



# SMU

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*Office of the Provost*

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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 to advance the goals of SMU's strategic plan and continue to move SMU forward and upward. 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 four categories: 1) SMU's Road to R-1, 2) Fall 2020, 3) Spring 2021, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

## **SMU'S Road to R-1**

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 Budget Process** – Meetings with Deans and Associate Provosts to review and finalize their proposed budgets for next year conclude this week. With data sharing across schools and units, one of my goals for this year's budget has been greater transparency and collaboration across all of the schools/college. The focus throughout our deliberations, including faculty/staff hiring requests, has been on how budget requests will help us attain SMU's goals within the 2016–2025 Strategic Plan, Black Unity Forum (BUF) Action Plan responses, *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, and Road to R1. Final budget proposals will be reviewed by members of SMU's senior leadership team in January and February with final budget decisions announced in March 2021.
  
- **College/school research spotlight** –
  - **Simmons School of Education and Human Development** – The Toyota Foundation has awarded the Simmons School a \$3 million, three-year research grant to fund the West Dallas STEM School (WDSS) work during its initial implementation phase. This new funding follows on the heels of an initial \$2 million, three-year planning grant from the Toyota Foundation and will make for a seamless transition.

Dean Stephanie Knight will serve as PI on this grant. Congratulations to her and to the following Simmons faculty and staff:

- Tim Jacobbe, Ph.D. – Professor and Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning
- Katrina Martinez, Project Manager, West Dallas Stem School
- Dawson Orr, Ph.D. – Clinical Professor and Director, Ed.D. in Educational Leadership
- Tony Petrosino, Ph.D. – Associate Dean and Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning
- Quentin Sedlacek, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning
- Jeanna Weiselman, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning
- Annie Wilhelm, Ph.D. – Associate Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning
- Annie Wright, Ph.D. – Executive Director of Research and Evaluation, Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE)
- Yetunde Zannou, Ph.D. – Program Manager, CORE

Congratulations as well to Richard Duschl, Executive Director of the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education and TI Distinguished Chair in Engineering Education in the Lyle School of Engineering, for his contributions to this grant.

- **Lyle School of Engineering** – Gary Evans, Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, has been elected as a Fellow into the National Academy of Inventors (NAI). The NAI Fellows Selection Committee selected Professor Evans because he has “. . . demonstrated a highly prolific spirit of innovation in creating or facilitating outstanding inventions that have made a tangible impact on the quality of life, economic development and the welfare of society.” Congratulations on this great achievement and recognition as a truly prolific academic inventor, Dr. Evans.
- **Gerald J. Ford Hall for Research and Innovation dedication** – On December 4, SMU [dedicated the Gerald J. Ford Hall for Research and Innovation](#), a new 50,000-square-foot interdisciplinary research hub that will equip faculty, students, and industry partners with tools and resources to collaborate, solve complex problems, and power new enterprises in the digital world of today and tomorrow. Ford Hall is unlike any building we have on campus and will be home to SMU’s AT&T Center for Virtualization, the Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute, the Data Science Institute, a cutting-edge virtualization lab, and the Guildhall, the Hart eCenter’s top-ranked digital game design program.

- **Career development resources for graduate students** – As mentioned last week, the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies is ramping up career development resources for graduate students. Dr. Ruth Schemmer, a career-development specialist with extensive graduate career advising experience, is now available for one-on-one appointments with Ph.D. students. Additional information about career development resources can be found on [the Moody School career-development website](#).

## **Fall 2020**

- **New guidance regarding quarantine** – As I mentioned last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established new [guidance](#) for individuals exposed to COVID-19 to allow for a shortened quarantine of 10 days in most cases. In coordination with local health officials and Dallas County, SMU will adopt a 10-day clearance from quarantine with some exceptions for medical providers, first responders, and those who participate in an active surveillance testing program.
- **Campus health and safety update** – You can follow our COVID-19 case trends and specifics with SMU’s [dashboard](#). Our current operational level remains in the “moderate” category. Remember that our operational level is reviewed each week, and any necessary updates are posted each Monday afternoon on the Mustang Strong website.
- **December faculty survey** – The Provost’s Office has collaborated with members of the academic leadership team of Chairs and Associate Deans to develop a final survey so that faculty can offer feedback as we plan for the spring term. This optional survey will differ from the September and October surveys in that it asks only for primary school or college affiliation, rather than departmental, and is followed by just four open-ended response items. We will provide the academic leadership teams in each area with direct access to responses in their areas to help as they plan across the winter break. A university-wide synthesis drawing on all results will then be forthcoming in January. The window for the survey will close at noon on Friday, December 18. Thank you for any input that you can offer by following this [link](#) to take the survey.
- **Responding to student requests for extension of pass/fail grading** – This week, I sent this [message](#) to the Student Senate, affirming the University’s November decision not to extend the pass/fail grading option for fall 2020. Over the course of my conversations with student leaders, some critical issues were identified. Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success, sent the following [message](#) to Department Chairs, Associate Deans and Deans to request their help engaging faculty to address some of these issues with hopes of improving everyone’s experience in spring 2021.

