



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

November 12, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the myriad ways, big and small, your work shapes and refines SMU's academic enterprise. Over the past two weeks, these weekly newsletters have focused on a broad range of student and faculty initiatives and accomplishments. The highlighted contributions are only a small, but representative, sampling of the world-changing work that transpires each day across campus in our classrooms, laboratories, studios, and lecture halls. As we transition to the final weeks of the semester, allow me to express my profound gratitude for your contributions toward advancing our academic mission.

These weekly updates will serve as a tool to keep you informed and engaged with SMU's Academic Affairs division as, together, we continue with a safe, healthy and productive fall semester. 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) Fall 2021, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2021

- **Planning SMU's response to President Biden's Executive Order** – The President's Executive Council (PEC) and Emergency Operations Center (EOC), working in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs and outside legal counsel, are currently developing SMU's implementation plan in response to President Biden's Executive Order on mandatory coronavirus vaccinations. Look for further updates in the near future.

As you have likely noted, our [case numbers](#) continue to remain low following our transition to mask optional four weeks ago and with approximately 50% of faculty still requiring masks in their classrooms. While likely underreported, our current confirmed vaccinations on campus (~75% faculty; 65% staff, 70% students) are undoubtedly facilitating our low case counts. For those who have not been vaccinated yet, the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center continues to offer Pfizer, J&J, and Moderna [vaccines](#). Please be sure to [upload your vaccination cards](#) if you have not done so already.

- **Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and Allies Action Plan meeting today, Friday, Nov 12** – On October 1, a representative group of AAPI students, staff, faculty and their allies submitted the AAPI Action Plan to President Turner and Dr. Maria Dixon Hall, SMU's Chief Diversity Officer. On Monday, November 8, Dr. Dixon Hall delivered SMU's response to the AAPI. Today, President Turner, Dr. Dixon Hall, Dr. K.C. Mmeje, and I will meet with AAPI leadership with hopes of forming greater clarity and mutual understanding on the concerns raised in the AAPI Action Plan and SMU's response to those concerns. We will provide additional updates in subsequent newsletters.
- **SMU Ignited: Reviewing academic priorities at college/school executive board meetings** – Each fall and spring, the college/schools host meetings with their executive boards to provide university and unit-specific updates. For this round of executive board meetings, which began last month, our university update has included a review of our academic

priorities shared with our Board of Trustees in September. This will help us meet our goals for greater academic quality over the next three to five years and will inform the *SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow* campaign. I have had the opportunity to share our focused strategic initiatives related to our goals for academic excellence/USN&WR top 50, research excellence/Road to R1, the 2016-2025 strategic plan, and inclusive excellence initiatives in each of these meetings. Thank you to President Turner, Vice President Brad Cheves, and to the Deans for the opportunity to share this important information.

- **In-depth meetings with college/schools underway this fall** – Opportunities for in-person visits were limited during my first year as Provost. One of my goals this fall has been to conduct in-depth, half-day meetings with each of SMU's academic units to review, inform and contextualize our academic quality goals and priorities through 2025 at the local level. My thanks to the Deans for coordinating these visits and to you, the faculty and staff, for your participation.
- **Emerging Leaders seminar series update** – This year's Emerging Leaders seminar series, by invitation and based on Deans' recommendations, aims to provide emerging faculty leaders an opportunity to supplement their knowledge and expertise with a larger sense of the university as a whole. As most of this year's faculty participants have previously attended the seminar series, presenters are focusing on how university leaders rely on budgets and data to establish collaborative and strategic financial planning processes.

Over the past several weeks, series participants have heard from a broad range of SMU leadership including Rick Hart, SMU's Athletic Director; Drs. Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, and Wes Waggoner, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management; Drs. Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School, and Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success.

During today's meeting, Mr. Bob Dedman, Chair of SMU's Board of Trustees, discussed the role of SMU's Board of Trustees.

Congratulations, again, to this year's [emerging leaders](#).

Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

- **Announcing the launch of SMU's new supercomputing hardware for artificial intelligence research** – Yesterday, SMU [announced](#) our collaboration with accelerated computing leader NVIDIA to bring a transformational high-performance computing ecosystem to SMU and the North Texas region.

This new system, a DGX SuperPOD, has a theoretical performance of 100 PFLOPS for AI calculations and SMU will be one of only two universities in the United States to have one.

My thanks to Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School; and Michael Hites, Chief Information Officer, for their leadership in securing this hardware and for their efforts to introduce interested faculty to the new machine and to the group at NVIDIA who will be providing support

- **Upcoming Promotion and Tenure Conversations** – The Associate Provost for Faculty Success and several of the Associate Deans for Research will co-host two conversations about promotion and tenure in the month of November. Both sessions will be in the Chamber in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center: *Conversations on the Path to Associate Professor*: November 16th from 1:30-2:30 pm; *Conversations on the Path to Full Professor*: November 17th from 1:30-2:30 pm. Additional conversations are planned for the spring 2022 semester and will be announced in future newsletters.
- **All Workload procedures finalized and uploaded** – Over the past year, faculty, Department Chairs, Associate Deans and Deans have worked

diligently in partnership with my office to design and develop department-level and unit-level workload documents that make our SMU policies clear, fair and transparent at the unit level.

I am pleased to announce that all workload procedures have now been approved and posted. Click [here](#) to access the final documents.

- **Position profile now available for SMU's Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer** – Click [here](#) to review the position profile that will guide our search for SMU's new Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer. Please share this profile with members of your network who might be interested in applying. My thanks to the search committee for their work advancing this strategic hire.

News and Noteworthy

- **Moody School Three-minute thesis competition** – SMU graduate students presented their research and competed for prizes this week at the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition, an annual opportunity for graduate students to share their research with the SMU community, to hone their communication and presentation skills, and to earn prizes.

The rules of the competition are simple: participants present their dissertation or thesis research in non-specialist language in less than three minutes with the assistance of one static PowerPoint slide. They are judged on the effectiveness of their presentation and their ability to convince the judges of the impact of their research. You can find more information [here](#).

- **Faculty invited to join the Residential Commons Affiliate program** – At a launch party on Monday, details of the refreshed approach to the Residential Commons Affiliate Program were announced. The Residential Commons is a partnership between the Divisions of Student Affairs and

Academic Affairs, and the Affiliate Program is an integral part of the Residential Commons, where faculty and staff commit to supporting the intellectual, cultural, and social life of SMU's 11 residential communities by engaging residents and providing mentorship, guidance, and support.

- **Sam Taylor Fellowship applications** – The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church announced its annual call for applications for the Sam Taylor Fellowships. These awards are provided by an endowment established to fund education and development of faculty members at United Methodist-related colleges and universities in Texas for academic work, study, or initiatives focused on intellectual, social, or religious life. I encourage you to consider applying for this award (deadline Friday, November 19). For more information, email facultysuccess@smu.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Lobo', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth G. Lobo, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

World Changers Shaped Here