



SMU

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Office of the Provost

April 30, 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.

As this is the final newsletter before undergraduate classes end for the semester, I would like to thank all of our incredible faculty and staff for your extraordinary efforts this year – one that has been unlike any other.

Spring 2021

- **Planning for May, summer and fall terms** – Informed by feedback from faculty, staff, deans, students and the Faculty Senate, the University's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has recommended modifications to our COVID-19 Operations Plan to facilitate a safe transition to normal operations.

This Monday, the President's Executive Council (PEC) reviewed these recommendations and President Turner [announced the following plans](#) for the May, summer and fall terms.

- **Message to Students: SMU Connected** – This [message](#) was sent to all undergraduate students on Monday, April 26. It contains instructions for indicating remote status for May/summer terms, a message from President Turner on plans for fall 2021, steps for rescheduling final exams in observance of Ramadan, and a reminder that enrollment for fall 2021 is underway.
- **International students can continue taking online classes** – The U.S. government's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will [continue to allow](#) international students enrolled at U.S. universities to take remote courses and maintain their active status. The student-visa guidance, which was first put in place in March 2020, **will remain in effect for the entire 2021-2022 academic year.**

New international students — those who weren't in the U.S. before March 9, 2020 — won't be able to enter the U.S. if their course of study is 100-percent online, but they can come if they are enrolling in a hybrid program with some in-person instruction. While the student-visa guidance will resolve one piece of uncertainty for international students, there are still many unknowns to account for, like visa-processing delays, consular closures, travel restrictions, and vaccine requirements. We will provide additional information as it becomes available.

- **Students from four countries will be excluded from COVID-19 travel bans** – The U.S. Department of State recently [announced](#) that student-visa holders from certain countries (including Brazil, China, Iran, and South Africa) will be exempt from COVID-related bans on travelers from those countries to the United States, lifting a significant obstacle to the return of international students this fall.

The inclusion of China in the so-called national-interest exemption, which applies to programs of study that begin after August 1, is significant — China accounts for one in every three international students pursuing higher education in the United States. Some academics and researchers from those countries will also be able to travel here. Read more about the State Department's announcement [here](#).

- **On-campus vaccines available to the SMU Community** – With additional supplies now available, the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center is offering the COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer) to all members of the SMU community. You are encouraged to schedule your vaccination as soon as possible. Please [follow this link to reserve a time](#) to receive a first-dose vaccine. If you have any difficulties scheduling an appointment, please contact the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center at 214-768-2141.
- **Additional reminders from previous Friday updates**
 - **Methodist Health System (MHS) registration for COVID-19 vaccine** – Methodist Health System (MHS) continues to offer appointments to SMU students, faculty, and staff. Vaccine appointments are available Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:00 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, second, or single vaccine dose.
 - As of April 30, 60% of our faculty and 50% of our staff have reported receiving at least a first-dose of the vaccine.

- To incentivize student reporting, and acting on the suggestion of SMU's Community Action Network (SMU CAN), we will give a one-time \$10 electronic Amazon gift card to all SMU undergraduate and graduate students who use our self-reporting tool to submit their vaccination status. Available responses include: I have received first/second/single dose; I plan to receive the vaccine; I am undecided; and I do not plan to receive the vaccine. Note: Students who have already reported their vaccine status are also eligible to receive the gift card. They will receive an email and must reply to verify their interest in receiving the \$10 gift card.

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.](#)

- **May commencement** – The [May Commencement website](#) provides the most up-to-date information for graduates, guests, and faculty/staff participants. For the ceremony (Saturday, May 15, at 8:00 a.m.), 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, the students graduating, and the values commencement represents.

- **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 observed. For those unable to participate in person, these events will be livestreamed as well. Please contact your dean's office for additional information.
- **Update on the Social Justice and Equity Task Force** – Last week, Task Force Chair Associate Professor Jessica Dixon Weaver of the Dedman School of Law and I announced the [members of the Social Justice and Equity task force](#). Thanks to all who offered to serve. We anticipate launching the Task Force in the coming weeks.
- **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. Note: If you have not already received approval for in-person exams, proceed with virtual exams only. The time window has closed for accommodating in-person exam scheduling.

Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **Virtual Town Hall schedule change and reminder to sign-up** – Today, over 70 faculty members joined me and Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School, in a virtual townhall to discuss 3-5 areas of distinction for SMU. Our hope is that being able to hire additional, interdisciplinary clusters of faculty in strategic areas of strength, coupled with SMU's emerging capabilities in data science and high-performance computing, will set SMU apart in these fields.

As with our [previous session](#), we recorded today's meeting and will provide a link to all faculty in next week's newsletter.

All faculty are encouraged to attend our final session, scheduled for Wednesday, May 12, at 4:00 pm. Click [here](#) to register.

- **Clarity and transparency in workload documents** – SMU is committed to developing and approving department-level and unit-level workload documents that make our SMU policies clear and transparent at the unit level, which will be a critical step in helping us reach our BUF goals around greater transparency and equity and our research and creative impact goals for R1.

All academic schools and colleges submitted workload documents in March. The Provost's Office team, including the Faculty Fellow for Equity and Inclusion, have reviewed all drafts and provided thematic, high-level feedback with the deans in April. One-on-one meetings between deans and the Provost's Office are scheduled throughout May. Revisions from this feedback will take place across the ensuing months. Finalized workload documents will be posted on the Provost's Office website starting as early as June 2021, with a goal of having all policies posted by the beginning of the coming fall semester.

- **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 welcome 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](#).

News and Noteworthy

- **Six faculty selected as recipients of the Tom Tunks Distinguished University Citizen Award** – The Tom Tunks Distinguished University Citizen Award is given each year to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding citizenship dedicated to the University and its governance. Congratulations to the following faculty members for their selection:
 - Tom Carr – Associate Professor in Dedman College’s Department of Mathematics
 - Randall Griffin – University Distinguished Professor in Meadows’ Department of Art History
 - Peter Kupfer – Associate Professor and Department Chair in Meadows’ Department of Musicology
 - Dayna Oscherwitz – Professor of French in Dedman College’s Department of World Languages and Literatures and Assistant Provost for General Education
 - Elizabeth Stringer – Faculty member and Director of Academics in SMU’s Guildhall
 - Jessica Dixon Weaver – Associate Professor in the Dedman School of Law

We would like to extend our gratitude to these faculty for their exceptional service. Their contributions have helped impact the administration’s ability to make recommendations and implement critically important approaches across a number of university priorities.

- **Election results for Faculty Senate** – Along with the Faculty Senate’s current president, Dr. Aurelie Thiele, Associate Professor of Engineering Management, Information, and Systems in the Lyle School of Engineering and incoming president, Dr. Pia Vogel, Professor of Biological Sciences in Dedman College, please join me in congratulating Robert Frank, Associate Professor of Composition and Theory and Director of Electronic Music in the Meadows School of the Arts for his election as Faculty Senate president-elect (2021-2022), then president (2022-2023). We will share additional election results, once finalized, in future weekly updates.
- **Election results for 108th Student Senate** – Last week, the elections for the 108th Student Senate concluded after two runoffs in the student body officer positions. Molly Patrick, current Study Body President informed me via email that SMU’s student body officers for the 2021-2022 Academic Year will be:

- President: Austin Hickle
- Vice President: Wade Glover
- Secretary: Sydney Paige
- Treasurer: Rhys Prosser

Please join me in thanking President Molly Patrick for her service as SMU's Student Body President this year. We look forward to continuing the tradition of strong partnership with next year's student body officers.

- **Libraries offer faculty opportunities to win an information literacy stipend**
– A stipend of \$1,000 will be given to the winning faculty member for working with a librarian to design and implement an information literacy assignment into a course for the following semester. The application deadline is May 28. [Learn more and apply.](#)
- **Reminders from previous Friday Updates:**
 - **2022-2023 Academic Calendar approved by Faculty Senate and PEC** – Last week, the PEC approved SMU's [2022-2023 academic calendar](#), as previously reviewed and approved by Faculty Senate.

Sincerely,



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