



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

September 9, 2022

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 toward achieving the goals that fall within our four priority areas through 2025: 1) Academic excellence/ *US News and World Report* top 50, 2) Research/scholarly creative excellence/ Road to R1, 3) 2016 – 2025 Strategic Plan, and 4) Inclusive Excellence.

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 2022, 2) Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2022

- **University welcome for Dean Jason Nance** – Thank you to the faculty and staff who joined President Turner and me in officially welcoming Jason Nance, Judge James Noel Dean and Professor of Law in the Dedman School of Law, to the university during Thursday's University Welcome reception. Jason comes to SMU from the University of Florida (UF) where he was most recently Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development at UF Law. Under Dean Nance's leadership, I believe we are well-positioned to advance Dedman Law's well-earned reputation within

the legal and business communities and to expand our impact in line with SMU's aspirations for even greater academic excellence.

- **September Board of Trustees meetings next week** – Next week, I will have three opportunities to provide Academic Affairs updates to SMU's Board of Trustees:
 - **Committee of the Whole** – On Thursday, September 15th the entire Board of Trustees will convene as a Committee of the Whole to receive updates on SMU's current and future strategies to advance in both the *U.S. News and World Report* (USNWR) and Carnegie Classification ranking systems, as well as on *Opportunity SMU*, a new fund to expand scholarships, financial aid, and student support programs. The heightened focus on social and economic mobility metrics by both ranking systems, both recently and moving forward, will require SMU's response and investment in order to meet our USNWR top 50 and Carnegie R1 goals. Chief Diversity Officer Maria Dixon Hall will also provide her annual update on efforts toward greater diversity, equity and inclusion on campus.
 - **Committee on Academic Affairs** – During Thursday afternoon's committee meeting, I will review our current and future strategies to advance in the USNWR and Carnegie rankings in greater detail. By comparing SMU's current and historic performance with that of USNWR top 50 and Carnegie R1 schools, I hope to illustrate which metrics should be our highest priority for improvement in the years to come.
 - **Full Board** – On Friday morning, I will share a consolidated version of my presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs and provide an update on fall 2022 enrollment.

- **Strategic workshops for collaboration** – As announced last week, and in partnership with my office, a team from the [Master of Arts in Design and Innovation](#) (MADI) program is working to better understand how spaces and places (including departments and physical buildings) are currently used across campus so that we might design a strategic structure for collaboration that helps reach the university's broad range of academic and research aspirations.

MADI ran discovery workshops this past spring with strong participation from across campus, but we want more faculty and staff voices to be represented in their work. The MADI team is offering additional workshops this month to capture your feedback. Please join them for one workshop (in-person and zoom options available) by registering [here](#) for the date and time that best fits your schedule. For more information, or if you have questions, please send an email to madi@smu.edu.

We will take what we have learned from each workshop to inform a strategic process for growing interdisciplinary research/scholarship and collaboration across the university – particularly those pertaining to campus spaces and places – and will share our findings in future newsletters. Thank you in advance for your contributions.

- **Report on spring 2022 survey of faculty workload procedures** – Also mentioned [last week](#), members of the [President's Commission on the Status of Women](#) (PCSW) collaborated with the Office of Faculty Success this past spring on a survey to understand faculty experiences with the development and use of our unit-level workload procedures. Informed by the survey results, the PCSW discussed their recommendations with President Turner last month and copies of that annual report and the President's responses are available [here](#).

In response to the PCSW's request for continued attention toward ensuring equity and transparency in our workload procedures, I have allocated discretionary dollars into my office's performance-based funding to the

schools/college to support the work of a Task Force on Equity and Transparency in Workload made up of representatives from each school/college. This task force has been charged to review and respond to the feedback generated from the spring 2022 survey of faculty workload procedures, support the development of a systematic approach to collecting information about faculty in-loads with respect to teaching, research and service, and serve as a liaison for faculty questions and concerns about workload equity and transparency.

My thanks to the faculty who have been appointed to serve in this capacity and to the Deans for their continued support of greater equity and transparency.

Road to R-1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence

- **Three-year budget planning deliberations continue** – This week, deliberations continued among the Deans and Associate Provosts toward developing a three-year budget plan, including revenue and expense projections, in academic affairs for fiscal years 2024, 2025 and 2026. We hope to have a draft plan, including priority areas for investment over the next three years, completed by the October 25 university kickoff meeting for the FY 2024 budget process and will share additional information in subsequent newsletters.

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Hites, SMU's Chief Information Officer, for participating in this week's three-year budget deliberations with the Academic Affairs leadership team. During our meeting, he shared information about the Office of Information Technology's (OIT) current budget as well as some potential future revenue sources and strategic investment opportunities in support of our academic goals.

- **Requests for research projects to be submitted to Congress for consideration** – Earlier this week, I sent the [following message](#) to faculty with a request for research projects to be submitted to the U.S. Congress as a part of the FY 2024 earmark and/or appropriation process.

Later this fall, we will be hosting a federal research workshop on campus. I would ask each of you to consider how your work may benefit from federal investment, and I encourage you to join us at the town hall portion of the workshop. More information about the FY 2024 submission process and federal research workshop will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead. Thank you, again, for your great work in support of SMU's research mission.

- **Key leadership searches underway -**

- **Lyle School of Engineering** – Last month, I launched [the search committee](#) for our next dean of the Lyle School of Engineering. My thanks to committee members for their service and to Sam Holland, Dean of the Meadows School of the Arts, for agreeing to chair this committee.


The search committee's kickoff meeting will take place on Thursday, September 27th. I will continue to provide regular updates in subsequent newsletters.

News and Noteworthy

- **Simmons faculty member and graduate student call for more diversity in math story problems in *Education Week*** – After reviewing more than 1,000 story problems included in math textbooks, Candace Walkington, Associate Professor in the Simmons School of Education's Department of Teaching and Learning and graduate student Tiffini Pruitt-Britton concluded the problems do not reflect the reality of a diverse America. Research shows students perform better when their math story problems relate to their interests, they wrote in an [Education Week](#) op-ed.
- **SMU anthropologist discusses Australian fire management strategies in *The Conversation*** – In an op-ed in the [Conversation](#), Professor Christopher Roos in Dedman College's Department of Anthropology and co-authors compared Australian institutional fire management to cultural burning.

After studying 25 years of fire management strategies, they concluded cultural burning is the most effective approach to fire management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth G. Lobo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Elizabeth G. Lobo, PhD
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>
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