

## Weekly Update | April 5, 2024

### 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 [submit your ideas through this form](#). 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 five categories: 1) Spring 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 4) Inclusive Excellence, and 5) News and Noteworthy.

## Spring 2024

### Recap: Executive Board Meetings

This week, I provided academic affairs updates during both the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences Executive Board and the Cox School of Business Executive Board meetings.

#### *Dedman College Executive Board*

For the Dedman College Executive Board meeting on Wednesday afternoon, my remarks focused on fall 2024 enrollment projections, as we are hard at work to shape the new class of undergraduate and graduate students who will join our ranks to start the next academic year.

#### *Cox Executive Board*

For the Cox Executive Board meeting this morning, I shared similar remarks with additional specificity on Cox projections.

### 2024 Total Solar Eclipse

On Monday, April 8, 2024, a historic astronomical event will occur across a broad swath of the North American continent – the 2024 Total Solar Eclipse. While I am sure that many of you are already aware of this exciting event, I would like to bring to your attention some of the ways it might impact campus activities on Monday.

While classes will be held as scheduled, [multiple events are happening across campus](#) midday as SMU will be in a prime spot for eclipse viewing. I encourage everyone on campus to step outside to view the eclipse, which is projected to begin at 1:40 p.m. and end only a few short minutes later. Remember that you should not stare directly at the sun, even during an eclipse; use sun-safe equipment such as eclipse glasses that meet the ISO 12312-2 international safety standard.

Dallas is directly in the eclipse's path of totality and is also a major transport hub, making our city a very popular destination for eclipse viewers. [The Dallas Morning News](#) is projecting a large number of visitors traveling to Dallas to view the eclipse. Take extra care while driving over the weekend and on Monday and schedule some extra time for transportation in case of traffic.

For additional safety and preparation for the eclipse, please reference the [message SMU Aware sent this morning](#).

### **Call for applications: Provost's Summer Research Grant**

The Provost's Summer Research Grants, launched last year to support summer research activities for doctoral students, will continue this year with expanded eligibility to include doctoral students from all subject fields who are conducting summer dissertation research. These awards provide up to \$5,000 per student for dissertation research-related expenses during the summer, including living expenses (in cases where the student does not already have a summer stipend from their department), travel to research sites, lodging at research sites, research equipment, technology purchases, software purchases, survey research expenses, etc.

Applications will be reviewed starting April 22, 2024, and on a rolling basis thereafter. Awards will be provided in a single upfront payment. At the end of the summer, awardees will submit reports confirming the completion of their proposed research activities. For more information, including application materials and instructions, read the [message sent from Robin Poston](#), dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and associate provost for graduate education.

Please share this information with faculty colleagues and doctoral students in your programs. Questions can be sent to Dr. Alan Itkin, senior assistant dean for academic affairs and chief of staff, at [aitkin@smu.edu](mailto:aitkin@smu.edu).

### **Call for applications: CTE Director at SMU**

I am pleased to announce an [open call for the next Center for Teaching Excellence Director](#). After a term of three years of excellent leadership over the CTE, Karen Thomas has decided to transition into a new role at SMU as the associate dean for inclusive excellence in the Meadows School of the Arts. We are grateful for her extraordinary leadership contributions in CTE and thrilled she will remain at SMU serving in this new capacity.

All full-time benefits-eligible faculty are eligible to apply for the position or be nominated. Applications should be submitted as a current CV and cover letter while nominations should consist of a brief paragraph of endorsement. Applications and nominations should be submitted to [facultysuccess@smu.edu](mailto:facultysuccess@smu.edu) by Friday, April 26. Finalists will be invited to an interview the week of May 6–10 with a start date of June 1 or July 1, 2024. Questions about the position or process can be addressed to Paige Ware, associate provost for faculty success, at [pware@smu.edu](mailto:pware@smu.edu).

## **Academic Excellence**

### **Undergraduate wins prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship**

Shriya Siddhartha, a second-year Dedman College Scholar and Tower Scholar majoring in biochemistry has been awarded the prestigious [Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship](#). Founded by the United States Congress in 1986, the Barry Goldwater Scholarship supports the development of the next generation of U.S. scientists by providing financial support to talented undergraduate students in science, engineering and mathematics who are preparing for careers as professional researchers. It is considered the preeminent award of its type in the country. Awardees receive a yearly scholarship of \$7,500 that can be used toward tuition, mandatory fees, and room and board.

Beginning with an applicant pool of over 5,000 college sophomores and juniors, 1,353 STEM undergraduates were nominated by 446 academic institutions to participate in this year's competition. From this group, 438 Goldwater scholars were ultimately selected.

Faculty and staff interested in recommending student researchers to apply in the future for the Goldwater Scholarship should write to Dr. Brandon Gray Miller, assistant dean for University Honors Program and Fellowships, at [bgmiller@smu.edu](mailto:bgmiller@smu.edu).

### **Reminder: Submit a retention alert if concerned about a student at risk of leaving SMU**

Faculty and staff can submit an alert about undergraduate students who have given indications that they may want to leave SMU to the Office of Student Success and Retention (SSR) via the retention alert reporting tool at [smu.edu/retentionalert](https://smu.edu/retentionalert). To learn more about this tool and how to submit alerts, refer to the [Enhancing student success: A closer look at SMU's retention alert system](#) blog post.

If you have additional questions or concerns, contact the Office of Student Success and Retention by emailing [ssr@smu.edu](mailto:ssr@smu.edu) or calling 214-768-1231.

