

**Weekly Update | December 8, 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 four categories: 1) Fall 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 3) Inclusive Excellence, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

## Fall 2023

### Board of Trustees meeting recap

This week, I had two opportunities to provide Academic Affairs updates to members of SMU's Board of Trustees.

#### *Committee on Academic Affairs*

In Thursday's committee meeting, my update covered three topics. I began with a detailed review of the Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub and what receiving regional tech hub designation from the Biden Administration can mean for our campus and region. I then presented the changes Carnegie will make to its research classification in the 2025 assessment cycle. I concluded with an update on the status of our nearly 160 endowed faculty positions.

### ***Full Board Meeting***

In this morning's meeting, I shared a consolidated version of my presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs that focused on the Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub and Carnegie's research classification.

### **Holt Hickman Outdoor Pool dedication**

This morning, at 11:30 a.m., President R. Gerald Turner, members of the President's Executive Council (PEC) and I joined board members and other distinguished guests for the Holt Hickman Outdoor Pool dedication.

The Holt Hickman Outdoor Pool is the newest addition to the Robson & Lindley Aquatics Center. This project was made possible by [the generous gift from the Robson, Hickman and Lindley families](#) as part of *SMU Ignited: Boldly Shaping Tomorrow*, SMU's \$1.5 billion capital campaign.

### **Import final grades from Canvas into my.SMU with new functionality**

The Registrar's Office and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) have collaborated to deliver a new tool for faculty to use when entering grades into the my.SMU Grade Roster. Faculty members can now import grades into the my.SMU grade roster by uploading a CSV formatted file. This type of file can be generated by exporting the Canvas Gradebook or from any Excel spreadsheet if the recommended formatting is followed. This new functionality can also be used during Early Intervention and Midterm grading cycles. A video outlining the new process [can be found here](#). Detailed instructions on exporting grades from Canvas as well as uploading grades into my.SMU are [available on Wiki.SMU](#). If you experience any issues exporting grades from Canvas or importing them into my.SMU, please reach out to the [Help Desk](#).

### **Council on General Education approves changes to Common Curriculum Critical Reasoning fulfillment requirements**

On Friday, December 1, the [Council on General Education approved a change](#) in the Common Curriculum's Critical Reasoning (CR) fulfillment requirement effective Spring 2024. At that time, students will be allowed to drop or withdraw from a CR-tagged course.

The Office of General Education will coordinate updates to impacted course descriptions, syllabi language, and websites with academic departments before winter break.

Please direct your questions on this topic to the Office of General Education at [theccmail@smu.edu](mailto:theccmail@smu.edu).

### **Reminder: End-of-semester important dates**

As a reminder, examinations are currently being held through December 13. I ask all faculty and class instructors to submit final grades to my.SMU no later than 72 hours after the final exam for each course section.

I will continue to run Weekly Newsletters on the normal Friday cadence until December 15. University offices will be closed from December 22 – January 1, and I will resume newsletter distribution after we return on the second Friday of January 2024.

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

## Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

### **Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences faculty member conducts study illuminating formation of U.S. East Coast during supercontinent Pangea breakup**

A [recent study](#) published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth* sheds new light on the formation of the East Coast of the United States during the breakup of the supercontinent Pangea around 230 million years ago. The study was co-authored by scientists from the University of New Mexico, SMU seismologist Maria Beatrice Magnani, and scientists from Northern Arizona University and University of Southern California – Los Angeles.

Understanding the formation of margin areas where land meets ocean is crucial because these stable areas preserve climate history for millions of years in their sediment. To gain access to this historical data, the research team analyzed rocks deep below the ocean floor to identify the rock's composition, noting the change in rocks along the East Coast which may be tied to how the continent was pulled apart when Pangea fragmented.

### **Request for Proposals: SMU Libraries Research Assignment stipend**

SMU Libraries encourages all full-time and part-time faculty members to collaborate with SMU's librarians and integrate new information literacy components into their undergraduate- and graduate-level coursework. Faculty who submit winning proposal applications by December 17, will receive \$1,000 to support this process.

Selected faculty must participate in a faculty cohort workshop, implement information literacy into the specified course, and complete a report on information literacy learning outcomes in their course.

Find [more information and apply for the stipend here](#).

## Inclusive Excellence

### **The SMU chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) was awarded the 2022-2023 Gold Chapter award**

On November 2, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), SMU Chapter, was awarded the 2022-2023 Gold Chapter award at the [SHPE National Convention](#). SMU was one of only six chapters selected for this honor at the national convention out of 213 SHPE chapters across the nation. SHPE SMU received the Gold Chapter award based on its level of excellence across all four of SHPE's core values: familia, service, education, and resilience. They have continuously led and executed life-changing services and programs for the people in their community and serve as a model for the rest of the SHPE familia. Congratulations to SHPE SMU on this accomplishment and recognition, and thank you to staff advisor, Linda Parker, director of career in the Hart Center for Engineering Education at Lyle School of Engineering, for her ongoing support of SHPE!

You can read more about SMU SHPE's accomplishment [here](#).



### **2023 Dallas County Day event**

The Office of Undergraduate Admission hosted its annual Dallas County Day on Saturday, December 2. This event provided opportunities to connect prospective students and families from Dallas County with SMU's Undergraduate Admission team and to learn more about our world-class university in their own backyard. During the program, families learned more about [ACCESS SMU](#) as well as other programs designed for our local students.

## **News and Noteworthy**

### **The G. William Jones Film & Video Collection gifted film materials and memorabilia from the collection of the late Robert Holladay**

The G. William Jones Film & Video Collection in Hamon Arts Library is pleased to announce a new donation of film materials and memorabilia, including rare laserdiscs, from the [collection of the late Robert Holladay](#) (1940-2019). Known as "Mr. Paramount of Abilene," Holladay was the Film Director of the historic [Paramount Theatre](#) in Abilene, TX. He was passionate about film and the theatre, a scholar with a vast knowledge which he shared with countless students in his 42 years as a high school teacher in Abilene.

Thank you to Mr. Holladay's family for this generous gift, which will allow the Jones Film & Video Collection to preserve rare pieces of film history for generations to come.

### **Southwest Review receives glowing praise from the prestigious literary media outlet LitHub**

[Southwest Review](#), SMU's quarterly literary magazine led by Greg Brownderville, professor in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of English, has continued to receive accolades for its post-2018 transformation. Recently, [LitHub](#), a respected media outlet for all things publishing, wrote a piece covering *Southwest Review's* impressive history, exciting new publications, and incredibly promising future.

Read [more about the review here](#).

## **Simmons School of Education and Human Development partnered with talkSTEM and the Dallas Zoo to host Mathfinder Camp for grade school students**

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, Simmons School of Education and Human Development partnered with [talkSTEM](#) and the [Dallas Zoo](#) to bring the *Mathfinder* Camp to the Dallas Zoo. Students from throughout the Dallas area enjoyed exploring the lives of animals through the lens of mathematics at no cost thanks to funding provided by the [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF).

More than 60 children, age 8-12, attended the educational camp and had the chance to explore an exciting new math app that is currently in development. The *Mathfinder* app, a collaborative effort between Simmons School and talkSTEM, is designed to make math fun while sparking curiosity and creativity and instilling a lifelong love for learning in children.

Thanks to the efforts of SMU's own Candace Walkington, Annette and Harold Simmons Centennial Chair and Gerald J. Ford Research Fellow in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Simmons School, the *Mathfinder* team plans to run additional camps in the Spring and Summer of 2024 at the Dallas Arboretum.

Sincerely,



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Southern Methodist University  
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

**World Changers Shaped Here**