

Weekly Update | June 16, 2023

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

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I hope you are having a restful and productive summer. Whether you are teaching, conducting research, or preparing exhibits or performances, your contributions are vitally appreciated and valued in our quest for even greater academic quality. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to SMU's academic mission.

As mentioned in the [final weekly](#) of the spring 2023 semester, my plan is to send these updates twice in the month of June and twice in the month of July. 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) Summer 2023, 2) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

Summer 2023

Fall 2024 (Fiscal Year 2025) faculty position release deliberations underway

Beginning this week, the deans and I have initiated conversations about which faculty lines to open for searches in fall 2023 to join SMU in fall 2024. Historically, decisions about faculty lines have been made as part of the budget cycle (November – March). In an effort to better align with the faculty recruiting schedule, we have moved the process earlier, into the summer.

This past academic year, Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware and Associate Director of Learning Analytics and Student Success Molly Ellis engaged the Office of University Decision Support to inform and refine the standard dataset we use to evaluate faculty position requests. I would like to thank them for their tremendous efforts.

SMU Internationalization Task Force update

Since fall 2022, SMU has participated in the 20th cohort of the American Council on Education's (ACE) Internationalization Laboratory, which aims to support the creation of a comprehensive internationalization plan that touches every facet of the University. To spearhead this initiative, I charged an Internationalization Steering Committee, composed of faculty, staff and students, to conduct a self-study and to develop an internationalization plan for SMU.

Currently the Committee has: (1) written [charges and research questions](#) (SMU ID and password required) for the Steering Committee's four subcommittees and met with an ACE advisor to review; (2)

convened a campus visit for the ACE advisor with key stakeholders at SMU; (3) along with the subcommittees, commenced monthly meetings, starting in January 2023, to identify 10 peer and cohort schools against which to benchmark SMU's internationalization efforts; (4) commissioned ACE to conduct a [benchmarking study](#) (SMU ID and password required) using those 10 schools; (5) encouraged subcommittees to gather information about SMU's activities in their respective domains and to [draft interim progress reports](#) (SMU ID and password required) detailing activities and goals completed to date.

Future Committee work will include: (1) the Steering Committee sending out a faculty survey to gather perceptions of experiences with internationalization activities on campus, (which I encourage you to participate in once the survey is deployed in September 2023); (2) completing the internationalization self-study by late October 2023; (3) writing the self-study report and sharing it with campus; (4) holding a University Town Hall to solicit feedback from SMU faculty, staff, and students; (5) using the collected feedback to draft a comprehensive internationalization plan for SMU for submission to SMU leadership in early spring 2024; (6) inviting a peer evaluator team to campus who will help SMU identify the best strategy for implementing the internationalization plan and achieving SMU's internationalization goals.

This is a very exciting time for SMU as we endeavor to expand our research and scholarly footprint on a global scale.

Additional updates will be provided in subsequent newsletters.

SMU receives 2023 advocate award from Project Unity

On June 15, SMU was honored with [Project Unity's](#) Advocate Award for organizational unity at a special celebratory event, *Together We Sing*. The Unity Awards recognize corporate executives, faith leaders, organizations, and individuals for championing the cause of racial healing and harmony. SMU was specifically recognized in these awards as a partner who has worked to advocate for Project Unity and to help grow community awareness about the organization.

Project Unity is a faith-based collaborative movement among Dallas-area religious, business, civic, philanthropic, grassroots, and government organizations founded by Richie Butler, Senior Pastor of St. Luke Community United Methodist Church and a member of SMU's Board of Trustees.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

SMU/Bush Institute Post-Doctoral Fellowship program funds three proposals for the 2023-2024 academic year

In March and April of this year, the [SMU/Bush Institute post-doctoral program](#) ran an application cycle accepting proposals to fund three post-doctoral positions for the 2023-2024 academic year (12 months). The application cycle closed on April 14 for candidate evaluation.

