

Weekly Update | December 1, 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, 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](#). Suggestions received before noon on Tuesday will be reviewed and considered for publication in that week's Friday newsletter. Others will be held until the following week. Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

Today's update falls into three categories: 1) Fall 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2023

Celebration of Lights recap

On Monday, November 27, SMU held its annual Celebration of Lights holiday ceremony and tree lighting. This beautiful tradition – filled with talented student performances – gives us all a chance to gather as a community in celebration of joy and hope. It is a wonderful way to begin the holiday season and I would like to extend my gratitude to all the members of the Student Foundation, faculty and staff who made this event possible.

Quarterly Black Unity Forum (BUF) meeting recap

Today, Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success, Elena Hicks, Assistant Vice Provost and Dean of Admission, and I were invited to participate in BUF's quarterly meeting. We addressed questions submitted in advance pertaining to the recruitment and retention of African American students, faculty/staff affairs, and the Urban Research Faculty Cluster

as well as the general state of the university – most directly in terms of the 2024 *US News and World Report* rankings and SMU's upcoming move to the [Atlantic Coast Conference](#) (ACC).

Important reminders for the upcoming end-of-semester

As the fall semester comes to a close, I would like to take a moment to mention important upcoming dates and changes to normal University functions impacted by the winter break that begins later this month.

- **December 4, Monday:** Last day of classes.
- December 5 – 6, Tuesday – Wednesday: Reading days.
- **December 7 – 13, Thursday – Wednesday:** Examinations. No examinations are scheduled for Sunday.
- **December 14, Thursday:** Residence halls close at 10 a.m. for winter break. December graduates should contact the [Department of Residence Life and Student Housing](#).
- **December 15, Friday:** December Rotunda Recessional.
- **December 16, Saturday:** December Commencement. Official close of term and conferral of degrees.
- December 22 – January 1, Friday – Monday: University offices closed.

Please note that the deadline for [Faculty to RSVP their participation](#) in December Commencement is today, Friday, December 1, 2023.

Please reference [SMU's academic calendar](#) for further information regarding important University dates.

Finally, I will continue to run Weekly Newsletters on the normal Friday cadence until December 15. I will resume newsletter distribution again on the second Friday of January 2024.

SMU's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) currently seeking faculty affiliates for spring semester

The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) is currently accepting applications for spring 2024 faculty affiliates. Each semester, two selected faculty affiliates will lead four sessions each on topics of their choice/expertise in support of CTE's vision to empower faculty and support teaching innovation. Session topics should have pedagogical relevance to other faculty on campus and/or enhance faculty well-being.

To recognize their generous efforts and contributions, each affiliate will receive a \$1,000 stipend. [Faculty affiliate applications](#) are due on December 8, 2023.

Provost monthly Lunch at the Commons Table next week

On Monday, December 4, from 12 – 1 p.m. I will be having lunch in the re-opened Faculty-Staff Dining Room located in Umphrey Lee. The "Commons Table," designed by the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Club, is designated for community members who come to meals by themselves or in small groups and wish to socialize with others to better foster faculty and staff community. I look forward to seeing you there and hope you will join me for a relaxed lunch and conversation.

You can [purchase credits for SMU dining facilities online \(which includes access to the Faculty-Staff Dining Room\) here](#).

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

SMU 2023 research expenditures highest in SMU history

Each year, SMU submits the Higher Education Research and Development (HERD) survey to the [National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics](#). The HERD survey is the primary source of information on research and development expenditures at U.S. colleges and universities and is a key input into Carnegie's Research Classification.

For the 2023 HERD survey SMU submitted a record high \$59M in research expenditures. This makes a second consecutive year of >\$50M in research expenditures for SMU, after we submitted \$58M (our previous record high) for the 2022 survey. To the faculty, staff and students leading and supporting SMU's advance in research with impact, thank you and congratulations!

SMU Chemistry professor and graduate student publish research in *Science* studying safer ways to handle hazardous fluorocarbons

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Chemistry faculty member Tomče Runčevski, graduate student Lida Aeindartehran and their collaborators completed landmark work to [determine safer ways to handle hazardous fluorocarbons](#). Based on their research, the team has compiled a general strategy for handling fluorinated gases that established alternatives to direct handling. Their research was published in volume 381, issue 6665 of *Science*, one of the premier journals in the world with a manuscript acceptance rate of less than 10% and an impact factor close to 60.

Lyle School of Engineering faculty member recognized as a 2023 Highly Cited Researcher

Jianhui Wang, professor and Gerald J. Ford Research Fellow in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Lyle School of Engineering, has been recognized by [Clarivate](#), a data analytics firm in the areas of bibliometrics and scientometrics, as a Highly Cited Researcher for 2023. According to Clarivate "Highly Cited Researchers are 1 in 1,000. These exceptional individuals have published multiple highly cited papers, ranking in the top 1% by citations for field and year over the last decade." Congratulations to Professor Wang on this significant achievement and recognition.

News and Noteworthy

Professor at Lyle School of Engineering honored with Urban Design Award from the Greater Dallas Planning Council

Professor Jessie Zarazaga, director of the Sustainability and Development Program at Lyle School of Engineering, has been awarded the Dunnigan Community Engagement Award from the [Greater Dallas Planning Council](#) for excellence in community outreach on issues affecting growth in the region.

The council honors six outstanding urban planning and design projects annually as part of its mission to advocate for a creative, sustainable future in the Dallas area. Professor Zarazaga was recognized for advancing dialogue around sound urban planning and design through her project-based and community-based graduate courses at SMU. Congratulations, Professor Zarazaga!

SMU Earth Sciences professor presented with a volume of work written and published in his honor

Professor Louis Jacobs, a recently retired faculty member from Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of Earth Sciences, was presented with a volume of work entitled *Windows into Sauropsid and Synapsid Evolution: Essays in Honor of Louis L. Jacobs*. This volume was compiled in honor of Professor Jacobs, a highly influential vertebrate paleontologist, and contains essays by some of the luminaries in the field.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences professor selected as the 2023 Yvonne Porter Endowed Residency recipient

Professor Sanderia Faye Smith, faculty member in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of English, was selected as the 2023 recipient of The Yvonne Porter Endowed Residency distributed by [Yaddo](#), a nonprofit retreat center for artists in Saratoga Springs, New York, which sponsors and issues endowed residencies to underwrite the cost of essential resources for "the great creative artists of our day." The Yvonne Porter Endowed Residency is awarded every other year to a Texan creative working in any discipline and was established in 2000 by the Louisa Stude Sarofim Charitable Trust.

Sincerely,



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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

World Changers Shaped Here