

## Weekly Update | July 26, 2024

### Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I hope you are having a restful and productive summer. Whether you are teaching, conducting research, or preparing exhibits or performances, your contributions are greatly appreciated and valued in our quest for even greater academic quality. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to SMU's academic mission.

As mentioned in the [final Weekly Update](#) of the spring 2024 semester, I plan to send these updates twice each month during June and July and once in August prior to the start of the fall semester. 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 publication.

[Submit your story](#)

Previous newsletters are [available here](#).

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

## Summer 2024

### **SMU waiving application fee for first-year and transfer undergraduate students**

To align with our [move to the Atlantic Coast Conference \(ACC\)](#), SMU is [waiving the application fee](#) for all first-year and transfer undergraduate students. When applications open on August 1, 2024, undergraduate students applying for entrance in fall 2025 will have their normal application fee waived. This is an exciting time to be on the Hilltop, and joining the ACC is reason for celebration!

### **SMU joins STARS College Network to recruit and support students from small towns and rural areas**

SMU has joined the invitation-only STARS College Network, a \$150 million initiative to prepare, recruit and support students who are less likely to attend college than their urban counterparts. Students from small towns and rural areas graduate from high school at the same rate as those

from metro areas but are 32 percent less likely to attend college according to the Progressive Policy Institute. Texas has more rural students than any other state.

The STARS College Network was launched last year with a roster of 16 selective colleges and universities. This summer, the network added 16 more universities, including SMU, Duke University and University of Notre Dame. SMU and UT Austin are the only two universities in Texas invited to be part of the STARS College Network.

[Learn more here](#) about how SMU plans to initiate outreach to students from small towns and rural areas.

### **SMU career services offices transitioning to 12twenty on August 1**

As announced on Thursday, July 18, 2024, SMU will move from Handshake to 12twenty as our campus career services platform effective August 1, 2024 in preparation for the fall semester. Monitor your email for additional information on this new technology in the coming weeks, covering topics such as student login, system use and guidance for posting on-campus student jobs.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your area's career services office.

### **Planning for fall 2024 holy days**

On Thursday, July 18, 2024, Lisa Garvin, chaplain and minister to the University, and Sheri Kunovich, associate provost for Student Academic Engagement Success, [sent a letter](#) to faculty and staff outlining holy days for the fall 2024 semester.

Awareness of the many holidays celebrated by our students promotes a supportive learning environment and fosters an inclusive community. Several of this semester's holy days observed by many religions fall on class days and exam days. Being familiar with these dates can help anticipate students' requests for absences and/or to reschedule tests/exams.

## **Academic Excellence**

### **Poets & Quants recognizes online MBA student as class of 2024 Best & Brightest**

Jason DeMattia, OMB A '24, is one of 54 graduates from business schools around the country honored by [Poets & Quants](#) in the seventh annual Best & Brightest Online MBAs feature. DeMattia is a medical director at Village Medical Clinic in Tomball, Texas. Learn more about [DeMattia here](#).

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

### **SMU-led research team explores the impact of surface conditions on the speed of natural gas pipeline leaks**

Navodi Jayarathne, a Ph.D. graduate in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Lyle School of Engineering, mentored by Professor Kathleen Smits, chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Professor Smits' master's student Richard S. Kolodziej, IV, led a study examining how different ground surface conditions affect the migration of natural gas from leaking pipelines. Also involved in the project were Daniel J. Zimmerle, principal director of the Methane

Emissions Technology Evaluation Center at Colorado State University (CSU), and Stuart Riddick, a research scientist at CSU's Energy Institute.

Conducting controlled leaks at Colorado State University's Methane Emissions Technology Evaluation Center, the team found that water/snow saturation and asphalt paving can cause natural gas to travel up to four times farther and 3.5 times faster than through dry soil. This highlights the significant role surface conditions play in gas transport times and distances, impacting safety and environmental risk assessments. Even after a leak is stopped, methane can remain detectable at a high concentration for up to 12 days under snow, moist soil or asphalt surface conditions, emphasizing the importance of having first responders and gas companies consider soil surface structures when addressing pipeline leaks.

Their study was published in the journal [Environmental Science & Technology Letters](#).

### **Cox School of Business professor's latest research investigates crypto-currency fundraising**

Inspired by the Ukrainian government's use of cryptocurrency for fundraising, marking one of the first instances of a country using blockchain to fund a real-world cause, Cox School of Business professor Jane Tan began studying cryptocurrency fundraising. Her research highlights significant differences in fundraising trends between cryptocurrencies Bitcoin and Ethereum, and the direct impact of offering non-fungible tokens (NFTs), "airdrops" and other digital rewards.

Additionally, Tan's research shows that traditional matching grants are still the most effective approach to fundraising but that well-designed NFT rewards can also significantly motivate donors.

[Read more about her research here.](#)

### **O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute announces graduate student fellowship recipients**

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (ODSRCI) is offering graduate student fellowships for the upcoming academic year. These fellowships include a stipend along with structured mentoring and work desk space. After extensive review and consideration, the ODSRCI is pleased to announce that the following five projects and students have been selected:

1. Graduate student Linag Kang and advisor Zhong Lu, Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences in Dedman College, for the project: "A self-supervised deep learning approach for radar interferometry denoising."
2. Graduate student Mark Vernon and advisor Tom Hagstrom, department of Mathematics in Dedman College, for the project: "Algorithms for reduced-order modeling and data assimilation with applications to digital twins of complex flow system."
3. Graduate student Eli Lard and advisor Corey Clark, SMU Guildhall and department of Computer Science in the Lyle School of Engineering, for the project: "Toward world model-based learning: A new paradigm for generalized artificial intelligence."
4. Graduate student Ding Lin and advisor Jianhui Wang, department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the Lyle School of Engineering, for the project: "Quantum reinforcement learning in power distribution system operations."

5. Graduate student Yinglu Tang and advisor Zhihao Wu, department of Biological Sciences in Dedman College, for the project: “Advanced Machine Learning techniques for discovering aging biomarkers in human skeletal muscle.”

## Inclusive Excellence

### Third SMU Subiendo Academy leadership program concludes

The Cox School of Business hosted the third annual [Subiendo Academy](#) this summer. Thirty rising high school seniors representing 24 area schools spent a week on campus learning about the benefits of a college education. Through field trips to the headquarters of Toyota and Keurig Dr Pepper, and business case presentations to a panel of judges from Toyota, the students gained an introduction to the world of corporate business.

Sylvie and Gary Crum, a member of the Cox School’s Executive Board, and the CFP Foundation, a Houston-based charitable organization focused primarily on educational issues related to Texas, originally brought the Subiendo Academy idea to SMU, inspired by a similar program at UT Austin. Their support for both projects has paved the way for high-merit, high-need students to expand their academic and leadership potential.

This year’s participants also heard from 10 alumni of SMU’s inaugural Subiendo Academy who had just completed their first year as SMU undergraduates—six of whom are studying at Cox School. This year’s Subiendo Academy culminated in a ceremony where the Cox BBA admissions director Olivia Trevino, who has organized and led Subiendo all three years, and CFP Foundation executive director Clayton Crum Harkness presented students with certificates of completion.



## News and Noteworthy

### **Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences Department of English professor featured in local media**

On July 3, 2024, the Dallas Observer's Vanessa Quilantan published an article highlighting the life and career of Professor Sanderia Faye, a faculty member in the Department of English at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences. The nearly 3,000-word feature covers a broad range of information about Professor Faye's life, including her upbringing in Arkansas, her short-form work, her novel *Mourner's Bench* and her work supporting Dallas' literary scene.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Sincerely,



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

**SMU**