- **Campus access for remainder of fall semester** – Students remaining in the area this month can find [library hours](#) and [Zoom spaces](#) available through December 18, if they need a quiet space to study or participate in online classes. Offices will also continue to provide in-person services during normal business hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) through final exams.
- **December Commencement** – [December Commencement](#) will take place on Saturday, December 19, 2020. We are planning for an outdoor ceremony in Ford Stadium at 1:00 p.m. for students and their guests. In case of inclement weather, our backup option will be two ceremonies in Moody Coliseum: one for undergraduate students at 9:00 a.m. and one for graduate students at 2:00 p.m. Regardless of location, face coverings are required and social distancing guidelines must be followed.

We anticipate about 400 graduates and 30 faculty will take part. As with our August Commencement ceremony, in-person participation is voluntary. You may also watch live via <https://www.smu.edu/live>.

### Spring 2021

- **Faculty instructional technology webinars for spring 2021** – On January 12, 13 and 14, the Office of Information Technology will host a series of new webinars featuring sessions hosted by Academic Technology Services, the Center for Teaching Excellence and the SMU Libraries. Focused on offering practical insight toward the improvement of your teaching and your use of technology across both SMUFlex and fully virtual courses, workshop session topics include ways to more effectively use Canvas and Zoom, strategies for taking attendance, and “911” sessions for how to best address challenging teaching scenarios with the right technology systems. The Center for Teaching Excellence has also arranged a special guest speaker who will discuss active learning in these exceptional times. For more information and to register for these sessions, please visit: <http://keepsteaching.smu.edu>.
- **Spring schedule** – Click [here](#) to see the red-blue rotation schedule for spring 2021. Students who are assigned to it will see either a red or blue tile in my.SMU on their student homepage designating their rotation schedule. Undergraduate students who have requested to be fully REMOTE or are taking all VIRTUAL courses will not be assigned to the red-blue rotation schedule.
- **COVID 2021 Operations Plan** – Earlier this month, SMU released the [2021 COVID-19 Operations Plan](#). The information contained in this comprehensive plan is reflected in the newly-updated Mustang Strong [website](#).
- **Instructional Technology Workshops 2021**. OIT and CTE are hosting a workshop series from January 12<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup> with a focus on teaching in

the SMUFlex modality. Mark your calendars and be on the lookout for more information soon.

### **News and Noteworthy**

- **Pedagogical Partner Up Grants.** Congratulations to the [58 SMU faculty](#) who received a grant to participate in faculty-led exploration pods focused on priority areas in instruction that emerged from the faculty and student surveys this fall. Recipients will work in teams of 4-7 that serve as a nexus to enhance their own learning while also sharing with colleagues through a variety of ways, including short videos, tip sheets, Canvas modules, co-hosted workshops, and more. We look forward to learning from their collective expertise and will host a kickoff session next week.
- **DASS lunch and learn: Resources for faculty working with students with disabilities and accommodations** – The Office of Disability Accommodations and Success Strategies (DASS) has scheduled two drop-in Zoom sessions for faculty, new or continuing, to learn more about working with students with disabilities and accommodations.
  - January 22, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.:  
<https://smu.zoom.us/j/91642753320>
  - February 8, 2021, 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.:  
<https://smu.zoom.us/j/95768967472>

Whether you are a new or continuing faculty member, drop in to one of these Zoom sessions to learn more about how students share disability accommodation letters with their instructors. Learn the basics of how to interact with the digital system, *DASS Link* (where accommodation letters are viewed), as well as ask any questions about how to implement accommodations in your classroom. Participation is strongly encouraged, especially for faculty members who are new to SMU.

For a helpful, short video on using *DASS Link*, click [here](#).

- **SMU undergraduate named Schwarzman Scholar** – Congrats to SMU senior Jared Burleson for his selection as a Schwarzman Scholar. Click [here](#) for more about the program and to see the directory of scholars who make up Schwarzman's Class of 2022. 154 students were chosen from more than 3,600 applicants, and the class includes students from 39 countries and 99 universities.

Jared is a senior pursuing double majors in Physics and Mathematics with a minor in Chinese. He plans to observe how Chinese physicists are working with the government on new collider physics experiments. Jared plans to work as a research physicist and utilize an understanding of public policy to advocate for collider physics experiments and government funding. Jared has

previously conducted research with the ATLAS Experiment at CERN and with the EIC at Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Loba', written in a cursive style.

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