

Weekly Update | April 21, 2023

Elizabeth G. Loba, Ph.D. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 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) Spring 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2023

Response to faculty senate resolutions on non-tenure track faculty

During its April 5 meeting, the Faculty Senate passed two resolutions – one regarding [non-tenure track faculty salaries](#) and one regarding [non-tenure track faculty promotion guidelines and contracts](#). Last week, President Turner and I provided [the following response](#).

Our memo outlines the steps completed, underway or planned for academic year 2023-2024 to address concerns raised in these two resolutions. Additionally, the letter announces that my office will appoint a Task Force on Faculty Salary and Merit Allocation Benchmarking. The task force will consist of membership from the faculty, Faculty Senate, Office of the Provost, Office of University Decision Support and Business and Finance. I will charge this group to bring forward a full report by the end of the 2023-2024 academic year that will guide decision-making for faculty salaries at both the tenure/tenure-track and non-tenure track levels. Having a holistic perspective, informed by data and benchmarking, will put us in the best position for an effective and strategic response.

We are grateful to the Senate for bringing forward these resolutions, as they align with efforts underway to improve transparency, equity and competitiveness for our teaching and professional faculty. Our goals for excellence are supported and sustained by SMU's ability to recruit and retain renewable contract faculty, and we share the Senate's viewpoint that they are vital and essential colleagues.

Generative AI & Chat GPT Follow-Up Panel

In January 2023, a group of faculty and staff across campus came together to begin campus conversations about ChatGPT and Generative AI. As the next iteration in these discussions, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) is hosting a Generative AI & Chat GPT Follow-Up Panel on

Thursday, April 27, from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. in Harold Clark Simmons Hall, Room 207. This panel will give faculty insight and tools to manage their students' use of ChatGPT inside the classroom. Panelists have been selected from across campus, including representatives from SMU Libraries, Student Affairs, Cox School of Business and the Writing and Reasoning (WRTR) Program in Dedman College. Faculty are welcome to bring their lunch, and coffee and cookies will be served.

Thank you for your participation in “Equity and Transparency in Workload” survey

On April 4, the Equity and Transparency in Workload Working Group sent an email survey to all full-time faculty to gather feedback on campus efforts toward improving equity and transparency in faculty workload. The survey closed on April 17, and we would like to thank all faculty who responded. Please look for additional information in subsequent newsletters. In the interim, you can visit this [webpage](#) with more information about the working group's five-year plan.

Dallas CEO to give SMU's May 13 Commencement Convocation Keynote

Brian Tyler, CEO of McKesson Corporation, will be the [featured speaker at SMU's May Commencement Convocation](#) on Saturday, May 13. The ceremony is scheduled at 8:30 a.m. at Moody Coliseum and will be [streamed live online](#).

Tyler has led McKesson Corporation through a significant period of transformation, building upon the company's strength as a distributor to make an even greater impact in the areas of oncology and biopharma services. Tyler's leadership empowers McKesson employees to lead with a growth mindset and to deliver excellent results for customers and partners, while remaining focused on the company's purpose of advancing health outcomes for all. We look forward to his role in this spring's Commencement.

Road to R1/Scholarly and Creative Excellence

Please follow Research at SMU LinkedIn

Sharing news about SMU research across a variety of communications channels is an important tool for raising the University's stature and in our journey for even greater research excellence. SMU's Marketing and Communications has launched [Research at SMU](#) on LinkedIn to share the reach and impact of University research. I'd like to encourage members of the SMU community – faculty, staff and students – to follow the account and amplify its posts on your own channels.

SMU faculty member elected president of the Seismological Society of America (SSA)

This week, Heather DeShon, Department Chair and Professor in Dedman College's Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, was elected SSA president and has already assumed duties as president-elect. This is a tremendous recognition for her, for our Department of Earth Sciences, and for SMU. Please join me in congratulating Professor DeShon.