After careful review, we are excited to announce the following proposals were selected for funding:

- "Strengthening Rural Courts and Their Communities"; PI: Pamela R. Metzger, Director of the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center and Professor of Law; Co-PI: Andrew Davies, Director of Research, Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center, Dedman School of Law
- "A Global Oral History of PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief)"; PI: Jill E. Kelly, Associate Professor of History, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences; Co-PI: Brian Franklin, Associate Director, Center for Presidential History
- "Ensuring the Integrity of Multimedia Content in the Age of Deepfakes and AI"; PI: Amit Basu, Professor and Carr P. Collins Chair in Management Information Sciences, Cox School of Business

The post-doctoral scholars supported through this initiative will grow collaborative and impactful research between SMU and the George W. Bush Institute. Congratulations to this year's recipients and their faculty mentors and thank you to all who applied. We are grateful for our partnership with the Bush Institute and for opportunities like the post-doctoral fellowship program to expand our research footprint. We look forward to renewing this program again next year.

Provost's Science & Engineering Postdoctoral Fellowship awardees

[Provost's Science & Engineering Postdoctoral Fellowships](#) are an initiative launched this year. They expand the funding pool for science and engineering research programs and increase the number of science and engineering postdoctoral fellows at SMU, with a particular focus on those employed at SMU during the ACE Carnegie Research Classification year of record. In May and June of this year, the Provost's Office ran an application cycle accepting proposals to fund ten postdoctoral positions for the 2023-2024 academic year (12 months).

After careful review, we are excited to announce that the following proposals were selected for funding:

- "Soft-Microbots for Vitreous Hemorrhage Mitigation and Accelerated Recovery"; PI: Minjun Kim, Professor and Robert C. Womack Chair in Engineering, Mechanical Engineering; Co-PIs: Alex Lippert, Associate Professor, Chemistry; Chul Moon, Assistant Professor, Statistics and Data Science
- "Exploring the Nexus of Multimodal Freight Transportation and Energy Security: Strategies for Efficiency, Resiliency, and Environmental Justice"; PI: Khaled Abdelghany, Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering; Co-PI: Mohammad Khodayar, Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- "Research and Development of Multiplexed Biomarker Assays"; Co-PIs: J.C. Chiao, Mary and Richard Templeton Centennial Chair and Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering; Ali Beskok, The Brown Foundation, Inc. Professor of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering
- "Biomarkers of SUDEP Risk Based on Brain-Heart-Lungs Network Dynamics"; PI: Edward Glasscock, Associate Professor and Prothro Distinguished Chair, Biological Sciences
- "Data Use in Educational Decisions: Application of Data Science in Educational Research"; PI: Leanne Ketterlin Geller, Professor and Texas Instruments Endowed Chair in Education, Education Policy and Leadership
- "Tensor Factorization Approaches for Accurate Thermochemistry and Chemical Dynamics"; PI: Devin Matthews, Assistant Professor, Chemistry
- "Exploring Batten Disease at the Atomistic Level: A Novel First Principles Computational Approach"; PI: Elfi Kraka, Professor and Chair, Chemistry
- "Deep Learning for Cosmic Inflation"; PI: Joel Meyers, Assistant Professor, Physics
- "Novel Software Package and Open-source Ecosystem for Innovative Biomolecular Modeling"; PI: Peng Tao, Associate Professor, Chemistry
- "Establishing a Long-term Sedimentary Record of Megathrust Earthquakes in the Austral Subduction Zone, Patagonia"; PI: Beatrice Magnani, Professor, Earth Sciences

Congratulations to this year's recipients and thank you to all who applied. We are pleased to be able to enhance research productivity and to support groundbreaking projects in science and engineering with these postdoctoral fellowships.

Please note that, since funds for this program are now fully committed, we are no longer accepting proposals for the 2023-2024 academic year.

SMU launches new cyber autonomy range supported by IBM software to defend 'smart' devices against attacks

The [Darwin Deason Institute for Cyber Security](#) is launching a new [Cyber Autonomy Range](#), supported by [IBM](#), to provide an in-kind contribution of software and support valued at \$850,000+. The project is designed to toughen autonomous systems against cyberattacks. These autonomous systems in smart devices, such as driverless vehicles, smart thermostats, and facial recognition programs make decisions without human involvement. But because these autonomous systems depend on machine learning and/or artificial intelligence, they are vulnerable to cyberattacks that can corrupt their programs with potentially disastrous results.

