



SMU

Elizabeth G. Lobo
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Office of the Provost

April 23, 2021

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 three categories: 1) Spring 2021, 2) Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2021

- **Campus response to this week's guilty verdict in the murder of George Floyd** – While this week's guilty verdict brings some degree of closure to the tragic murder of George Floyd, I want to echo [President Turner's message](#) from earlier this week that our struggle continues.

I want to extend my gratitude in particular to the University Diversity Council, the Dedman School of Law and its Dean, Jennifer Collins, Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Maria Dixon Hall, and to Professors Jeffrey Engel, Pamela Metzger, and Karen Thomas for their participation in Thursday's all-University Flash Class which served as a forum to help members of our campus community explore the verdict's impact on our society.

As always, counseling is available to students through the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center and for faculty, staff and students through the Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life.

- **Summer operations and preparing for fall** – We are currently planning for the continued utilization of Virtual and SMUFlex modalities during the May and summer terms, with hopes of a return to normal, in-person operations in fall 2021. Informed by feedback from faculty, staff, deans, and the Faculty Senate, the University's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is recommending modifications to our COVID-19 Operations Plan that will facilitate a safe transition to normal operations.

The President's Executive Council (PEC) will review the feedback from the deans, Faculty Senate, faculty, and students on EOC'S recommendations on Monday, April 26, and plans to share updates next week.

- **Update on the Social Justice and Equity Task Force** – Along with Task Force Chair, Associate Professor Jessica Dixon Weaver of the Dedman School of Law, I am pleased to announce [members of the Social Justice and Equity task force](#). Members received notification this week, and an initial meeting will be scheduled before the end of the semester to review the charge and to begin planning. My thanks to Jessica and all members of the task force for the great work that I know you will do.

- **Quarterly update to the Black Unity Forum** – This week, President Turner, Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Maria Dixon Hall, Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. K.C. Mmeje and I met with members of the Black Unity Forum. In this meeting, we provided our quarterly update on progress toward meeting the University’s commitments as outlined in SMU’s response to the Black Unity Forum Action Plan. The Academic Affairs’ update focused primarily on the goals and initiatives of our Quality Enhancement Plan, SMU in Four, and how it supports the Black Unity Forum Action Plan.

- **Additional reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **Methodist Health System (MHS) registration for COVID-19 vaccine** – Methodist Health System (MHS) is also offering more appointments to SMU students, faculty and staff. Vaccine appointments are available Monday-Friday between the hours of 8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. at Methodist Dallas Medical Center on 1441 N Beckley Ave. To schedule an appointment, [click here](#).
- **Reminder to report your COVID-19 vaccination** – To tailor the University’s requests for vaccine allotments each week and to inform our plans for summer and fall, it is important to know how many people have already been vaccinated or are scheduled to get the first and/or second doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.
 - As of April 22, over 380 faculty and 770 staff (approaching 50%) have reported receiving at least a first-dose of the vaccine.

If you have already received your vaccine, please remember to fill out the self-reporting tool – *and keep it up to date if a second dose is required* – on the [Mustang Strong vaccine page](#). Your voluntary submission will not be used to communicate to you directly about your own vaccine status. Unsure of what activities are safe after you are vaccinated? [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer guidelines for what vaccinated individuals may do](#).

- **Reminder: Guidance for staff who are able to schedule vaccine shots during working hours** – SMU encourages you to schedule a time to get your COVID vaccination as soon as you are eligible and can find one. While staff are not required to take vacation/sick leave to get your vaccine during working hours, you should notify your dean or manager if you miss time and also plan to make up any lost work. We also remind faculty to be supportive of students who are able to acquire their vaccination during classroom time.
- **May commencement** – SMU is currently solidifying plans for the [May Commencement](#) ceremony in Ford Stadium and will provide updated information as it becomes available. We anticipate following the same health and safety guidelines put in place during our previous commencement ceremonies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you are unable to attend May Commencement in person, you may also view the ceremony virtually at smu.edu/live. Whether you attend in person or watch the webcast, I hope you will join with your colleagues in support of these events and the values they represent.

- **Memo to faculty regarding final exams** – Faculty, please review my [email](#) from last week with important reminders about university policies and procedures related to final exams and final grades. Thank you for your tremendous efforts in making spring 2021 a success.

- **School-specific May Commencement ceremonies in Moody and McFarlin** – School-specific commencement ceremonies will resume this spring in both Moody Coliseum and McFarlin Auditorium. Masks will be required in these facilities and, in keeping with current CDC and state/local guidelines, 5' – 6' spacing will be enforced. For those unable to participate in person, these events will be livestreamed as well. Please contact your dean's office for additional information.

Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **2022 USN&WR graduate rankings** – Last month, *US News and World Report* [released its 2022 rankings of graduate schools](#). In previous newsletters, I highlighted Simmons and Dedman Law for making the most noteworthy gains in 2022. This week, I would like to recognize SMU's Cox School of Business. Their full-time MBA program ranks 44th in the nation for 2022 and, since 2019, has consistently ranked in the top-50. Congratulations to Dean Myers and Cox's faculty, staff and students for this recognition of sustained excellence.
- **Virtual Town Hall schedule change and reminder to sign-up** – The virtual town hall was rescheduled to Friday, April 30 so that we could encourage and allow attendance to the all-University Virtual Flash Class that explored the George Floyd murder trial verdict's impact on our society.

All faculty are encouraged to attend one or both of our final sessions. Click [here](#) to register.

- **SMU faculty member receives grant funding for FY 2021-2022** – Congratulations to Dr. Johan Elverskog, Dedman Family Distinguished Professor, Professor of Religious Studies, and, by courtesy, Professor of History who was [awarded a grant](#) from the James P. Geiss and Margaret Y. Hsu Foundation to support his work through the National Humanities Center (NHC) during the 2021–2022 fellowship year. Professor Everskog's work will focus on examining the history of Uighur Buddhism from 800 to 1800 CE.
- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**
 - **Call for research cluster proposals for 2021-2022** – The Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute (DCII) offers a home for informal, collaborative research clusters of scholars who wish to meet together to discuss shared interdisciplinary interests. These clusters must have at least two faculty and/or graduate student conveners who are responsible for the cluster's activities, and they should be open to faculty and graduate students from across campus. DCII also welcomes participants from other universities in the DFW area as well as from the broader community. The DCII provides space for meetings in Ford Hall, staff assistance to organize the meetings and events, and up to \$4,000 in funding to support the activities of the cluster.

Those interested in forming or renewing a research cluster for 2021–2022 should submit a proposal via this [link](#). The deadline for applications is **Friday, May 21**. For examples of previous and current research clusters sponsored by the DCII, visit [here](#).

- **Workload Policy update and next steps** – This week, having completed a thorough review of all of the department-level efforts to provide transparency about faculty workloads as submitted by the March 31 deadline, my office has provided feedback to deans to be shared with department chairs and faculty.

Be on the lookout for additional information once drafts are finalized. We plan to provide SMU's faculty access to all approved department-level and school/college-level workload documents through the Provost Office's website.

News and Noteworthy

- **2022-2023 Academic Calendar approved by Faculty Senate and PEC** – This week, the PEC approved SMU's [2022-2023 academic calendar](#), as previously reviewed and approved by Faculty Senate

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Loba
Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
P.O. Box 750221, Dallas, TX 75275-0221
eglobo@smu.edu
214-768-3219

