

Weekly Update | September 8, 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

SMU invited to join the Atlantic Coast Conference

President R. Gerald Turner [announced on Friday](#), September 1, 2023, that SMU will officially join the [Atlantic Coast Conference](#) (ACC) beginning July 1, 2024. The act of joining the ACC, a nationally renowned intercollegiate conference, allows SMU's strong and competitive athletic programs to be recognized on a larger stage that will continue to propel SMU athletics forward. SMU enters the ACC alongside Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, and will join current conference members such as Duke University, the University of North Carolina, Georgia Tech and Wake Forest to name a few.

The ACC provides new opportunities for academic and research collaboration as well. Prior to last week's expansion, 93% of the ACC's schools were R1 and the median *U.S. News and World Report* ranking was 55 (32.5 for private schools in the ACC). Post-expansion, 89% of ACC schools are R1 and the median *U.S. News and World Report* is 49.5 (32.5 for the ACC's private schools). We are honored by this recognition, athletically and academically, and for the chance to join a conference with many of our current and future aspirational peers.

Provost encourages faculty/staff to enjoy the re-opened Faculty-Staff Dining Room and will join the "Commons Table" during lunch on the first Monday of the month

Two weeks ago, [I wrote about](#) efforts taken by the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Club to re-open the Faculty-Staff Dining Room in Umphrey Lee. As part of the re-opening, the Faculty-Staff Dining Room will have a staff person to clear/bus tables, provide coffee and iced tea, and feature a “Commons Table” designated for community members who come to meals by themselves or in small groups and wish to socialize with others. These measures were designed to foster faculty and staff community. I am grateful for this initiative and also want to show my support. Starting on Monday, September 11 from noon to 1 p.m., and continuing from there on the first Monday of every month, I plan to have lunch at the Commons Table as my schedule allows. I look forward to seeing you there and hope you will join me for a relaxed lunch and conversation.

You can [purchase credits online for SMU dining facilities \(which includes access to the Faculty-Staff Dining Room\) here](#).

SMU First 5 program encourages students to visit professors’ office hours as a featured activity

The [SMU First 5](#) program helps incoming students transition to life on the Hilltop by orienting them to campus and SMU’s many resources. The program takes place over the first five weeks of the semester and focuses on the core principles of people, academy, campus, spirit and community. Campus, the program’s third principle, directs students to engage with important resources early so that they are positioned to thrive at SMU.

A small selection of campus activities and events are highlighted as “Mustang Must-Dos,” because they are effective predictors of a student’s academic engagement and success. One of these activities is “meet your professors by attending their office hours.” I encourage faculty to accommodate students, particularly our newest Mustangs, requesting to schedule time during your office hours. To show completion of this activity, data that is critical to our ability to support student academic engagement, faculty are [provided a QR code from this link](#) that they can have available for students to scan and “check-in.” Thanks in advance for supporting our students, both in and outside the classroom.

SMU provides information on anti-sexual harassment resources, policies and procedures

As mentioned in President Turner’s [letter to the SMU community earlier this week](#), SMU works to eliminate sexual harassment, provide care and support to those who experience it, and hold violators accountable while treating all parties fairly. All forms of sexual harassment – including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking – are violations of [University policy](#), state law and the federal law Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. SMU will not tolerate sexual harassment in any form and will vigorously enforce University policies and support state and federal laws.

The University provides support for those who experience sexual harassment via multiple departments. Contact any of the following for more information on campus and community support and options, including pursuing criminal charges and/or SMU’s internal grievance process: [SMU Police](#), the [SMU Title IX Coordinator and Deputy Coordinators](#), [Office of the Dean of Students](#), confidential counselors at [SMU Counseling Services](#) and confidential pastoral support at the [SMU Chaplain’s Office](#).

Please reference the [President’s letter](#) for additional details regarding policy, resources and mandatory reporting.

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

As mentioned in previous newsletters, two task forces recently published their final reports detailing the findings of their research. The [Task Force on Social Justice and Equity submitted their](#) final report after two years of work to further define our current and future goals for inclusive excellence,

and the [Urban Research Faculty Cluster Task Force submitted their final report](#) to help guide the search, onboarding and implementation stages of this cluster hire.

Now we invite all SMU faculty to [participate in this brief survey](#) to help us inform our next steps based on the recommendations from these two task forces. The survey will be open until 5 p.m. Friday, September 29, 2023. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important feedback collection.

Invitation to celebrate the dedication of Frances Anne Moody Hall

SMU Board of Trustees Chair David B. Miller ('72, '73) and President R. Gerald Turner invite community members to celebrate the dedication of Frances Anne Moody Hall on Friday, September 15, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. The dedication ceremony will be followed by an informal lunch. The new, and incredible, Frances Anne Moody Hall will house SMU's eighth degree-granting school – the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies. Made possible by a historic gift from the Moody Foundation, the Moody School began operations during fall 2020 and has been an indispensable asset as we pursue our goals for research and scholarly excellence. [Click here to RSVP](#).