Second annual Research Computing Day on April 21

SMU's Center for Research Computing, in collaboration with the Data Science Institute, held its second annual [Research Computing Day](#) today in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center. This event highlighted the latest SMU faculty and graduate student initiatives, with SMU faculty presentations and a graduate student research poster exhibition showcasing work that utilizes high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, and data analytics to address complex problems in science, engineering, economics, and other disciplines. Research Computing Day also hosted two keynote

presentations; the first delivered by Jeff Hittinger of Lawrence Livermore National Lab and the second delivered by Mark Austin of AT&T.

Undergraduate researchers present their work at national conference

The Office of Engaged Learning sponsored eight undergraduate researchers and creative artists to present their work at the [National Conference for Undergraduate Research](#) (NCUR), hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The presenters, representing projects from Dedman College, Lyle School of Engineering, and Meadows School of the Arts, included Mace Cowart, Odran Fitzgerald, Regina Nguyen, Alexandra Savu, Sandhya Srinivasa, Shriya Siddhartha, Vivian Thai, and Jonathan Thomas. [Read more about the students' experiences here.](#)

Key leadership searches underway

Peter O'Donnell Jr. Data Science Institute (DSI) Director

Last week, we posted the [position profile](#) that will guide our search for the inaugural Peter O'Donnell, Jr. DSI Director. As announced last week, the individual who fills the DSI Director role will oversee both SMU's Data Science Institute and the Center for Research Computing (CRC). Tom Hagstrom, Professor of Mathematics in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, will complete his term as Director of the CRC on May 31, 2023. Effective June 1, 2023, Peter Moore will serve as both the DSI Director and CRC Director *ad interim* until the new director arrives.

The search committee, chaired by Suku Nair, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer, will begin receiving updates on the developing candidate pool later this month and during the month of May. We hope that the new director will be in place by the fall. Be on the lookout for additional information in subsequent newsletters.

News and Noteworthy

SMU Law graduate nominated to fill seat on the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals

Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden nominated U.S. Northern District of Texas Magistrate Judge Irma Ramirez to fill a seat on the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. If confirmed by the Senate, she will be the first Hispanic woman to serve on the Fifth Circuit. Judge Ramirez graduated from the Dedman School of Law in 1991, received a distinguished alumni award in 2019, and currently serves on the school's Executive Board.

Meadows professor's art featured in the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art

Willie Baronet, Stan Richards Professor in Creative Advertising in the Meadows School of the Arts, is a participating artist in the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art's [newest exhibition](#), which explores many iterations surrounding the idea of home. Professor Baronet's contributions, in line with his ongoing work "[We Are All Homeless](#)," confront museum-goers with the feelings of shame, both in those asking for help and in those unable or unwilling to provide it, that often accompany housing instability. The exhibit is on view until July 15.

Cox School of Business' Healthcare Initiative aims to make DFW a healthcare center of excellence

Earlier this month, Cox hosted its inaugural Healthcare Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making program as part of its strategic Healthcare Initiative. Throughout the two-day event, convening over 70 healthcare leaders and decision-makers from across DFW, participants explored approaches for leading their organizations through a range of current healthcare challenges and ethical issues as

well as strategies for moving from transactional to transformational leadership as CEOs, physicians and other industry professionals.

Brian Tyler, CEO of McKesson and Cox Executive Board Member; and Jim Hinton, former Baylor Scott & White Health CEO, served as co-chairs and were integral in making this program a success. To continue its efforts toward making DFW a healthcare center of excellence, Cox's Healthcare Initiative will host a conference in October.

SMU GOCE leader gives keynote address on the role of AI in student engagement

Terry Teague, Senior Director of Admissions and Corporate Partnerships for SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE), recently presented at the 2023 Salesforce Education Summit in Dallas to an international audience of 3,000 educators and technologists. In her keynote address, Terry shared her team's groundbreaking use of AI chatbots to amplify student engagement at SMU. These chatbots were designed to interact with students in a personalized, responsive manner, offering them timely support and information. She emphasized how these chatbots have contributed to fostering a more connected and engaged community for adult learners at SMU. Terry's presentation was met with praise from attendees, underlining the transformative potential of AI in higher education. We're proud to have her as a valuable member of the SMU community and look forward to more exciting innovations from SMU GOCE in the future.

Sincerely,



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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

World Changers Shaped Here