



SMU®

Office of the Provost

July 31, 2020

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 a safe and healthy reopening in fall 2020. Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

To provide as broad an update as possible, my goal is to keep the content brief and to provide you links/attachments with additional information as needed. Today's update falls into two categories: 1) Virtual Town Hall Followups and 2) Preparing for Fall 2020.

Virtual Town Hall Followups

- **Additional town halls** – During the July 19 town hall with faculty and staff, President Turner and I expressed a desire to offer additional opportunities for community engagement through virtual town halls. Below is an update on two town halls:
 - Student and Parent Town Hall – On Wednesday, July 29, Vice President for Student Affairs K.C. Mmeje and I joined President Turner in hosting our first town hall event for students and parents. A recording of the event is available [here](#).
 - Faculty Town Hall – On Wednesday, August 5, the Faculty Senate has invited me to a town hall with SMU faculty. Faculty will receive access instructions in a separate email.

- **August Commencement** – Some community members have expressed concern about the concept of an on-campus commencement ceremony, which as you know is being held on August 15. However, our RSVP numbers indicate that a significant portion of our students, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, are pleased with both the option to come to a campus ceremony, as well as the option to participate remotely. I know all SMU faculty and staff share the desire to recognize the accomplishments of our 2020 graduates, hence SMU's plan includes

both of these ways that graduates and families can participate and be a part of the celebration.

The day's activities include two components, a morning ceremony ([live streamed](#)) and an afternoon Dallas Hall Rotunda recessional. For those attending the morning outdoor ceremony in Ford Stadium, we will require social distancing and mask wearing by graduates and guests. Graduates in attendance will be invited to cross the stage, in addition to other normal program elements. The University is also offering a campus indoor viewing option in McFarlin Auditorium, incorporating health and safety requirements, for guests wishing to escape the heat. For students and families choosing to participate from remote locations, the morning ceremony can be viewed via [live stream](#). All graduates, both those participating on campus and those participating remotely, will receive the same celebratory items, such as diploma covers and printed programs. Programs will also be available for viewing on-line the day of the event.

The afternoon component of the on-campus experience includes a timed recessional through Dallas Hall's Rotunda, incorporating physical distancing and facial coverings. In addition, campus facilities and fountains will be lit red and blue for two nights in the graduates' honor, as will Reunion Tower in downtown Dallas. This will be a wonderful opportunity to look back at the accomplishments of these students and to celebrate their futures with them as we welcome them as our newest alumni.

- **Additional options for community members needing child care** – President Turner's [announcement](#) last week explained additional options that SMU is offering for staff parents who choose to keep their children home or who are in school districts that are not open for face-to-face classes until later this fall.

This week, Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware has convened a working group to help address faculty concerns related to child care. The working group will be sending a voluntary survey to faculty next week for a better understanding of needs.

Preparing for Fall 2020

- **Return-to-work training** – SMU is committed to bringing its faculty, staff and students back to campus in a safe and healthy way. As a reminder, all employees returning to work are required to complete "COVID-19 Return-to-Work Training" before coming back to campus. Please access this required training on Canvas [here](#).

- **SMU Police Department’s cultural diversity training** – On July 22 the SMU Police Department held its annual Cultural Diversity training. The afternoon session of that training involved a panel discussion with black students, alumni and staff designed to facilitate candid discussion between the SMU Police Department and the campus community. The panel resulted in a healthy discussion that allowed all to hear and understand the perspectives and perceptions of both groups. Consistent interactions such as this will continue as the SMU Police Department advances implementation of their Community Engagement Action Plan.
- **Update on student outreach** – Many faculty and staff have asked to be kept informed on the COVID-19 information SMU is providing to students. Moving forward (initiated on July 17), all faculty and staff will receive communications sent to undergraduate students from the Office of Academic Engagement and Success.

Yesterday, Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. K.C. Mmeje sent the following [message](#) to all undergraduate students to familiarize them and their parents with the student life experience this fall. While his message was sent to undergraduates, much of the content pertains to graduate students as well. We encourage you to utilize such information in School/College-level communications with your professional and graduate students.

- **More information on implementing SMUFlex** – SMUFlex is based on the HyFlex instructional model that can support maximum flexibility to reach all students under the unique circumstances this upcoming semester presents. In practice, excluding classes where room capacity can safely accommodate the full student enrollment, instructors will meet in person with approximately half of their students, while the other half of the class will simultaneously attend virtually via Zoom. To achieve this, undergraduate students will be algorithmically assigned to either a “red” or “blue” team cohort. They will come to campus for face-to-face instruction based on their assigned color. We will announce red/blue designations to undergraduate students during the week of August 10. In the event that last-minute schedule changes result in an imbalanced mix of red/blue students, there will be an adjustment period to move students to ensure that no classroom has more students than can be accommodated for physical distancing.

