

Weekly Update | February 9, 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 this [email address](#). 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

Listening sessions begin with key Dedman College stakeholders to inform dean search

Last month, I shared the bittersweet news that Thomas DiPiero, the inaugural Elisabeth Martin Armstrong Dean of Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, plans to conclude his service effective May 31, 2024, after 10 years as dean. Be on the lookout for additional information about plans to honor and recognize Tom for his outstanding leadership and service.

This week, I had meetings with members of the Dedman College Executive Board, Dedman College faculty members, and Dedman College staff to gather feedback that will inform our search for the next Dedman College dean. My thanks to those who were able to participate in these important meetings. Next steps include determination of the executive search firm to support this search and to select and charge a representative search committee. I hope to complete these tasks before month's end and will provide additional updates in subsequent newsletters.

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities Conference

At the beginning of this week, I attended [the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities \(NAICU\) Annual Meeting & Advocacy Day](#) on behalf of President R. Gerald Turner. NAICU is a national organization with membership comprising presidents from accredited private non-profit colleges and universities who represent higher education on public policy issues in Washington, D.C.

NAICU's Annual Meeting & Advocacy Day provides briefings on the most current policy issues affecting higher education and provides an opportunity for higher education executives to inform and shape NAICU's ability to respond and advocate.

Also, while in D.C., I met with congressional leadership to raise awareness and petition support for SMU's world-changing research agenda, most notably our developing Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub proposal.

Call for Nominations: Woodrow B. Seals Laity Award

Nominations are now requested for the 2024 Perkins School of Theology Woodrow B. Seals Laity Award and will be accepted through Friday, March 1. The award is presented annually to a layperson in the United States who exemplifies an exceptional commitment of service to Christ through faith and action in the church, community, and world.

Additional information about [nominations can be found here](#).

Presentation of the 2024 Seals Laity Award will take place during the worship service for the Perkins Summit for Faith and Learning scheduled for March 22-23, 2024.

Call for faculty applications: Summer Research Intensive

The Office of Engaged Learning (OEL) is currently accepting Summer Research Intensive (SRI) faculty applications for the 2024 summer session. Submissions are invited until end of day today, Friday, February 9.

Interested faculty members may apply for match funding to support up to two undergraduate research assistants for summer 2024. The students may work up to 30 hours per week and will attend weekly symposia and professional development workshops hosted by OEL.

Further information on [SRI and how to apply is available here](#).

Academic Excellence

Update: Perkins School of Theology dean search

My thanks to the Perkins Dean Search Committee for their hard work to date reviewing candidate applications and to Peter Moore, interim Associate Director of the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (and former Provost *ad interim*), for serving as the search committee chair. Semifinalist interviews are planned for the week of March 4 with on-campus finalist interviews slated for early April.

Call for Proposals: SMU-in-Taos January Term 2025

As mentioned in the [SMU-in-Taos and SMU Intersessions Office email](#) from February 5, January Term will be offered in-person both on the Dallas campus and at SMU-in-Taos during January 2025. All faculty are invited to submit a course proposal for Jan Term, which is due no later than Thursday, February 29, 2024, at 5 p.m.

SMU-in-Taos class proposals can be [submitted here](#). For more information or assistance with a Taos proposal, please contact Cristalle Choi at smutaos@smu.edu, or visit <https://www.smu.edu/Taos/Faculty>.

SMU Intersessions class proposals can be [submitted here](#). Only a course that has been approved by SMU GOCE may be offered online. For more information or assistance with a Dallas proposal, please contact Andrew Hamilton or Mariah Parker in the [Intersessions Office](#) at janterm@smu.edu.

Reminder: Submit Retention Alerts for students of concern

Faculty and staff can help support and retain undergraduate students who may be at-risk of leaving SMU by using the Office of Student Success and Retention's retention alert reporting tool at smu.edu/retentionalert.

To learn more about the tool and how to submit, refer to our [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 or calling 214-768-1231.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Lyle School of Engineering professor awarded grant to study natural gas soil aeration systems

Kathleen Smits, Solomon Professor for Global Development and chair in the Lyle School of Engineering's department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, was recently awarded a \$230,000 grant from the [Northeast Gas Association](#). Professor Smits will use the grant to study the design and operation of natural gas soil aeration systems, a crucial technology for mitigating hazardous gases in the soil and enhancing pipeline safety.

Inclusive Excellence

First Gen Social: Let's talk FAFSA

SMU's First-Generation Initiative is hosting its first spring 2024 event. This event will allow students to meet other first-gen students as well as supportive faculty and staff while learning more about the new FAFSA and the College Scholarship Service (CSS) profile. Jennifer Gomez from Financial Literacy will be available at the social to answer any questions students may have.

The social will take place on February 15, from 2-3 p.m. in the Hughes-Trigg Ballroom.

Office of Social Change and Intercultural Engagement hosts events with partners across campus to celebrate Black History Month

Throughout February, the Office of Social Change and Intercultural Engagement has been and will be partnering with SMU offices to host events that highlight and uplift Black American achievement and life.

Read a full list of the Black History Month events happening across campus on [Instagram](#). Learn about event details on [SMU360](#).

News and Noteworthy

Lyle School of Engineering faculty member's recent publication selected by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)

Nicos Makris, professor at Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, recently had a paper selected by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). ASCE selected Professor Makris' paper, "Characterization of the Inherent Resilience of Large Cities to Natural Hazards", to promote content devoted to the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). This paper supports [Goal 11](#), make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Cox School of Business hosts Leaders on Leadership with special guest President Turner

On February 15, from 5-6 p.m. in the Collins Executive Center, Leaders on Leadership, a fireside chat speaker series hosted by Cox School of Business, has invited SMU's own President R. Gerald Turner to speak. He will share his story "Beyond the Hilltop," providing insights into his early career and presidency at SMU for nearly three decades. Associate Dean of Graduate Programs and Executive Education, Shane Goodwin, will moderate.

The free event will include a Q&A and networking hour immediately following the event. [Please register here](#).

National Signing Day with SMU football head coach

On Wednesday, Head Coach Rhett Lashlee and the SMU football coaching staff presented the 2024 signing class at Armstrong Fieldhouse. The signing class is a group of talented student-athletes who have committed to attend and play for SMU in the fall of 2024, our inaugural ACC season.

Thank you to Coach Lashlee and his staff for welcoming our new Mustangs to campus and organizing this exciting event for National Signing Day.

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