



SMU

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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) Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

This week, we reached a major milestone with zero active or new COVID-19 cases and zero individuals in quarantine or isolation. Thursday, May 6, marked the first time this academic year that the SMU community was able to report zeros in all of these categories.

SMU COVID-19 DASHBOARD

Data through May 5, 2021. Dashboard last updated May 6, 2021.

Select a Population:
Students and Faculty/Staff
Select Time Period:
All-Time



Thank you for your commitment to safety and for the work you have done this year in support of our COVID-19 response.

Spring 2021

- **Recap from this week's Board of Trustees meetings –**
 - I am pleased to share that today our Board of Trustees approved SMU's plans for the upcoming capital campaign – Campaign 3.0. After a yearlong delay during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will plan to launch the new campaign this September. In preparation, our leadership team of Deans and

Associate Provosts is currently developing a preliminary list of strategic funding priorities – aligned with our academic priorities to strengthen teaching, research and student quality – which will be finalized in time for the campaign’s launch. We will share additional information in the weeks and months ahead.

- **Committee on Academic Affairs (May 6)** – As a reminder, my reports this year to the Committee on Academic Affairs have been focused on SMU’s four major focus areas for academic quality: faculty research, scholarship and creative contributions (September 2020), undergraduate student excellence (December 2020), graduate student excellence (February 2021), and community impact (May 2021).

This week’s presentation, which focused on SMU’s community impact strategy, began with an introduction to SMU’s Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations from Vice President for Development and External Affairs Brad Cheves and members of his team. Next, Associate Provost for Curricular Innovation and Policy Peter Moore reviewed some tangible ways that SMU’s Global Online (GO) and Continuing and Professional Education (CAPE) teams are engaging corporations in service to the local, national and global community. Stephanie Knight, Dean of the Simmons School, then gave an update on the Simmons/Toyota/West Dallas STEM school – a real-life example of SMU’s ability to conduct research with impact in service to our community. Before I offered my concluding thoughts on future opportunities for SMU, Dr. Wes Waggoner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, gave an update on both the fall 2021 incoming class profile and our plans for May Commencement.

- **Full Board (May 7)** – Today, for the Full Board, I shared a consolidated version of Thursday’s presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs – focusing on SMU’s corporate engagement strategy, the role that SMU GO and SMU CAPE play in engaging community members through online and continuing education program offerings, and the power of faculty research and creative work when structured and focused on community impact. I concluded with a fall 2021 enrollment update and a review of our plans for May Commencement.
- **On-campus vaccines available to the SMU Community** – First doses of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are still available at the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center. 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.

Note: SMU will continue to offer vaccines throughout the summer and fall at the Health Center as supplies allow.

- **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** – Having a good understanding of how many members of our campus community have been vaccinated will help inform operational decisions for the future.
 - As of May 7, 65% of our faculty and over 50% of our staff have reported receiving at least a first-dose of the vaccine.
 - As of May 7, over 30% of our students have reported receiving at least a first dose of the vaccine. To encourage students to report their vaccine status, we began offering a one-time \$10 electronic Amazon gift to students who voluntarily register their COVID-19 vaccine status in the self-reporting tool. This communication came out in the SMU Information email, and we have added it to Canvas so that students can be informed of this opportunity.

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](#).

- **Planning for May, summer and fall terms** – Last week, President Turner [outlined SMU's plan](#) to move toward a normal, in-person fall semester. Highlights included:
 - Details of the continued availability of COVID-19 vaccines, testing and isolation units moving forward.
 - SMU's timeline to resume normal occupancy limit for campus buildings and events.
 - Mask requirements for common spaces and classrooms through the end of summer term.
 - Campus building ventilation and water fountain restoration updates.
- **Memo to faculty regarding final exams** – Faculty, please review my [email](#) from last month 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.

- **May Commencement** – SMU is preparing to celebrate the Class of 2021 at an outdoor ceremony, following guidelines previously announced – fully masked, outdoors and with social distancing, in Ford Stadium on May 15th at 8:00 a.m. SMU alumna Whitney Wolfe Herd '11 will give the Commencement Address. Herd is the youngest female CEO ever to take a company public in the U.S.

There are 2,611 candidates for degrees who will be recognized at school ceremonies throughout Friday and Saturday, May 14-15, 2021. In the event of severe weather, outdoor ceremonies will move inside with necessary adjustments to allow for health and safety protocols. More details are [here](#).

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.

- **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.

Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence

- **Virtual Town Hall debrief and reminder to sign-up** – Last week, over 70 faculty members joined Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School, and me 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.

To begin the meeting, I reviewed our academic priorities for the next 3-5 years and shared a high-level timeline and roadmap for achieving our goals in this area. Dean Quick then reviewed efforts taken to date, in partnership with the deans, to develop an initial grouping of priority areas for consideration based on SMU's research strengths and their potential for community impact. He also shared insights on the most recent and anticipated federal research and

development landscape. While there are other sources of funding (including corporate, foundation, state and philanthropic) that will need to be considered, we believe that the federal funding priorities, as presented by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), can serve as an effective guide for SMU as we seek opportunities for strategic growth within our research faculty. Our introductory presentation is available [here](#).

We then invited faculty feedback, recommendations, and questions. To highlight a few key discussion topics, several faculty members identified existing research clusters that would benefit from additional investment, such as the democratization of information, neurobiology, and the digital humanities. Other faculty identified research clusters with strong potential, such as psychology, neuroscience and public health, and international development, energy and banking. Many faculty expressed concerns about the focus on only STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and encouraged us to expand the conversation beyond STEM to include STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math).

While we have signaled that our initial focus for faculty cluster hires is likely to be in fields that are most directly linked to the Carnegie Classification System, I greatly appreciated hearing from many faculty about the need to incorporate the arts, humanities and social sciences into our ongoing and future conversations around academic excellence and resource allocation.

Additionally, and following the Town Hall, many faculty have emailed my office with thoughtful recommendations along similar lines. In response, I plan to offer a Town Hall early in the fall 2021 semester that is focused more heavily and centrally on SMU's areas of academic distinction in the arts, humanities and social sciences and we will include opportunities to bring forward ideas around strategic planning and visioning, both across the short- and long-term goals at SMU. We will share more information as plans materialize.

As with our [April 5 session](#), we recorded the April 30 meeting, which you can log in to review [here](#).

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

- **School/College research spotlight** – Congratulations to Pamela Metzger, Professor of Law and Director of the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center in the Dedman School of Law, for the \$787,000 two-year award she received to deploy data, education advocacy and litigation to advance the right to prompt, meaningful and counseled post-arrest court appearances and to eliminate the extended and often uncounseled pretrial detention of people who have not been formally charged.

- **Reminders from previous Friday updates:**
 - **Clarity and transparency in workload documents** – 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 currently occurring and 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.

News and Noteworthy

- **Dedman College Spring 2021 Godbey Book Fest** – This week, Dedman College hosted the spring 2021 [Godbey book fest](#) – a celebration of all books published by SMU faculty and staff in 2019 and 2020. I was pleased to attend this year's event and greatly enjoyed a chance to meet Jeremiah Gaines, who has been a Lecturer in Simmons' Applied Physiology and Wellness Department, is an SMU alum and a former football player, to discuss his book. Please join me in extending thanks and congratulations to the faculty and staff who were featured in this year's event.

Sincerely,



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