

SMU Office of the Provost

Weekly Update | October 13, 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](#). Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

Today's update falls into four categories: 1) Fall 2023, 2) Academic Excellence (with a heavy focus on outcomes across the complete student lifecycle), 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2023

Message from the Office of the President on violence in Israel-Gaza

On Tuesday, October 10, President Turner [sent a letter](#) to the SMU community about the violence transpiring in Israel and Gaza. I want to reiterate SMU's deep concern for those affected, both abroad and here on campus, and extend my gratitude, in particular, to the Student Affairs team for the support they are providing to those who may have been most impacted.

Retired Faculty Reception recap

Each year, the Office of the Provost hosts a reception for SMU's retired faculty. During this event, I always appreciate the chance to make new connections, rekindle old ones and – above all else – to hear stories from our incredible and dedicated retired faculty. We typically host the event in late spring but transitioned to a fall gathering this year, and it took place yesterday in the Meadows Museum's Jones Hall.

My thanks to Professor *emeritus* of Music (and former Associate Provost and Provost *ad interim*) Tom Tunks for his support in arranging this event and for serving as a vital liaison between my office and SMU's retired faculty.

SMU in Four Year-Two Progress Presentation recap

Yesterday, the SMU in Four team presented their second annual presentation to discuss and showcase SMU's progress toward completing our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This five-year QEP, a key component of SMU's SACSCOC accreditation process, is constructed to undergird SMU's goals to increase first-year retention and four- and six-year graduation rates for our undergraduate students.

Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success; Paige Ware, Associate Provost for Faculty Success; Dustin Grabsch, Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education and Academic Success; Curt Herridge, Associate Chief Information Officer in the Office of Information Technology (OIT); Molly Ellis, Director of Strategic Initiatives in the Office of Faculty Success; and Josh Beatty, Associate Director for the University Advising Center each spoke about the SMU in Four initiatives currently underway, shared data analyses and reflections on this year's activities, and previewed plans for next year's initiatives.

The written SMU in Four Year-Two Progress Report will be made available later this fall, but in the interim [click here for a copy of this week's presentation](#).

Mid-Semester Check-In from SMU in Four

All SMU undergraduates will receive an email from SMU in Four on Monday, October 16, asking them to complete a two-question check-in survey. The mid-semester check-in seeks to capture students' self-reported academic performance and sense of belonging during the current term. It is intentionally distributed around midterms and has built-in interventions to connect struggling students with campus support resources. I encourage all faculty to allow 30 seconds during class for students to complete this survey or to announce the survey to students via Canvas. The survey runs through October 27, 2023.

Academic Excellence

Department of Operations Research and Engineering Management (OREM) at Lyle School of Engineering launches new academic equivalency program in partnership with International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE)

In May 2023, working collaboratively with SMU's Office of Research and Innovation, Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Operations Research and Engineering Management (OREM), entered into a formal agreement with the [International Council on Systems Engineering](#) (INCOSE). This agreement will provide SMU's engineering students a pathway to pursue a Systems Engineering Professional Certification.

INCOSE is the international authoritative body on systems engineering with more than 21,000 members and more than 70 chapters across 77 countries. INCOSE offers a [Systems Engineering Professional \(SEP\) certification](#) that recognizes and distinguishes professional engineers who have demonstrated competency in systems engineering at any career level. In conjunction with this certification, [OREM will now offer courses that have been approved by INCOSE as academic](#)

[equivalency courses](#). This will allow SMU engineering students who take them to bypass the Systems Engineering knowledge exam when applying for a Systems Engineering Professional certification at the level of Associate Systems Engineering Professional (ASEP) or Certified Systems Engineering Professional (CSEP).

Meadows School of the Arts features four graduate students to watch as they progress toward their advanced degrees and careers

Recently, Meadows School of the Arts published [profiles on four of their graduate students](#) who have accomplished much, both during and prior to their enrollment in Meadows, and who are on track to continue these accomplishments well into their post-graduation careers. SMU is proud to be home to many outstanding graduate students and these four are wonderful examples of the dedication, passion and creative excellence they represent.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Inaugural Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Director commences work at the SMU O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute and the former *ad interim* director moves into new position

Neena Imam, the inaugural Peter O'Donnell, Jr. Director for the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute officially started on Monday, October 9. We are excited to have Dr. Imam on board and look forward to the research and industry expertise she brings to SMU. I encourage you to take the time to congratulate Neena and welcome her to SMU.

Additionally, I am pleased to announce that Peter Moore, the former *ad interim* director of the O'Donnell Data Science Institute and Center for Research Computing, has agreed to move into a new position as the Associate Director of the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute to support Dr. Imam as she transitions more fully into her new role. We are grateful to Dr. Moore for his willingness to continue to support SMU in new and impactful ways.

SMU professor and director of global health at the Bush Institute awarded Department of Justice (DOJ) grant to create a virtual reality de-escalation training program for the City of Dallas

Eric Bing, Professor of Global Health in both the Simmons School of Education's department of Applied Physiology and Dedman College's department of Anthropology, and his team have been awarded a grant from the [Department of Justice's \(DOJ\) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program](#) for just under \$800,000. Their research project aims to enhance the de-escalation training curriculum of the Dallas Police Department (DPD) by integrating virtual reality (VR) technology in partnership with the City of Dallas and the DPD. This project also hopes to rebuild public trust and improve relationships between the police and the community through this additional VR de-escalation training.

Congratulations Professor Bing on this leading-edge research project that will have such meaningful impact on our community and beyond.

News and Noteworthy

The Office of Engaged Learning held annual Big iDeas Pitch Contest during SMU Family Weekend and selected competition winners

The Office of Engaged Learning held the annual Big iDeas Pitch Contest during SMU's Family Weekend on Friday, September 29. Twenty-two SMU students pitched their best business ideas in 90 seconds to a panel of judges for evaluation, and 13 student teams received Pitch Contest funding for their start-ups. Winning pitch ideas ranged from a non-profit that helps foster teens and an app that tracks classroom attendance and learning to a community-uniting South Asian clothing and accessories brand. [Read more about the winners and the event here.](#)

Chair of the Department of Operations Research and Engineering Management (OREM) at Lyle School of Engineering serving as the 2023 Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) Annual Meeting Program Co-Chair

Professor Sila Cetinkaya, Chair of the Department of Operations Research and Engineering Management (OREM) at Lyle School of Engineering will serve as the Program Co-Chair for the [2023 Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences \(INFORMS\) Annual Meeting](#) in Phoenix, AZ, October 14 – 18. The theme for the meeting will tackle one of the [National Science Foundation's 10 Big Ideas](#): "Harnessing the data revolution...all with the power of OR/MS!".

This year's annual conference has registered over 6,000 participants and offers a rich program to engage students, researchers, practitioners, and industry leaders. The OREM department is sponsoring the conference at the bronze level, targeting events that engage student members.

Sincerely,



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World Changers Shaped Here