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

### **Recap: Research and Innovation Week**

Today marks the end of [Research and Innovation Week](#) (RIW) but not the end of SMU's efforts to promote leading-edge research that propels the innovation lifecycle. As per tradition, this year's RIW highlighted the exciting research being done by our undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. Additionally, campus leaders came together to discuss the role of centers and institutes in fostering a culture of interdisciplinary discovery. The event included talks from global leaders sharing their ideas and engaging with SMU's academic community as well as industry partners.

Thank you to everyone who participated in poster sessions, attended talks, contributed to panels, or otherwise found ways to support your fellow colleagues and students this week. Thank you to the faculty and staff who made this year the largest RIW to date by organizing and supporting components of the dynamic calendar of events. Thanks in particular to the staff from the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, the Office of Research and Innovation, and the Office of Engaged Learning for their leadership and oversight of this important and inspiring week.

### **Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences faculty member and colleagues recently published study examining anxiety levels in adolescents with autism**

Professor Chrystyna Kouros, co-director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Psychology at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, and colleagues Audrey Courreges, UT Southwestern Medical Center; Naomi V. Ekas, Texas Christian University; and Sam Levy, former

SMU undergraduate research assistant, recently published their study “[Remote vs. in-person schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and internalizing symptoms among children on the autism spectrum](#)” in [Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders](#). The study found that education disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had little impact on the anxiety levels of teenagers with autism.

While previous research has shown that the pandemic adversely impacted the overall mental health of adolescents, Kouros' study found that those experiencing mental health difficulties were likely already struggling before March 2020, and teenagers with autism had anxiety levels that remained consistent during pandemic education disruptions, regardless of delivery mode (i.e. in-person, remote or homeschooled).

## Inclusive Excellence

### **Student Senate and the First-Generation Initiative announce new First-Generation Scholarship**

On March 26, SMU's Student Senate unanimously passed legislation earmarking \$50,000 per year in scholarships exclusively for Pell-eligible first-generation students. Per the terms of the legislation, this scholarship program will distribute funds to its first recipients in fall 2024 and will continue to do so for the next nine years, through spring 2033.

The First-Generation Initiative would like to thank Student Senate representatives, especially Alex Alarcón, Clayton Meyer, Michael Castle and Wyatt Harms for supporting this legislation, and to students Briana Morales and Guadalupe Roman, who worked with the First-Generation Initiative to promote the need for these scholarships as a means to provide increased on-campus support for first-generation Mustangs.

## News and Noteworthy

### **SMU to receive Exercise is Medicine® On Campus's (EIM-OC) Silver Level designation**

SMU is one of 145 academic institutions around the world recently honored with the [American College of Sports Medicine](#) community-impact initiative's, [Exercise is Medicine® On Campus](#) (EIM-OC), Silver Level designation for its efforts to create a culture of wellness on campus.

The SMU EIM-OC leadership team includes Professor Megan Murphy, director of health promotion management and Professor Kristie Abt, both from the Department of Applied Physiology and Sport Management at Simmons School of Education and Human Development; Dr. Arthi Krishnan, associate director of medical services and physician at the Bob Smith Health Center; and Bonnie Hainline, director of campus recreation. The leadership team has worked for two years to create campus outreach events that include fitness classes and assessments, a colloquium series, a 5K Run for Mental Health and other community outreach events.

In celebration of this recognition, the SMU EIM-OC leadership team is inviting all SMU faculty, staff and students to its spring event, Exercise is Medicine, scheduled for Friday, April 12. Dr. Carena Winters, who developed the EIM-OC initiative, will present “Exercise is Medicine – Move Your Way” in Harold Clark Simmons Hall, room 101, from 12–1 p.m. Activities for physical and mental well-being will follow on Dallas Hall Lawn from 1–3 p.m.

## **SMU NSBE attends National Society of Black Engineers' 50th Annual Convention**

SMU student members of the [National Society of Black Engineers](#) (NSBE) recently [attended the organization's 50<sup>th</sup> annual convention](#) in Atlanta, Ga., to network, connect and explore job opportunities. The four-day event is designed to provide support, guidance and resources for undergraduate and graduate students as well as established professionals. The agenda includes a two-day career fair that gives jobseekers access to more than 400 companies and universities.

NSBE is one of the largest student-governed organizations based in the U.S., supporting the aspirations of collegiate and pre-collegiate students and technical professionals in engineering and technology. SMU NSBE is one of 600 chapters that aim to increase the number of culturally responsible Black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community.

## **SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education to host Tech Titans Cyber Forum**

On April 11, SMU Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE) will host the [Tech Titans Cyber Forum](#), assembling a distinguished panel from leading industry organizations such as DTC Global, Will Long Consulting, Microsoft, and North America Ericsson. Notably, Regan Edens of DTC Global and Will Long of Will Long Consulting, members of SMU GOCE's Cybersecurity Advisory Board, will bring their invaluable expertise to the discussion. The forum will delve into pressing topics, including the utilization of leading-edge technologies and governmental policies, reporting mechanisms and procedures aimed at enhancing national cybersecurity responsibility and accountability. This event will take place at the James M. Collins Executive Education Center, Bank of Texas Dining Room.

For those wishing to attend, [registration is available here](#).

Sincerely,



Elizabeth G. Loba, PhD  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Southern Methodist University  
<https://www.smu.edu/provost>

