

Weekly Update | February 16, 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 send your ideas to provost@smu.edu. 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

Search committee: Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences dean

As mentioned in previous newsletters, SMU has now begun the search for the next Elisabeth Martin Armstrong Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences. I am grateful to the Dedman College executive board members, faculty, staff, and students for their participation in meetings to inform the search.

I would like to thank Robin Poston, Dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and Associate Provost for Graduate Education, for serving as the search committee chair. Next week, we will send formal invitations to members of the search committee and announce their names.

Recap: SMU Libraries Executive Board meeting

This week, I provided academic affairs updates during the SMU Libraries Executive Board meeting, highlighting three topics. I began by discussing the SMU-led Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub. Then I presented data on the University's projected return by fall 2024 to near-record high full-time faculty counts. I concluded with the news that Thomas DiPiero, the inaugural Elisabeth Martin Armstrong Dean and Professor of World Languages and Literatures and English in the Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, plans to conclude his service effective May 31, 2024.

Upgrade of Mass Notification System on Campus

On February 12, SMU Aware informed the campus detailing how the Office of Information Technology (OIT) is working to upgrade the university's Mass Notification System (MNS) in 72 buildings. OIT has begun liaising with

building contacts this week to address the installation and testing of the new equipment that will enhance our current notification system. They will make every effort to minimize disruption to classes and activities.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we work toward ensuring a more robust and effective mass notification system for the safety and well-being of our campus community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mona Horton in OIT at mlhorton@smu.edu.

Southwest Graduate School of Banking Foundation announces new leadership

[William T. Chittenden, Ph.D.](#), has been selected as the President and CEO of the [Southwestern Graduate School of Banking \(SWGSB\) Foundation](#), headquartered in Cox School of Business since 1957. Dr. Chittenden, whose new role took effect earlier this month, most recently served as Chief Academic Officer of SWGSB and Associate Dean for Graduate Programs in the McCoy College of Business at Texas State University. His selection follows previous President and CEO Jeffrey R. Schmid's appointment to President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City in August 2023.

Academic Excellence

Call for faculty volunteers: Re-evaluation of Common Curriculum-tagged transfer credits to streamline external credit process

The Office of General Education has been working to improve how SMU applies transfer and pre-matriculation external credit toward a student's degree through the "Improving Transfer Pathways Working Group." One of the group's main objectives is the re-evaluation of transfer credit for the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS) and external credit review for Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams as it relates to Common Curriculum requirements. By examining these courses and assigning [Common Curriculum](#) tags, SMU will be able to streamline the transfer and external credit process for incoming students and reduce the number of individual Re-Evaluation of Transfer Credit petitions.

To accomplish this objective, the Office of General Education is calling for faculty volunteers who will compare syllabi and learning outcomes for TCCNS, AP, IB, and CLEP artifacts against SMU CC rubrics, assigning transfer credit where appropriate. Time commitment is flexible with two to three group meetings and some individual work.

If you are interested in volunteering or learning more, please reach out to the Office of General Education at gened@smu.edu by February 22.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Department of English faculty member receives two fellowships

Professor Katie Condon Hermes from Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of English was recently honored with two fellowships: a [MacDowell Fellowship](#) and a [Walter E. Dakin Fellowship](#).

The MacDowell Fellowship, starting in 1907, invites artists of excellence to their 450-acre New Hampshire property to produce creative works during their time in residency. The MacDowell Fellowship is a prestigious award that has received the National Medal of Arts for its patronage of artists.

The Walter E. Dakin Fellowship supports creative writers and provides financial assistance for them to attend the [Sewanee Writers' Conference](#). The [Walter E. Dakin Fund](#) was established by American playwright Tennessee Williams after his passing to honor his grandfather.

Dallas Symphony Orchestra to perform world premiere of Meadows School of the Arts faculty member's concerto

The world premiere of Professor Xi Wang's [YEAR 2020: concerto for Violin, Trumpet and Orchestra, commissioned by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra \(DSO\)](#), will take place on February 22-25 at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. The work will feature [Karen Gomyo](#) on violin and [Tine Thing Helseth](#) on trumpet under the baton of Fabio Luis. A commercial recording as well as a film of the concert will be available to view online at [Medici.TV](#) after the performances.

To learn more about this musical piece, watch a [short video interview](#) with Professor Wang and read this [preview article in Arts and Culture Texas](#).

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences professor publishes debut poetry collection

Professor Jacob Rubin from Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences' Department of English recently debuted his collection of poetry, [Piggy Bank](#). The poetry collection was published by [Gold Wake Press](#).

Inclusive Excellence

Become an ally for first-generation college students

Last week, on February 9, SMU's First-Gen Initiative sent a message inviting faculty and staff to participate in their Ally Program for First-Generation College Students.

Becoming an ally entails a commitment to understanding the experiences and needs of first-generation college students and offering support in meaningful ways, such as providing mentorship, offering resources, or simply listening to student experiences. Faculty and staff participation in this initiative will help create a more welcoming and empowering campus environment where all Mustangs feel valued and supported.

To sign up as an ally, please [click here to complete a short form](#).

News and Noteworthy

The New Yorker Cartoonist Amy Kurzweil to Speak at SMU, February 20

SMU Jewish Studies, Department of Religious Studies, and Bridwell Library present the Nate and Ann Levine Endowed Lecture in Jewish Studies: a lecture by Amy Kurzweil - *Artificial: The Art of Graphic Resurrection*. The lecture will take place next Tuesday, February 20, from 7:30–8:30 p.m. in Dallas Hall's McCord Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.

Amy Kurzweil will discuss her new book, *Artificial: A Love Story*, a graphic memoir about love, loss, and AI. *Artificial* tells the story of the mission of Amy's father, renowned computer scientist, author, and futurist Ray Kurzweil, to build a chatbot from the salvaged writings of Amy's grandfather, a Viennese musician who fled the Nazis in 1938 and died in 1970. Amy will address the book's themes and the process of drawing and writing comics about self and family. Amy Kurzweil is a New Yorker cartoonist and the author of *Artificial: A Love Story* (2023) and *Flying Couch: A Graphic Memoir* (2016). Amy was a 2021 Berlin Prize Fellow with the American Academy in Berlin, a 2019 Shearing Fellow with the Black Mountain Institute, and has received fellowships from MacDowell, Djerassi and elsewhere. Her work *Technofeelia*, a four-part graphic series with *The Believer* magazine, has been nominated for a Reuben Award and an Ignatz Award. Her writing, comics, and cartoons have also been published in *The Verge*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Longreads*, *Literary Hub*, *WIRED* and others.

Big iDeas Business Plan winners announced

On Friday, February 12, the Office of Engaged Learning held its annual Big iDeas Business Plan Competition where 12 undergraduate entrepreneurship teams pitched their business plan in four minutes to a panel of business experts. Seven entrepreneurs were awarded funding up to \$7,500 each.

2024 Winners:

Ryder McNeal '24 – PREVO

Jude Lugo '24 – [LectureLogger](#)

Mason Morland '24 – [SteadySpoon](#)

Anish Senthikumar '25 and Vedang Uniyal '24 – The Active Mind Initiative

Joshua Baier '24 – [Timio News](#)

Mason Dierkes '27 – [Seed Innovate](#)

Benjamin Omoregbe '24 – Internsurf

Sincerely,



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

SMU

World Changers Shaped Here