

Weekly Update | December 6, 2024

Provost and Senior 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 our story form via the button below. 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.

[Submit your story](#)

Previous newsletters are [available here](#).

Today's update falls into five categories: 1) Fall 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 4) Inclusive Excellence, and 5) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2024

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 on Academic Affairs meeting, my update covered four topics. I began by sharing information about fall 2025 undergraduate class recruitment. With a 49% year-over-year increase in application submissions this fall (as of December 2), we are 86% of the way toward meeting our goal of 20,000 applications for the fall 2025 recruitment cycle. Next, I gave an overview of SMU's Common Curriculum – the general education requirements that all undergraduate students must complete as part of our liberal arts curriculum. I then reviewed the four-year initiative Academic Affairs has taken to develop and implement a culture of transparency and equity around differentiated faculty workloads. I ended my presentation with updates on the dean searches underway at Cox School of Business, Perkins School of Theology, and Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences.

[Full Board meeting](#)

In this morning's meeting, I shared a consolidated version of my presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs with the full Board.

Undefeated in the ACC: SMU Football goes to North Carolina for ACC Championship game

Tomorrow, Saturday, December 7, the SMU Mustangs football team will be in Charlotte, NC to play in the ACC Championship game against Clemson University. This is the first time a college football team has gone from a Group 5 conference to a Power 4 conference and competed in the championship in their first season. SMU is the sixth program in ACC history to go at least 8-0 in conference play since the ACC went to an eight-game conference schedule in 1992.

We ended our first ACC season undefeated in the conference and 11-1 overall, making SMU the highest-ranked ACC team nationally (#7 in the Coaches Poll; #8 in the AP Poll). This is SMU's highest ranking since 1985 and marks the ninth straight week SMU has appeared in both polls.

Thank you to our student-athletes and coaches who have worked so hard to bring us this record-breaking season. Pony Up Dallas!

Important change coming for logging on to SMU digital platforms

SMU is changing its Single Sign-On (SSO) service to take advantage of new user conveniences and the latest security capabilities.

From now until December 26, everyone can log on to SMU systems with *either* their SMU ID (8-digit employee ID) or their *NetID*. For almost all users, your NetID is your SMU email address (yourname@smu.edu). OIT has created a new My Profile page, <https://myprofile.smu.edu>, where you can confirm your NetID.

On December 26, during winter break, SMU will transition to accepting only the *NetID*. We strongly encourage everyone to begin logging in with their NetID as soon as possible to get used to the upcoming change.

[More information is available here.](#)

\$3 million restoration project nearly complete for four buildings at Perkins School of Theology

[Construction projects have been underway this fall](#) across the Perkins School of Theology quadrangle. Four key buildings, Perkins Chapel, Kirby Hall, Selecman Hall and Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Hall, have undergone a \$3 million building restoration project to address moisture issues and necessary maintenance to the building's exteriors. The project is on track for completion by January 2, 2025.

Provost monthly lunch at the Commons Table next week

On Monday, December 16, from 12–1 p.m., I will be having lunch in the Faculty-Staff Dining Room located in Umphrey Lee. The "Commons Table," re-established by the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Club, is designed for community members who come to meals by themselves or in small groups and wish to socialize with others to promote faculty and staff community. I hope you will join me for a relaxed lunch and conversation, and I look forward to seeing you there.

Academic Excellence

Dedman School of Law welcomes the highest credentialed class in school's history

SMU Dedman School of Law recently welcomed the highest credentialed class in its history. The Class of 2027, the 100th first-year law class to start since the law school's founding in 1925, comprises a remarkable, diverse group of students with strong academic backgrounds and real-world experience.

The 228-student class has a median LSAT score of 165 (scored out of 180) with a median GPA of 3.86. These students represent 87 different undergraduate institutions from 23 states. Twenty-six identify as first-generation college students and 30% identify as racially/ethnically diverse.

Read more about the [incoming class and Dedman Law rankings here](#).

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Meadows School of the Arts professor named Wallach Chair by esteemed Chamber Music Society

The [Chamber Music Society \(CMS\) of Lincoln Center](#) has announced that Chad Hoopes, professor of practice in violin in the Division of Music at Meadows School of the Arts, is the new holder of its Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Chair.

This honorary position, which comes with a monetary award, is bestowed upon artists who exhibit extraordinary musicianship and service to CMS and to chamber music as an art form. CMS has also remarked that they are proud and grateful for everything that Professor Hoopes does to engage audiences with the beauty of his chamber music performances.

Professor Hoopes will hold the position for a three-year term beginning with the 2024-25 season and concluding at the end of the 2027-28 season.

