

August 3, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Hope this letter finds you enjoying your summer wherever you are! The summer has flown by, and I do want to heartily welcome all our new retirees! We hope you will find our group a good group to be associated with and helpful in any way we can. Our board is always welcome to any suggestions from you, offer advice and related resources.

So, now I want to share with you some exciting news. I mentioned in this past May's newsletter that we wanted to design a new initiative for the RFA. Well, it is starting to happen and take form! It is going to be podcast productions. Our plan is to produce a series of podcasts featuring discussions with retired faculty members. They will discuss their careers at SMU, memorable moments in their teaching, the challenges they faced as professors, their achievements, the important events, both good and bad, on campus that they took part in, and some of the insights they've arrived at in their fields of expertise in the arts, humanities, and sciences.

I am working with Paige Ware, Deputy Provost for Faculty Success. In August, Paige will be interviewing and will identify a current SMU student for developing the actual podcasts. They will begin in late August and are part of the First-Year Research Experience program. We will also be connecting with the SMU Journalism department for their help, along with infrastructure to produce the actual podcasts. Also, we will request either one of the current board members who has a related field in teaching or research to the retired faculty interviewee or one of the broadcast journalism students to serve as an interviewer. Maybe also panels of retired faculty could be engaged in some of the podcasts.

Broad Topics for these podcasts:

- faculty members' former and current research
- faculty courses they taught and how this body of content might have changed  
Popular and/or trailblazing courses (e.g., PHIL Tech & Ethics; Cox Alternative Assets; etc.)
- reflective interviews with retired faculty would be where they could focus on the signature they have and the marks that their life in academia made. They could speak about inspirational topics like these (or others as they see fit)
- retired faculty reflecting:
  - What some of my students are doing today
  - Two of my favorite moments as a professor. Unexpected ones especially

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- Two friendships I made early in my career that sustained me
- Top pieces of advice for a fulfilling career in academia
- retired faculty insights into how they handled the extreme challenges that emerged during their tenure at SMU. For example: Covid, protests, politics. Retired faculty have been there—different time—same crisis mode. When you are “in it,” you are not allowed to speak as freely about it; when you are retired, you can be as constructive or critical or reflective as you want!
- retrospective analysis of SMU significant events, noteworthy and invaluable to that retired faculty member
- in developing research: how one thing led to another
- retired faculty talking about their disciplines and the courses they taught in that field and why
- emphasis on the changing nature of higher education
- career twists and turns, the opportunities that fell into one’s laps versus those purposefully pursued

More specific topics (some AI-generated) for the podcasts-

These are just a few examples, certainly not conclusive.

History & Political Science- examples

- Untold Archives: Unpacking specific historical documents, diaries, or letters that never made it into mainstream textbooks. Great stuff: tie into the SMU Oral History Project (Jill Kelly, HIST)? There’s already great stuff here (e.g., voices of minority students from the 1960s and 1970s)
- Political Propaganda: historical media manipulation tactics mirror modern social media disinformation campaigns. Matthew Wilson, Cal Jillson

Science & Technology- examples

- The Evolution of a Cure: Retracing the multi-decade journey of developing specific life-saving drugs or vaccines.
- Scientific funding in a world where science is politicized
- Ethics of Tomorrow: A philosophical look at AI, gene editing, and automation from scientists who watched the digital age begin. SMU’s PHIL department is excellent at this and popular with students
- Climate Change Forensics: Explaining the long-term data trends of environmental shifts using decades of firsthand research. Heather DeShon and SMU cluster hire in Earth Hazards; role of remote sensing

#### Arts- examples

- the political attack on the quality of and access to the arts.
- Meadows is a huge umbrella that encompasses Dance, Theatre, Music, Musical Theatre, Art, Art History, Advertising, Arts Management, Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Creative Computation, and Film and Media Arts.

#### Humanities- examples

- Lost Literature: Re-evaluating banned, forgotten, or critically panned books that deserve a modern audience.
- The SMU Press?
- Language Evolution: Tracking how slang, dialects, and modern internet speech evolved from ancient linguistic roots.
- Philosophy for Daily Life: Applying classical philosophical theories (Stoicism, Existentialism) to modern problems like burnout and loneliness.

#### Sociology & Psychology- examples

- Generational Shifts: How dating, work ethics, and family structures have objectively changed over the last 50 years.
- The Psychology of Magic and Deception: How human perception, cognitive biases, and memory can be easily manipulated.
- Evolution of Crime: How criminal behavior and profiling have shifted from the pre-digital era to the cybercrime age.

#### Economics

- What's going on at the Fed?
- Remote sensing data and earth hazards
- Is today's world economy radically different or is it the same old thing?

#### Higher Education Culture (Meta-Topics)- examples

- The Ivory Tower Unlocked: Behind-the-scenes stories of academic rivalries, bizarre tenure battles, and university secrets. Wow! Let's call legal! This is great and would guarantee is a following.
- What College Missed: Vital life lessons and critical thinking skills that are rarely taught in standard university curriculums. Is Critical Thinking Still Critical? Media literacy; The Student Variable: How are today's students different from how we were? What's the Best Thing about Today's Students (everyone is always critical—what do they have going for them that we didn't have?)

Topic formatting for these podcasts

- faculty could be "interviewed" by someone about a series of issues where they know the questions in advance so they can prepare. When we reach out to faculty to recruit viable candidates, we will mention all possible topics and ask for more topics from the faculty themselves as well. The faculty will have plenty of ideas presented to them to start developing what would work for them.

**Application for the retired faculty to participate in a podcast**

If you are interested in being interviewed for a podcast, please e-mail Lynn Romejko Jacobs: lromejko@smu.edu and provide the following information.

Name, email, phone number, physical address, degrees earned, years at SMU, department, courses taught, area of research, areas of interest, university involvement, topics of interest to discuss, and why? Do you like podcasts? Do you have a favorite podcast you listen to regularly?

Finally! We need you!

**Contributions**

Your annual contribution of any amount plays a vital role in ensuring the ongoing support of retired faculty research and in keeping the organization vibrant.

To contribute, you can:

1. Checks should be made out to "SMU Retired Faculty Association Research Fund" and mailed to SMU Office of Gift Administration, PO Box 750402, Dallas, TX 75275-0402 or dropped off at G03 in Perkins Administration Building (PAB)
2. Online gifts can also be made to the fund at:  
<https://link.smu.edu/giving/givenow2?CRR=9800911DMWDGCALLAL11POW220401598S000000000>

I very much look forward to hearing from you. The board and I welcome your thoughts and ideas.

Kind regards,

Lynn

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