This week, the Academic Continuity subcommittee has recommended a red/blue schedule, alternating daily, for in person classes. The pattern would repeat every two weeks and would apply to all undergraduate classes offered between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. See the graphic below for an illustration of the proposed Red/Blue schedule for Fall 2020.

September 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Key rationale for this recommendation:

- Keeps students more engaged with the campus with fewer opportunities for long breaks where they could leave campus.
- Makes the schedule predictable for students and faculty.
- Provides students access to other campus resources on a more regular basis.
- Allows students to be more fully engaged with other campus activities and events.

The EOC has reviewed and approved this approach so we will present this recommendation to the PEC next week for final approval.

- **Additional time between classes** – In response to a recommendation by the Academic Continuity subcommittee and based on faculty requests and feedback from the Faculty Senate town hall, a five-minute increase to the time between classes (from 10 minutes to 15 minutes) has been approved.
- **Update on new air filter system** – SMU Facilities Planning and Management is upgrading all air filters in air handler units across campus, as a strategy to improve air quality in all University buildings. All air filters will be updated from the current MERV 10 level to the highest rated filtration level effective for SMU's air handler system – MERV 13. The diagram on this [website](#) details the filtration ratings, and the types and amounts of particles captured.

The first round of installations will focus on residential buildings, transitioning next to the University's academic buildings, and concluding with all remaining indoor facilities on campus. All installations are scheduled for completion by late-August.

- **Qualtrics and Pathcheck** – OIT is partnering with consultants from Ernst and Young with a goal to implement a technological solution to manage COVID-19 symptom tracking, case management (for employees), and digital tracing before August 14. Project activities begin this week, and I will provide additional information as the team’s work progresses.
- **Quarantine** – This week, the PEC reviewed and supported the EOC’s recommendation to remove the 14-day quarantine requirement for all individuals arriving from an international location. This is effective as of July 27. We will continue to monitor the situation and will revise this direction in consultation with local/state/federal authorities and CDC guidelines.
- **Zoom rooms** – Zoom rooms will be spread across campus and will provide students with a quiet space to engage virtually in their courses. Students will need to bring their own laptops and headphones and masks will be required. Zoom rooms will be scheduled through a centrally managed reservation system. Look for more details soon.



- **Faculty preparation for online-only course delivery** – A joint team from Office of Information Technology (OIT), Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and Libraries, with input from SMU Global and Online (SMU GO), developed two required courses (one focused on Canvas, one focused on online teaching) to support faculty members in their delivery of high-quality instruction through fully online modalities. As of today, 539 faculty had enrolled in these courses; and 163 have finished both courses. The deadline for completion has now been extended until August 10.

Non-tenure track faculty, adjunct faculty, and/or graduate-facing faculty who will be teaching remotely must take these courses as well. We recognize that some faculty who fall into these categories might only learn of the need to teach remotely very near to the start of classes. In cases such as these, while we are requiring training, we will allow you to complete the training over the course of the semester. Look for more information in future updates.

- **Standard Syllabus language** – Members of my office, working in partnership with SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN), are currently developing draft language, to address policies such as classroom participation, attendance, face covering and safety, for faculty to include in their fall 2020 course syllabi. Once drafting has been completed, we will work with deans, department chairs and the faculty senate to finalize and distribute to faculty.
- **Changes to building access** – To welcome our students for fall and avoid congestion at building entrances, exterior doors will no longer require ID card swipes during normal operating hours beginning August 10. Over the summer, card swipe access to buildings assisted in contact tracing efforts. With the addition of the new digital tracing mentioned above, card swipe access will no longer be required.
- **SMU CAN and community pledge to protect** – As an important step to promote a safe return, the SMU CAN has developed a community “pledge to protect.” Prior to the start of the fall semester, all faculty, staff and students will review and sign the pledge to confirm our understanding and commitment to our personal responsibilities during these challenging times. Click [here](#) to review and sign. Please note that to submit, we request that community members provide their name and SMU ID. This is not an effort to identify individuals who have not signed, but rather to understand the level of commitment in the different segments of our campus community. This pledge is also included in the student return-to-campus training. I signed the pledge yesterday. Thank you all in advance for signing and joining me as we work to ensure the health and safety of our entire SMU community.

Sincerely,



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