Inclusive Excellence

Student Academic Engagement and Success requests SMU faculty and staff survey participation to inform support structures

Student Academic Engagement and Success (SAES) is developing strategic initiatives to better support SMU's transfers, veterans and first-generation college students. One of these initiatives is to identify faculty and staff with similar identities who are willing to connect with these student groups.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to complete [this brief survey](#), which will play a crucial role in connecting campus individuals who are interested in supporting initiatives that enhance the experiences of these unique student populations at SMU. Thank you in advance for your participation, which will help us foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

SMU Continuing and Professional Education's (CAPE) Women in Leadership Advisory Council completes first term

SMU alumnae, North Texas businesses, and community leaders have come together to support SMU CAPE's online *Women in Leadership: Influence and Impact* certificate program. This program offers a unique educational experience for new and emerging leaders. Since its launch in 2023, 122 participants have participated in the Women in Leadership certificate program.

An inaugural Women in Leadership Advisory Council offers valuable insights through panel discussions, interviews, and case studies that augment the program's core curriculum. The council, a dynamic group of 18 female executives from various industry sectors, completed their two-year term in November 2024. During their tenure, council members attended seven meetings with the program's instructional team and supported eight cohorts of students.

Registration is open for the next section, which starts on February 5, 2025. Learn more about [the program here](#).

News and Noteworthy

SMU's Project Poëtica recognized by *Publishers Weekly*

[Publishers Weekly](#) has recognized SMU's Project Poëtica and Bridwell Library's combined publishing initiative set to debut in 2025. This initiative was built out of a desire to "support poetic careers and broaden the culture's notion of creativity beyond a single author." The initiative will open three editorial lines that will focus on collaborative works, works by poets who have previously published at least one collection and works about poetics.

The initiative is part of SMU's broader commitment to poetry, which includes the biennial SMU Symposium on Poetic Form. A second symposium, scheduled for March 1-2, 2026, will feature presentations by Ada Limón, Anahid Nersessian, Ben Lerner, Camille Dungy, Patience Agbabi, and Stephanie Burt, along with editors from *Poetry*, *Pleiades*, *Paris Review*, and *Granta*.

Mary and Richard Templeton Dean for Lyle School of Engineering serves as keynote speaker at Universal AI University's International Case Study Conference

Nader Jalili, Mary and Richard Templeton Dean for the Lyle School of Engineering, traveled to Mumbai, India last week to attend the third annual Universal AI University (UAI) [International Case Study Conference](#). UAI and Lyle School of Engineering established a partnership three months ago when Professor Simon Mak from the Cox School of Business became the Chancellor of Universal AI University.

Dean Jalili was a keynote speaker at the conference, discussing ways to build a resilient workforce through AI-enhanced engineering formation characteristics (EFC). As a conference sponsor, Dean Jalili represented the Lyle School and SMU by presenting the conference's Best Paper Awards and joined Chancellor Mak in raising an SMU flag at UAI to commemorate the conference and to celebrate the ongoing global partnership between the two universities.



Chancellor Simon Mak and Dean Jalili at Universal AI University hoisting the SMU flag.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences professor appears in multiple national media outlets as expert on the role of religion in public education

Mark Chancey, professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, has recently appeared in national media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *NPR*, *CNN*, and the *Washington Post*. Professor Chancey has been selected by these outlets for his expertise on religion in public education, and particularly, for his work reviewing a proposed curriculum in Texas that uses Bible stories as central content.

Professor Chancey has recently given television interviews on [KFDW](#), [NBC Top Story](#) (story starts at 35:01) and [CNN](#). He has also provided interviews and statements on this topic for media outlets such as [The Dallas Morning News](#), [Chron](#), [MSN KENS-TV San Antonio](#) and [The Forward](#).

Perkins School of Theology hosted Fall Convocation 2024, *Faith in a Digital Age*

The [2024 Fall Convocation at Perkins School of Theology](#) brought 90 attendees to campus to discuss “Faith in a Digital Age.” The event took place on November 14–15, and drew clergy, engaged laypersons, community leaders, and members of the Perkins and SMU community.

Guest lecturers Cole Arthur Riley and Noreen Herzfeld presented insights exploring the ways AI might affect the ways human beings express their spirituality and connect with their faith communities. Artist Jennifer Monet Cowley created art on-site during the two-day program, which also featured breakout sessions, panel discussions and dedicated time for worship.

Geoffrey Moore, Darnell St. Romain, and Darrell St. Romain presented the opening worship service, offered through the lens of Black liturgical wisdom. Jay Cooper and Tyler Wallace of Violet Crown City

Church, a United Methodist congregation in Austin, Texas, led and curated the closing worship experience – written entirely by generative AI.

Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Endowed Chair speaks on two podcasts

Professor Christopher González, Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Endowed Chair and Department Chair in the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of English, recently appeared on two podcasts, sharing insights from his collegiate athletic career as well as his literary expertise. On episode 35 of the [Project Narrative Podcast](#), Professor González discussed Junot Díaz's recent work of flash fiction, *The Books of Losing You*, with Professor James Phelan, Distinguished University Professor in Ohio State University's Department of English, and on [Talk'n Throws Podcast](#), Dr. González reflected on his years as a shot putter.

Sincerely,



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

