

### Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences professor wins \$1.8 million 5-year Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) from the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

SMU Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Biology Professor Zhihao Wu has received a \$1.8 million, [5-year Maximizing Investigators' Research Award \(MIRA\)](#) from the National Institutes of Health. This award will support Professor Wu's research in determining if different quality control pathways in our bodies might be working together to repair damaged components in cells.

Answering that question could help researchers figure out why breakdowns in seemingly unrelated quality control pathways lead to some of the same abnormal changes that have been identified with many human diseases including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, Type II diabetes and cancer. Understanding how this happens could lead to new therapeutic targets for the pathological hallmarks that are known to cause or worsen these diseases.

Read more about [Professor Wu's research here](#).

### Cox School of Business faculty member elected as a 2024 fellow by the American Psychological Association (APA)

I am pleased to share that Cox School of Business' O. Paul Corley Distinguished Chair in Organizational Behavior and Administration Zhen Zhang was elected as a Fellow by the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA) starting January 1, 2024. APA Fellow status is an honor bestowed upon APA members who have shown evidence of outstanding contributions in the field of psychology. This is considered a Prestigious Award by the [National Research Council/Association of American Universities](#).

Thank you, Professor Zhang, for your contributions to the field of psychology and organizational behavior, and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

### **Call for Proposals: University Research Council Travel and Research Grant**

The University Research Council (URC) Research and Travel Grant Program is currently accepting proposals for the 2023-2024 academic year. Two proposals will be selected to receive grant funding - travel grants may be awarded up to \$10,000, and research grants may be awarded up to \$15,000. The deadline for submission is 5 p.m., October 11, 2023.

Full-time research-active faculty both tenure track and non-tenured track, as well as Faculty Emeriti are eligible to submit proposals.

All proposals will be [submitted here via DocuSign](#). The proposal should be short, cogent, and written to communicate with colleagues who are not experts in your field. The proposal must explain the significance of your research and/or travel and its benefit to the University and include a justification for the proposed budget. Faculty with restricted accounts must declare these financial resources in their proposals and explain why additional funds are required from the URC to accomplish their research goals.

Additional information is available [here in the original announcement](#) and on the [URC website](#). Please contact LaGail Davis in the Office of Research and Innovation, at [lagail@smu.edu](mailto:lagail@smu.edu) if you have questions.

### **Due today: Nominations for Provost Research Fellowships**

Nominations from deans and Faculty Senate for [Provost Research Fellowships](#) candidates are due today by 5 p.m. Letters of nomination should include the reason for the nomination as well as a detailed evaluation of the nominee's contributions relative to others in the field.

Nominations will be evaluated by both the University Research Council and the Office of the Provost for final selection – with up to four fellows selected. The faculty receiving Provost Research fellowships will be announced before the end of the fall 2023 semester.

## **News and Noteworthy**

### **World Changers Alumni Networking Event to be held in San Francisco, California**

Dean Nader Jalili, inaugural Mary and Richard Templeton Dean of Lyle School of Engineering, will be traveling to San Francisco, CA tomorrow to speak at [2023 San Francisco World Changers](#), an alumni networking reception. Dean Jalili will discuss "Shaping the Future of Tech: Trends and Insights for Tomorrow" with SMU alumni, parents, students and friends in support of [SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow](#), the University's landmark \$1.5 billion campaign for impact.

### **Hilltop Scholars Program's "Service Showcase" created over 1,000 finished products for Community Partners**

SMU's [Hilltop Scholars Program](#) (HSP), an honors community for students interested in service and leadership, hosted their annual [Service Showcase](#) on Monday, August 28. This year, 185 Hilltop

Scholars attended and made over 1,000 products for SMU's community partners. Congratulations and thank you to Professors Marta Krogh and Caitlin Anderson for leading a program that combines in-class academics with extracurricular service leadership that benefits both SMU and the Dallas community.

### **CAPE Instructors Honored for Artistic Achievements and Advocacy**

Lane Banks and Gail Sachson, two long-time instructors with [Continuing and Professional Education](#) (CAPE) will be recognized this fall for their achievements in visual arts and arts advocacy. Dallas College presents *Lane Banks: 20 x 20*, a solo exhibition at the Richland Campus Art Gallery through October 6, 2023. The exhibition showcases Banks' work, which is "mathematical in concept and geometric in appearance." In 2023, he also had works in group exhibitions at the Beeville Art Museum and the University of Houston – Clear Lake. His work also can be found in the Neiman-Marcus Collection, Dallas, and at both DFW and Love Field airports.

At CAPE, Banks teaches short courses focusing on art history; this fall, his class is Pierre Bonnard and the Nabi Artists.

Gail Sachson, who received her M.F.A. from SMU, will receive the Arts Leadership Award from the Dallas Historical Society at its [Dallas History Makers Luncheon](#) in October. Gail is a lifetime achievement award recipient from the Dallas Business Council for the arts. She also co-founded [Inspire Art Dallas](#), a non-profit partnership established in 2018 with the Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs to promote and conserve public art.

Gail Sachson teaches CAPE noncredit classes highlighting the local contemporary art community and artists living and working in Dallas. Both Gail and Lane have taught classes with CAPE for over 10 years.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

**World Changers Shaped Here**