



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 three categories: 1) Spring 2021, 2) SMU's Road to R-, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2021

- **Planning for North Texas' inclement weather forecast February 15 – February 17** – The North Texas weather forecast for this weekend and into next week indicates the potential for a prolonged winter weather event with significant impacts to travel and infrastructure. As we conclude this week, I would encourage faculty and staff to plan accordingly and take any work-related or instruction-related materials home with you for the weekend in the event campus does need to close. If campus does close, all courses will be offered virtually as opposed to in-person.

If it becomes evident that weather issues will challenge in-person operations next week, members of our leadership team will convene over the weekend to discuss and initiate a response plan. [Policy 9.12 University Operations Affected by Emergency Conditions](#) can be reviewed for more information on the campus' response.

- **Automatic live transcription services now available in Zoom** – We received confirmation this week that SMU's Zoom platform now allows faculty to enable AI-powered live transcription services in Zoom events. This setting (set by the host) creates computer-generated captions at the bottom of the screen as well as a transcript. Click [here](#) for more specific information about this feature. Please contact your school's [Academic Technology Service Director](#) (ATSD) for instructions on activating this advanced setting.
- **Dr. Bob Smith Health Center still offering flu shots** – The seasonal flu and COVID-19 have similar [symptoms](#), making it difficult to differentiate between the two without a lab test.

You can help ease the burden on the healthcare system by minimizing your chance of getting the flu, and we encourage all SMU students, faculty and staff to get their flu shot. Click [here](#) for more information on available options.

- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **December faculty survey report and key findings** – All full-time and part-time faculty were invited to participate in an optional, end-of-term survey during a one-week window from December 11 – 18, 2020. The survey consisted of four open-ended items designed to elicit feedback about experiences across the fall semester.

All raw data associated with each school/college was shared on December 18 with their respective deans and associate deans, and an email was sent to all chairs informing them that those responses would be shared with them by their deans' offices in order to support their efforts in planning during the winter break. Click [here](#) for a summary of the feedback received through the December 2020 faculty survey.

- **COVID-19 vaccine plan updates** – We continue to submit weekly requests for vaccine allocations from the state but have not yet received confirmation of when we might receive our first allotment or how many doses to expect.

Once we begin receiving allocations, we will follow state distribution guidelines in making the vaccine available, beginning with the [1A phase designated for campus health care workers and police](#). Next, the [1B phase will prioritize people 65+ and/or those with underlying medical conditions](#) with priority given to those in that phase who are working/residing directly on campus. Along with faculty and staff, students who fit in this category are also eligible for the vaccine.

Check out the [vaccination page](#) on the [Mustang Strong website](#) for more information on how the process will work. We encourage you to take advantage of the first opportunity to get the vaccine regardless of whether it is through SMU or another provider. Visit the [Texas COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Locations map](#) for additional vaccination sites and availability. Whether you have received the vaccine or are still waiting to get it, it is important to continue with the healthy behaviors outlined in our community's [Pledge to Protect](#).

- **COVID-19 test sites on campus** – The Urgent Care for Kids and Families' no-cost, rapid drive-through testing site remains available for employees and their dependents. It is located on the East Campus at Expressway Tower, [6116 North Central Expressway](#). You will need to [complete a telemedicine screening to schedule a test](#).

The Curative kiosk, located near the Airline Parking structure at 6501 Airline Court, uses a self-administered oral swab to collect test samples for faculty, staff and students as well as the general public. [Appointments are required](#). As part of the registration process, your insurance information will be collected and costs

will be billed to your insurance. The Curative kiosk is currently scheduled to be on campus until February 19 but that may be extended if necessary.

- **Date extensions for spring 2021 pass/fail declaration and course withdrawal** – As mentioned last week, and in response to student requests to provide our undergraduates additional support, we are extending the pass/fail declaration deadline to March 5 and the course withdrawal deadline with a W to April 23.
- **Event request process** – In-person meetings of SMU students, staff, and faculty may occur as long as the most current county and state guidelines can be followed within the meeting space, such as wearing face masks and social distancing. Attendance rosters should be kept and an option for attendees to participate remotely via Zoom, conference call, etc. must be provided

As part of our current operations, no events beyond the meetings described above will take place on campus without advance authorization. [Employees requesting events](#) must submit [exceptions](#) to the Events Group no later than 10 business days prior to the event for consideration. A recommendation to approve/disapprove will be made by this group. If further discussion is required, the exception request will be brought to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for determination. If a review by the President's Executive Council (PEC) is required, they will make the final determination. Any outdoor events requiring an event exception must also have a fully approved [Outdoor Event Request](#) (OER) before an exception request will be reviewed. Please note, employee vents taking place in an off-campus location do not require an event exception request.