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

We are seeing an uptick in student illness at the start of the semester, including but not limited to COVID-19, as was the case during the pandemic. 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.

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. As a reminder, 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](#).

Finally, students experiencing medical conditions with longer-term impacts should request temporary accommodations through Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS) following the step-by-step procedures on the [Applying for Accommodations page](#).

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

As mentioned in last week's newsletter, nominations are now open for this year's [Faculty Teaching Awards and Academy of Distinguished Teachers 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.

Reminder: Applications for open Provost Faculty Fellow position

The Provost Faculty Fellows program currently has an open role to start this fall with a 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.

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, 2023. Applications and questions can be emailed to facultysuccess@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Announcing the Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Director of the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute

This week, we were very excited to announce that [Neena Imam has accepted our offer](#) to become the Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Director of the [newly-endowed O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute](#) and will officially start on October 9, 2023. Dr. Imam comes to SMU from the NVIDIA corporation where she has been the Director of Strategic Researcher Engagement (North and Latin Americas) for the past two years. In this role, Dr. Imam worked with academic researchers to enable GPU-accelerated and Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning applications development.

Before NVIDIA, Dr. Imam served as a distinguished scientist and the Deputy Director of Research Collaboration in the Computing and Computational Sciences Directorate at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). At ORNL, she led research in High-Performance Computing (HPC) as well as next-generation microelectronics and *Post Moore* Computing.

Dr. Imam holds a doctoral degree in electrical engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology with master's and bachelor's degrees in electrical engineering from Case Western Reserve University and California Institute of Technology, respectively. She is a senior member of the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and has served as an IEEE officer for multiple years.

Dr. Imam brings an exemplary depth of skills and experiences to SMU at a time of tremendous momentum around data science, high-performance computing and artificial intelligence. We look forward to her leadership and partnership in our quest for even greater academic and research excellence.

Allow me to extend a final thank you to the members of the search committee, to Suku Nair, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer, for serving as chair, and to Peter Moore, who has been serving as the *ad interim* Director for both the Data Science and the Center for Research Computing, during our search for a new director.

President Turner Reflects on SMU's journey toward R1 status

The [Dallas Morning News recently published an article](#) written by SMU's own President R. Gerald Turner. In the article, President Turner discussed how the O'Donnell Foundation's generous gift of \$30 million will endow and create operational funds for both the newly endowed O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (formerly the Data Science Institute and the Center for Research Computing) and the Initiative for Digital Innovation in Engineering and Computer Science in the Lyle School of Engineering.

President Turner also wrote about the University's deliberate shift, almost a decade ago, that paved the way for SMU to engage in the types of research that will better prepare our community, and the world, for an increasingly digital future. Our current trajectory toward world-changing research is thanks, in large part, to President Turner's bold vision and to you, our faculty, for heeding his call. The O'Donnell Foundation's generous gifts, both to SMU and Lyle School of Engineering, elevate SMU's reputation as a hub for innovation, collaboration, and research and advance our quest toward achieving and sustaining Carnegie R1 status.

Reminder: Requesting nominations for Provost Research Fellowships

The Office of the Provost is currently accepting nominations for FY 2024 [Provost Research Fellowships](#). These awards provide \$15,000 stipends to up to four faculty that will support their research during the current academic year. Prospective candidates must be nominated by their deans or Faculty Senate by September 15, 2023. Letters of nomination 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.

News and Noteworthy

Advertising students continue to set records during the 2023 calendar year and recently added four national awards to their win total

Advertising students from SMU's Temerlin Advertising Institute in the Meadows School of the Arts continued their streak of wins during the 2023 summer at the [American Advertising Federation's](#) (AAF) National Awards Gala & Dinner. Students received four national American Advertising Awards (ADDYs), including two Gold awards. A Gold ADDY is a recognition of the highest level of creative excellence and is judged to be superior to all other entries in the category.

In 2023, Temerlin's advertising students have won 193 awards in local, regional, and national advertising competitions. And with nearly four months remaining in the year, they have already surpassed their previous highest annual award record of 132 awards in 2022.

Congratulations to all our competing advertising students for their achievements in both the AAF's ADDYs and other competitions. [Click here](#) for a full list of awards.

SMU archaeologist discusses how and when the first humans migrated to the Americas with History.com

David J. Meltzer, Henderson-Morrison Professor of Prehistory in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Anthropology recently spoke at length with History.com journalist Dave Roos about [How Early Humans First Reached the Americas](#). In the interview, Professor Meltzer goes into detail about the three leading theories of humans traveling and migrating to the North and South American continents and the data that supports each complex theory. Thank you, Professor Meltzer (a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences) for representing SMU on both the national and international levels over the course of your esteemed career.

Sincerely,



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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

World Changers Shaped Here