

Weekly Update | March 22, 2024

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 [submit your ideas through this form](#). 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

SMU welcoming newly-admitted students to the Hilltop

On Friday, March 15, President Turner [sent a message](#) to the SMU community highlighting the important college decisions facing newly-admitted students between now and May 1.

If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to read the message to learn more about the important role each of us play in recruiting outstanding new Mustangs to the Hilltop.

Academic Excellence

SMU in Four communication regarding Mid-Semester Check-In

All SMU undergraduates received an email from SMU in Four on March 18, asking them to complete a brief, two-question survey as part of the SMU in Four initiative. This mid-semester check-in survey is intended to capture students' self-reported academic performance and sense of belonging for the

current term. It is distributed around midterms and has built-in interventions to connect struggling students with SMU's array of campus support resources.

In the next four class days, I encourage faculty to allocate 30 seconds of class time for students to complete this survey or to announce the survey to students via Canvas. The mid-semester check-in survey runs through March 31, 2024.

Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success announce winners of Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Award

Sponsored by the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success, the Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Award recognizes exemplary contributions to the teaching of SMU undergraduates by graduate student instructors and teaching assistants. At least two awards, each including a \$1,000 prize, are given annually.

This year's three winners are:

Kendall Dinniene, Ph.D. student in the Department of English at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, was recognized for her stellar performance as a course instructor and teaching assistant for multiple classes and for her devotion to the craft of teaching through work in the English department and the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Marie Schramper, Ph.D. student in the Religious Studies Graduate Program at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, was recognized for her exemplary support of faculty instruction as a teaching assistant for multiple classes and for her dedication to students both in and outside the classroom.

Timothy Seiter, Ph.D. student in the Department of History at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, was recognized for his creativity in developing innovative class assignments as a teaching assistant and his ability to craft compelling and informative lectures as a class instructor.

Two SMU undergraduates win prestigious Critical Language Scholarship

This year, two SMU undergraduate students were awarded the U.S. Department of State's prestigious [Critical Language Scholarship](#). EJ Rorem, a senior political science and statistical science major, will be traveling to Dushanbe, Tajikistan this summer to continue learning Persian. Anish Senthilkumar, a third-year economics with financial applications major will study Hindi in Jaipur, India. Both EJ and Anish are members of SMU's Tower Scholars Program, an invitation-only public policy program that enables students from a variety of academic backgrounds to combine their academic interests with real-world experience in public policy. EJ also participates in the Dedman College Scholars Program and the University Honors Program.

The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), which only accepts 10 percent of applicants, covers all expenses for an eight-to-ten-week immersive summer abroad experience for students to learn one of 13 languages important for American national security and economic prosperity: Arabic, Azerbaijani, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, or Urdu. The program includes intensive language instruction and cultural enrichment experiences to promote rapid language gains.

Undergraduate students interested in learning more about the CLS program should contact Dr. Brandon Gray Miller, Assistant Dean for University Honors Program and Undergraduate Fellowships at bgmiller@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Research and Innovation Week 2024, April 1-5

All faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to attend [Research and Innovation Week](#) on April 1-5. I will be launching the week with a welcome at the Kick-Off Event scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Monday, April 1, in the Frances Anne Moody Hall Auditorium.

This year, Research & Innovation Week is bigger than ever. Events organized by the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, the Office of Engaged Learning, the Office of Research & Innovation, Simmons School of Education and Human Development and Meadows School of the Arts will take place throughout the week. Programs and events will include:

- Kick-Off Event and Centers and Institutes Panel, Monday, April 1, 8:30 a.m.–12 p.m., Moody Hall Auditorium
- Undergraduate Poster Session, Tuesday, April 2, 2–5 p.m., Moody Hall Atrium
- Graduate Poster Sessions, Wednesday, April 3, 9 a.m. –12 p.m. (Dedman College programs), 2–5 p.m. (all other programs and postdocs), Moody Hall Atrium
- Lunch & Learn with the Office of Research Compliance, Thursday, April 4, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Moody Hall 241
- [Keynote Talk](#), Thursday, April 4, 5–6 p.m., with reception to follow
- Conversation with Dr. Sandi Chapman and Dr. Lori Cook, Friday, April 5, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., Moody Hall Auditorium
- Interdisciplinary Workshop: Licensing Research, Friday, April 5, 8:30 a.m.–3:45 p.m., Moody Hall Auditorium
- MFA Qualifying Exhibition special RIW event, Friday, April 5, 2–5 p.m., Pollock Gallery in Expressway Tower, East Campus

Lyle School of Engineering faculty member awarded nearly \$1 million in research funding from 2024 Congressional Appropriations

Barbara Minsker, Bobby B. Lyle Endowed Professor of Leadership & Global Entrepreneurship and professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, has been awarded a \$963,000 grant from the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Appropriations Act of 2024, part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 that was signed into law on March 9. This federal grant, managed by the [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) (NIST), will fund Professor Minsker's project, *Improving Communities Through Smart and Resilient Infrastructure Investments*.