Click [here](#) for a description of guidelines for student events.

SMU'S Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute Book fest** – The Dedman College Interdisciplinary Institute's (DCII) annual Book Fest, sponsored by the Godbey Lecture Series, is a unique celebration of all books published by SMU faculty and staff the year prior. Unfortunately, the DCII's Book Fest was cancelled during the unprecedented spring 2020 semester and the difficult decision was made not to host an in-person event this spring. We would like to take the opportunity though to celebrate faculty- and staff-published books in a new, socially distanced format.

The DCII will purchase copies of books published in 2019 and 2020 by faculty and staff and display them in the library of the DCII's new space in Gerald J. Ford Hall for Research and Innovation. Campus community members will then receive an invitation and have the opportunity to browse the library at their socially distanced leisure. We hope that the invitation will increase exposure of your books, celebrate them, and inspire others on campus.

If you are the author of a book published in 2019 or 2020, please submit your information [here](#) no later than Thursday, February 18.

- **2021 Sam Taylor Fellowship award recipients announced** – Each year, the United Methodist Church’s Division of Higher Education and Ministry grants Sam Taylor Fellowship Awards to support faculty research that advances the intellectual and social life of our global society.

Following a highly competitive selection process, the Sam Taylor Fellowship review committee is pleased to announce the 2020-2021 SMU faculty awards to the following faculty members:

- Amber Bemak, MFA: Assistant Professor, Film and Media Arts, Meadows School of the Arts
- David Bertrand, Ed.D.: Director and Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Applied Physiology and Wellness, Simmons School of Education
- Wookun Kim, Ph.D.: Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Dedman College
- Andrea Laurent-Simpson, Ph.D.: Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Dedman College
- Alexandra Pavlakis, Ph.D.: Assistant Professor, Department of Education Policy and Leadership, Simmons School of Education
- Tomce Runcevski, Ph.D.: Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry, Dedman College
- Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, Th.D.: Professor of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Theology, Perkins School of Theology
- Quan Xie, Ph.D.: Assistant Professor, Temerlin Advertising Institute in the Meadows School of the Arts
- Holly Bowen, Ph.D.: Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Dedman College
- Jack Levison, Ph.D.: W. J. A. Power Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Biblical Hebrew, Perkins School of Theology
- Brian Molanphy, M.F.A.: Associate Professor of Drawing and Ceramics, Meadows School of the Arts
- Neely Myers, Ph.D.: Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Dedman College

- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–2022 Budget Process** – The review of final budget proposals by members of SMU’s senior leadership team continues throughout this month, with final budget decisions announced in March 2021. The focus throughout our budget deliberations this year, including faculty/staff hiring requests, has been on how budget requests will help us attain SMU’s goals within the 2016–2025 Strategic Plan and Black Unity Forum (BUF) Action Plan, as well as *U.S. News & World Report* top 50 ranking and R1 status. Thanks to the deans and associate provosts for their collaborative approaches to prioritization.
- **Department-level workload policies revised and approved by May 2021** – This is a reminder that SMU is committed to developing and approving department-level workload policies by May 2021. To meet the late-May timeline, I have asked deans to engage faculty and department chairs to develop and submit draft

workload policies to my office by Wednesday, March 31. Feedback will be provided, and chairs and faculty will have an opportunity to make revisions until the May timeline.

Having departments clarify and operationalize transparent workload policies will be a critical step in helping us reach our research goals and the commitment SMU made in response to the Black Unity Forum action plan. Each department's workload policies should reflect a clear and transparent understanding of the research, teaching, and service expectations for all faculty.

News and Noteworthy:

- **Announcing a call for nominations for SMU's Task force on Social Justice and Equity** – As a next step in SMU's journey toward greater social justice and equity, I am pleased to announce the formation of a University-wide interdisciplinary [Task Force on Social Justice and Equity](#).

My thanks to Jessica Dixon Weaver, Associate Professor of Law in the Dedman School of Law, for agreeing to lead this task force. If you are interested in finding out more information about the task force or to submit your name for consideration to serve on the task force, please send an email to provost@smu.edu by March 1, 2021.

- **SMU to remain test-optional for upcoming undergraduate recruiting cycle** – In May 2020, with consideration of the limited opportunities for high school students to take the SAT and ACT during the COVID-19 pandemic, SMU adopted a one-year, temporary test optional policy for undergraduate admission and scholarship awarding for first year applicants to fall 2021 and spring 2022. SMU joined over 1,685 accredited, four-year colleges and universities who utilized test optional policies for fall 2021 admission.

This week, after consultation with the Faculty Senate, the PEC affirmed the recommendation that SMU will remain test-optional for undergraduate students applying in fall 2022 and spring 2023.

Sincerely,



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