



SMU

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
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.

Before providing this week's update, I want to first take this opportunity to sincerely thank you. Fall 2020 has been unlike any other. Our ability to navigate the challenges of this semester safely and successfully has been dependent on your sacrifices, flexibility, and perseverance. Although I have only been here six months, I feel so fortunate to share a workplace with such an amazing, talented and committed group of faculty and staff. On behalf of the entire Provost's Office team, thank you for your commitment to SMU's academic mission.

SMU'S Road to R-1

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 Budget Process** – Planning meetings with Deans and Associate Provosts to review and finalize their proposed budgets concluded this week, and the final budget submission deadline was December 15. 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* top 50 rankings, and Road to R1. Deans and Associate Provosts have done an outstanding job coming together this year to prioritize their requests and to strategize ways, using transparent data, to collaborate. 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.

- **Department of Economics wins seed fund to support underrepresented groups** – Last week, SMU’s Department of Economics received notification that they had been awarded seed grant funding from the American Economic Association (AEA) to support their proposal to encourage underrepresented minorities in the pursuit of graduate studies in economics. Congratulations to Daniel Millimet, Professor and Department Chair, as well as to SMU’s Economics faculty.

Fall 2020

- **New guidance regarding quarantine** – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established new [guidance](#) for individuals exposed to COVID-19 that allows for a shortened quarantine of 10 days. In coordination with local health officials and Dallas County, SMU will now adopt a 10-day clearance from quarantine in most cases, with some exceptions for medical providers, first responders, and those who participate in an active surveillance testing program.
- **Campus health and safety update** – 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](#). For those watching SMU’s case counts, SMU will pause its [COVID-19 dashboard updates](#) while the University’s offices are closed from December 19 to January 3. Regular updates will resume Monday, January 4. Thank you for your commitment to health and safety over the course of a very challenging fall semester. As we enter the holiday season, I would encourage you to maintain vigilance for your sake and for those around you.
- **December faculty survey** – Last week, my office sent a final survey for fall 2020 to faculty so that they could offer feedback as we plan for the spring 2021 term. Thanks to all who participated. We will review your responses over the next few weeks and use them to inform our plans for spring 2021. Look for more information from my office when we return from the holiday break.
- **December Commencement** – [December Commencement](#) will take place this weekend on Saturday, December 19, 2020. This week, the PEC reviewed and affirmed our plans for an outdoor ceremony in Ford Stadium at 1:00 p.m. for students and their guests. We anticipate that about 400 graduates and 30 faculty will take part. As with our August Commencement ceremony, in-person participation is voluntary. Face coverings are required and social distancing guidelines must be followed. You may also watch live via <https://www.smu.edu/live>.

Spring 2021

- **Preparing for COVID-19 vaccine distribution** – SMU will be a [provider of the COVID-19 vaccination for the campus community](#). Our Dr. Bob Smith

Health Center will administer the vaccine in phases according to the State's [guiding principles for distribution](#). Supplies allocated to our campus are not expected until after the first of the year, but vaccination plans are in place for when they arrive. Watch for a one-question survey in your email about whether you intend to get the vaccine through SMU.

- **Faculty instructional technology webinars for spring 2021** – On January 12, 13 and 14, a joint team from the Office of Information Technology (OIT), the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and SMU Libraries will offer a series of webinars to offer practical insight to enhance your teaching and your use of technology across both SMUFlex and fully virtual courses. Workshop topics will 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. CTE has also arranged a special guest speaker who will discuss active learning in these exceptional times. For more information and to register, please visit: <http://keep-teaching.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.
- **New options for addressing attendance issues** – Based on feedback from faculty and students across the semester, we have added 8 new optional additions to the attendance policy for spring 2021 that cover areas such as participation grades, uncounted unexcused absences, Zoom camera expectations, recording availability, and more. We would like to thank members of the academic leadership team of Chairs and Associate Deans, as well as Faculty Senators and individual faculty across 6 departments who worked with their Chairs, to provide very detailed input in the development process. You can watch this [2-minute video](#) explaining the “why and how” of these new options, which are laid out in this [document](#). We will be reaching out to work with the academic leadership team with more information as questions come in from faculty and staff about these options.
- **COVID 2021 Operations Plan** – I would encourage faculty and staff to review SMU's [2021 COVID-19 Operations Plan](#) prior to the start of the spring 2021 semester. The information contained in this comprehensive plan is also reflected on the Mustang Strong [website](#).

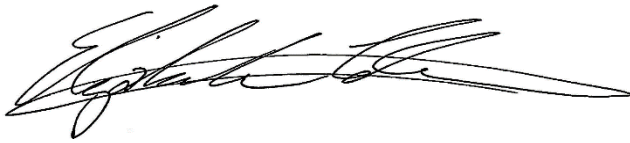
News and Noteworthy

- **CTE's “Thank a Professor” initiative** – This week CTE hosted an initiative called “Thank a Professor” where students were able to send thank you notes to

their professors (after grades and courses evaluations were completed). We have received 378 notes (and counting!) for 284 unique faculty and teaching assistants from every school on campus. This semester has brought more than its fair share of challenges, but I was pleased to see our faculty acknowledged in this unique and personal way as we prepare for a much-deserved break. Despite a pandemic, our faculty persevered and found new ways to make a difference in the lives of our students.

- **Warm holiday wishes** – In closing, I would like to wish you a safe and happy holiday season. Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to move SMU forward and upward. I look forward to great days ahead!

Sincerely,



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