The Cyber Autonomy Range facility will be configured for briefings, classroom training, secure testing and lab space and will be supported by SMU's Data Center, which includes SMU's high performance computing cluster, [ManeFrame III](#), and access to SMU's [NVIDIA DGX SuperPOD](#), specifically tailored for artificial intelligence research.

Key leadership searches underway

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

The search committee and our executive search firm, Isaacson Miller, met this week to evaluate applicants and to select candidates for first-round interviews, which are planned for the second week of July.

As always, thank you to Suku Nair, Vice Provost for Research and Chief Innovation Officer, for chairing the search committee, and to Peter Moore, who is serving as the DSI Director *ad interim*, and the Center for Research Computing Director *ad interim*, until the new Director arrives. Be on the lookout for additional information in subsequent newsletters.

News and Noteworthy

SMU sponsors 2023 International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF)

[ISEF](#), the world's largest pre-college science and engineering competition, hosted 1600+ students from 60+ countries this past month at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center. This was an excellent opportunity for SMU's faculty and staff to showcase our University's offerings. SMU sponsored the Tools and Supplies Center, showcased in the photo below, that supported student participants and hosted a table at the College Fair to recruit talented students to the Hilltop. SMU has been fortunate to recruit many International Science and Engineering Fair winners, such as past Grand Prize Fair winner, Jupin Malhi, who attended SMU on a President's Scholarship, received her M.D. Degree, and is now a faculty member at [UT Southwestern](#). She returns annually to the Dallas Fair to serve as a judge and mentor for the students.



Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences faculty member publishes featured article in chemistry journal

Department of Chemistry Chair and Professor, Elfi Kraka, recently had her research article, [Reaction Mechanism – Explored with the Unified Reaction Valley Approach](#) (Kraka, Antonio, and Freindorf, 2023), published in the [Chemical Communications](#) journal produced by the [Royal Society of Chemistry](#). This is the second time Dr. Kraka's research has been a featured article in this journal. Congratulations to Dr. Kraka for her continued contributions to SMU's research excellence.

Lyle Dean recognized by American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) for authoring one of 2022's Most Accessed Papers

Congratulations to Mary and Richard Templeton Dean Nader Jalili for authoring, along with Elias Brassitos, Senior Control Systems Engineer at [AMETEK](#), one of ASME's Most Accessed Papers of 2022. Their research paper, [Design and Development of a Compact High-Torque Robotic Actuator for Space Mechanisms](#) (Brassitos and Nader, 2017), was published in the ASME [Journal of Mechanisms and Robotics](#).

Poets & Quants names Cox School online MBA 2023 graduate as a Best & Brightest OMBA

Valecia Harris, '23, was honored as a 2023 [Poets & Quants Best and Brightest Online MBA graduate](#). Harris is the first SMU Cox OMBA student to receive this recognition.

While at Cox, Harris was highly involved in student-led organizations and held several leadership positions, including President of the Graduate Women in Business Club, and President of the Graduate Entrepreneurship Club. Harris is currently working as a senior advisor to early- and growth-stage companies, helping them navigate complex business challenges.

Lyle School of Engineering announces new Lyle Anywhere™ program

Lyle School of Engineering has recently announced the creation of [Lyle Anywhere™](#), an overarching brand name for the many Lyle graduate learning modalities. Lyle Anywhere™ encompasses all

classroom experiences: in-person, online, synchronous remote, lecture capture, and everything in between. Lyle is building additional technology-enhanced Smart Classrooms that will allow for a larger offering of graduate courses and will further enable education that transcends physical boundaries – classrooms where in-person, remote students and faculty members can seamlessly interact and collaborate. This enhanced student experience will allow our graduate and professional students the flexibility to choose the learning format that best suits their needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Loba', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern Methodist University

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

World Changers Shaped Here