



Weekly Update | January 19, 2024

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](#). Suggestions received before noon on Tuesday will be reviewed and considered for publication in that week's Friday newsletter. Others will be held until the following week. Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

Today's update falls into four categories: 1) Spring 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2024

Welcome back to the Hilltop

I hope that you all had a wonderful holiday season and wish you a happy and healthy New Year. I am pleased to welcome everyone back to the Hilltop for the spring 2024 semester. Keeping the harsh winter weather streak alive that started in my first year as provost, it wouldn't be January (but hopefully not also February) in Dallas without at least a few days of cold, ice and snow. Thank you for your flexibility in response to this week's class cancellation.

I also want to thank Michael Harris, Faculty Senate President, for the invitation to address the faculty during this week's spring General Faculty meeting. [Click here](#) to review a copy of my presentation materials for the spring 2024 faculty address. And congratulations to the faculty receiving this year's teaching awards. We achieved so much during the 2023 calendar year, and I look forward to what we will be able to accomplish together this year and in the years to come.

Fondren Library construction update

On December 18, [Fondren Library commenced renovations](#) to several library spaces en route to an exciting transformation. Currently, a series of small projects are underway that will enhance staff spaces on the first and third floors of Fondren Library Red. Construction activities have been planned to minimize disruptions; however, occasional noise may occur during the renovation. Contact the library's Main Desk for help finding quieter study spaces and to locate earplug supply stations. Additionally, books with call numbers 800-899 will be temporarily stored offsite and procurement of these books will require an [Interlibrary Loan](#) request.

SMU's statement on anti-hazing from Dean of Students

On Monday, January 8, 2024, Dr. Melinda J. Sutton, dean of students, sent a letter to students, faculty and staff regarding SMU's policies against hazing.

Hazing is a violation of Texas law and SMU's Student Code of Conduct. Individuals or organizations engaging in hazing could be subject to fines and charged with a criminal offense as well as face disciplinary action from the University.

Students who have knowledge of hazing activity can report it to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards by clicking [here](#) or to the SMU Police Department, or both. Information about hazing may also be reported anonymously through the SMU Police Department's Silent Witness Program by calling 214-SMU-2TIP or online at <http://www.smu.edu/2tip>. Hazing activity can also be reported anonymously via Real Response by texting 205-TXT2SMU and a member of the Dean of Students Office will respond as needed.

2024 spring Holy Days

On Tuesday, January 9, 2024, Lisa Garvin, chaplain and minister to the University and Sheri Kunovich, associate provost for Student Academic Engagement Success [sent a letter to faculty and staff](#) outlining this semester's holy days.

Awareness of the many holidays celebrated by our students promotes a supportive learning environment and fosters an inclusive community. Several of this semester's holy days, observed by many religions, fall on class days and exam days. Being familiar with these dates can help anticipate some students' need to request absences and/or to reschedule tests/exams.

SMU Brand Guidelines

SMU brand email signature guidelines

SMU has a standardized email signature that reinforces our professionalism and extends our brand recognition. Navigate to smu.edu/brand/email-signatures and learn more about our standardized email signature and make any changes necessary. Reach out to brand@smu.edu if you need any additional guidance or assistance.

SMU Brand Guidelines session open to SMU faculty and staff

On Friday, January 5, 2024, SMU Marketing & Communications sent an email to faculty and staff about a Brand Guidelines session they will be hosting on Monday, January 22, from 1–2:30 p.m. in Oren Auditorium in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center. This session will review SMU's brand, explain why maintaining brand compliance is important – even across social media and digital content – and conclude with an open Q&A session. This session is relevant for anyone looking for a structured review or introduction to SMU's brand materials.

If interested in attending, confirm attendance by today, January 19, via <https://blog.smu.edu/events/smu-brand-guidelines-overview/>.

Additionally, many schools, colleges and other academic units have their own marketing and communications contacts on staff. These individuals are excellent resources when looking to discuss marketing initiatives and projects, or to receive guidance and assistance. If you are unsure who your school/unit contact is, reach out to brand@smu.edu and they will direct you to the appropriate individual.

Academic Excellence

Common Curriculum workshop hosted by the Office of General Education

Join the Office of General Education on Wednesday, January 31, to learn more about SMU's Common Curriculum. This workshop, held from 12-1 p.m. in Hughes-Trigg 219, will provide an overview of the Common Curriculum, take an in-depth look at ways students can complete Foundation, Breadth, and Proficiency & Experience requirements and will conclude with a question-and-answer session where faculty and staff are invited to ask any remaining questions they may have.

Attendees are encouraged to [RSVP through SMU 360](#), but walk-ins are welcome.

Second annual Graduate Student Success Day scheduled for January 29

SMU's annual Graduate Student Success Day, hosted by the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, will take place on Monday, January 29. This half-day event convenes faculty and postdocs to share best practices and ideas for promoting the success of our graduate students. Special guest [Dr. Lillian Eby](#), distinguished research professor and chair of the Industrial-Organizational Psychology Program at the University of Georgia, will share insights on graduate mentoring. Dr. Maria Dixon Hall, SMU's chief diversity officer, will present on best practices in working with graduate students, and Dr. Paige Ware, associate provost for faculty success, will moderate an SMU faculty panel on helping graduate students persist to graduation. The event will also include breakout sessions on specific topics with Dr. Eby and Moody School staff. Graduate Student Success Day will kick off with breakfast at 8:45 a.m. and will also include lunch for attendees at 12:15 p.m. A full schedule can be found [here](#).