Research team from SMU, University of Maine, and Fairfield win National Science Foundation's Innovative Technology Experiences for Students Teachers grant

Lin Lin Lipsmeyer, professor and chair of the Department of Teaching & Learning at Simmons School of Education and Human Development, and Kyle Roberts, professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning along with colleagues Prabuddha Chakraborty, University of Maine – Orono, and Xiaoli Yang, Fairfield University, have been awarded a \$1.3 million National Science Foundation (NSF) Innovative Technology Experiences for Students Teachers (ITEST) grant researching education curricula focused on innovative technology and workforce development related to semiconductors. \$414,802 of the award will be awarded to SMU specifically. This research will provide excellent synergy with SMU's current Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub efforts.

Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub invited by state and federal officials to present to companies and academic leaders in Taiwan

Campus members of the [SMU-led Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub](#) will be sharing their vision with more than 100 attendees from companies and academia in Taiwan by invitation of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the American Institute in Taiwan and Texas Governor Greg Abbott's office. Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub representatives will make remote presentations to Taiwanese tech investors and partners who have expressed an interest in investing in the United States' semiconductor industry. Taiwan is a major global hub for building semiconductor chips, and an alliance with companies from Taiwan could be a boon for the United States' aspirations.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Chemistry faculty member and colleagues publish study on machine learning interatomic potentials

Elfi Kraka, professor from the Department of Chemistry at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences and her colleagues are developing a computational tool aimed to understand [what happens at the tiny scale at which individual atoms exist and interact](#).

Mathematical functions used to calculate the potential energy of a system of atoms are called interatomic potentials. Machine learning interatomic potentials (MLIP)s have become an efficient and cost-effective alternative to traditional quantum chemical simulations, which even in today's high-performance computing environment often become out of reach for large systems. In their quest, Kraka and her colleagues have developed a novel MLIP, called ANI-1xnr, that applies to a broad range of reactive chemistry without the need for costly refitting, a major drawback of the MLIPs currently in use. Their article, "Exploring the frontiers of condensed-phase chemistry with a general reactive machine learning potential," appears in the journal [Nature Chemistry](#).

News and Noteworthy

Dedman School of Law and Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center to host Artificial Intelligence and Prosecution workshop

SMU faculty and staff are invited to register for the "[Artificial Intelligence and Prosecution](#)" workshop, co-hosted by the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center at SMU Dedman School of Law. This interdisciplinary on-campus workshop will be held April 17-18. Participants will explore how, over the next five years, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies will impact prosecution, with a particular focus

on topics such as discovery, plea bargaining, bail, motion practice and litigation strategy. They will also map critical research and policy questions concerning how AI technologies can advance equal justice, due process and public safety.

[Register here](#) for the workshop; please note that space is extremely limited. When you register, please use the promo code "research" to access the tickets reserved specifically for SMU faculty and staff.

SMU civil engineering student honored with Student Engineer of The Year award from Dallas chapter of Texas Society of Professional Engineers

Zoe Mukendi '26 was honored last week with the [Dallas chapter of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers'](#) (TSPE) [Student of the Year Award](#) for her academic excellence and leadership. A sophomore at SMU, Mukendi is pursuing her B.S. in civil engineering at Lyle School of Engineering with a minor in public policy and international affairs. She is the current president of SMU's TSPE campus chapter, where her main goals are to advocate for engineering license and to empower her fellow engineering peers. Mukendi also serves as a peer mentor in the Thrive Scholars Program at Lyle School of Engineering.

Meadows School of the Arts' Division of Dance and Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute hosted weeklong dance company residency

The Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII) selected "Climate Resilience" as the theme for its annual Big Challenge Series. [DCII collaborated with Meadows School of the Arts](#), the partnership overseen by Chair of the Division of Dance Christopher Dolder, to create and organize interdisciplinary programming around the climate resilience theme. DCII and Meadows School hosted [Time Lapse Dance](#), a professional dance troupe that creatively advocates for climate change through choreography, for a weeklong residency as part of the series. The residency included a performance, a panel with SMU faculty, a dance workshop along with three master classes for Meadows dance students in technique, dance composition, and dance production.

The Time Lapse Dance performance, "Arbor and Other Dances About Nature," took place yesterday, March 21, in the Bob Hope Theatre of Owen Arts Center.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of English hosts poetic form symposium

On March 18 and 19, some of the English language's leading poets and poetry scholars gathered on SMU's campus for the SMU Symposium on Poetic Form. Participants included Keynote Poet Jericho Brown, winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize; along with panelists Evie Shockley, finalist for the 2023 National Book Award, Maureen McLane, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Excellence in Book Reviewing, Stephanie Burt, Jahan Ramazani and Jonathan Culler.

You can follow the symposium on Instagram [@smu_symposiumonpoeticform](#).

The SMU Symposium on Poetic Form is sponsored by the Department of English and organized by David Caplan, professor and Daisy Deane Frenley Chair in English Literature.

SMU student team to take Big iDea invention to the ACC InVenture Prize competition

SMU students Raleigh Dewan '24 and Mason Morland '24 will be taking their [StediSpoon](#), a self-stabilizing utensil mobility aid, to compete in the [Atlantic Coast Conference \(ACC\) InVenture Prize](#) competition on March 27, at 6 p.m. CST. This competition gathers top student innovators from across the ACC to compete for start-up funding. You can cast your vote to help our students win the \$5,000 People's Choice Award by texting "SMU" to 415-965-7445. Voting begins Monday, March 25, and closes Wednesday, March 27, at approximately 7 p.m. CST.

StediSpoon was first launched with funding from the Big iDeas competition run by SMU's Office of Engaged Learning.

Sincerely,



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