Questions can be directed to Dr. Alan Itkin, senior assistant dean of the Moody School at aitkin@smu.edu.

Thank you to faculty and staff for attending last week's student academic support open house

Last week, the Offices of Student Academic Success Programs (SASP) and Academic Development of Student Athletes (ADSA) hosted a faculty/staff breakfast meet-and-greet for community members interested in learning more about SMU's student academic success support initiatives. Thank you to the SASP and ADSA staff members for hosting this event and to the more than 125 community members who were able to participate.

SMU student-entrepreneur featured in The Dallas Morning News

Trevor Gicheru, a computer science junior at SMU and two-time winner of the Big iDeas Pitch Competition, is making headlines with his software [Nurovant AI](#), which uses AI technology to create quizzes, flashcards, and study tools from audio recordings of lectures. Trevor's app was covered by [The Dallas Morning News](#) in an article written by fellow SMU student, Kirk Ogunrinde, who interned with the media outlet during the fall 2023 semester.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

SMU hosted Federal Research Workshop

On January 18 and 19, SMU hosted an on-campus federal research workshop to support the development of research projects being submitted to U.S. Congress as part of the FY 2025 earmark and/or appropriation processes.

[Click here](#) to review important information shared during the workshop as well as additional details about the FY 2025 submission process. Please direct questions to Suku Nair at nair@smu.edu, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer.

Thanks to all who were able to participate.

2023–2024 Provost Research Fellowship recipients

In the fall 2023 semester, the Office of the Provost, in conjunction with the Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer and the University Research Council (URC), selected the recipients of this year's Provost Research Fellowship – a \$15,000 cash prize designed to provide research support to SMU's outstanding scholars during the current academic year.

This fellowship was open to current SMU tenured faculty nominated by their dean or by the Faculty Senate. Nominated faculty were invited to submit research proposals for review and evaluation by the URC, who then recommended the most meritorious proposals for final selection by the Office of the Provost.

Join me in congratulating the following 2023-2024 Provost Research Fellows:

Alexandra Pavlakis – Professor, Department of Education Policy & Leadership, Simmons School of Education & Human Development

Klaus Desmet – Ruth and Kenneth Altshuler Centennial Interdisciplinary Professor, Department of Economics, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences

Jennifer Dworak – Associate Director of the SMU AT&T Center for Virtualization and Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Lyle School of Engineering

David Taylor – Co-Director of the Tsai Center for Law, Science and Innovation and Professor, Dedman School of Law

James Lee – Professor, Perkins School of Theology

Research & Innovation Week 2024, April 1-5

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. Research & Innovation Week 2024 will feature a [keynote talk](#) by Keivan Stassun, director of the Frist Center for Autism and Innovation and Stevenson Professor of Physics & Astronomy at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Stassun's talk is titled "The (Neuro-) Diversity Revolution: Tapping the Human Diversity of Mind to Accelerate Scientific Discovery." It will take place on Thursday, April 4, at 5 p.m. in the Frances Anne Moody Hall Auditorium. The keynote is co-sponsored by the Simmons School of Education and Human Development, the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education, and the Scott-Hawkins Lecture Fund.

Students and postdoctoral scholars are encouraged to be a part of Research & Innovation Week by participating in the poster sessions, which will be held in Frances Anne Moody Hall. The [undergraduate poster session](#) will take place on Tuesday, April 2, from 2-5 p.m. Two [graduate poster sessions](#) will take place on Wednesday, April 3, from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. for students in Dedman College graduate programs and from 2-5 p.m. for graduate students in all other graduate programs and postdoctoral scholars. More Research & Innovation Week events will be announced soon. Questions can be directed to Dr. Alan Itkin, senior assistant dean of the Moody School, at aitkin@smu.edu.

Simmons School of Education and Human Development professor publishes model-based approach to equate student fluency scores

Professor Aki Kamata from the department of Education Policy and Leadership at Simmons School of Education and Human Development published research featuring a new model-based approach equating words read correctly per minute (WCPM) scores with oral fluency assessment scores. This model can help identify at-risk readers and monitor intervention progress as well as help researchers collect more informative data.

Professor Kamata's article, Equating Oral Reading Fluency Scores: A Model-Based Approach, was published in volume 84, issue 1, of *Educational and Psychological Measurement*.

News and Noteworthy

Dedman School of Law Distinguished Alumni Awards

Dedman School of Law will recognize five alumni with the Distinguished Alumni Award on March 6, 2024, at the Arts District Mansion. The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest honor the law school bestows upon its alumni (and friends) in recognition of their professional achievements, leadership, and service.

Alumni being recognized are Brittany K. Barnett '11, Hon. Dennise Garcia '93, Mark A. Melton '08, Timothy P. Reames '61, and Donald E. Godwin '73. [Read more about the distinguished alumni here.](#)

Dedman School of Law professor elected to the American Law Institute

Professor Carla L. Reyes from Dedman School of Law has been elected to the [American Law Institute](#) (ALI). ALI, founded in the early 1920s, was established "to promote the clarification and simplification of the law and its better adaptation to social needs, to secure the better administration of justice and to encourage and carry on scholarly and scientific legal work." Over the past 100 years, ALI has worked under this mission, with a membership of judges, lawyers, and law professors, to clarify the law through Restatements, Principles, and Model Codes.

Congratulations to Professor Reyes for this recognition of her scholarly work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Lobo', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth G. Lobo, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

World Changers Shaped Here