

Weekly Update | March 28, 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

Update from the Task Force for Faculty Salaries and Merit Benchmarking

On Tuesday, March 26, [I sent a letter](#) to faculty regarding the outcomes of the Task Force for Faculty Salaries and Merit Benchmarking Study. This task force was charged with analyzing tenure- and non-tenure-track faculty salaries and making recommendations for market-based salary adjustments using available comparison data. The President's Executive Council has reviewed the task force's recommendations and has made several decisions in support of their suggestions.

I encourage you to visit this [webpage that hosts FAQs](#) to provide further context. Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige Ware and I will join the Faculty Senate on Wednesday, April 3, to answer any additional questions.

We believe that making salary adjustments based on the study will help us recruit and retain the best faculty – the engine that drives our teaching, research, creative activity, and service mission – here on the Hilltop and beyond. Once more, I extend my deepest gratitude to the members of the task force for their service this year and to the Faculty Senate for bringing forward the recommendations that led to the review.

Invitation to participate in May Commencement

On Wednesday, March 27, [I sent a message](#) to faculty inviting them to participate in May Commencement and to RSVP by Friday, April 12, at 4 p.m. Faculty members' presence at this significant rite of passage is important to students, their families and guests, and to the entire University community. I hope you will join us in support of these events to celebrate our students and their academic achievements.

This year, the Baccalaureate Service will be held on Friday, May 10, at 5 p.m. in McFarlin Auditorium. The All-University May Commencement ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 11, at 8:30 a.m. in Moody Coliseum. This year's Commencement speakers are Megha and Nirav Tolia, the co-founding directors of the William S. Spears Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership at the Cox School of Business.

For faculty who wish to attend these events and need academic regalia, please contact your department administrator to determine the ordering process before Monday, April 15, to ensure that regalia arrives on time.

Good Friday Holiday

Tomorrow, Friday, March 29, all University offices will be closed in observance of Good Friday. Easter will be the following Sunday, March 31. Please note that Orthodox Christians will be celebrating Good Friday on May 3, an exam day, and Easter on May 5. Faculty should be aware that they may receive requests from Orthodox Christian students to reschedule an exam in observance of the holiday.

I hope that everyone is able to rest and enjoy the long weekend, and I look forward to seeing everyone back on campus on Monday, April 1.

2024 Spring Skills Sharpener

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) is hosting the [2024 Spring Skills Sharpener training series](#) from April 15 to May 15. [Over two dozen training courses](#) will be offered, both in-person and via webinar, on topics such as Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Teams, Wiki.SMU, and Adobe. Sessions are tailored to meet the needs of SMU's faculty and staff.

In addition to learning new skills and/or leveling up current abilities, session participants will be entered to win prize pack raffles. Participants will receive one raffle entry for each session attended to be eligible for prizes that will be distributed during the Staff Association President's Picnic on May 17, 2024.

SMU Common Curriculum Assessment Results: Academic Year 2022-2023

As part of its commitment to excellence in undergraduate education and in fulfillment of its responsibilities to its accreditor the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges](#) (SACSCOC), SMU assesses student learning in the [Common Curriculum](#) each year. To allow sufficient time to collect, review and analyze results, and in the spirit of continuous improvement, SMU assesses approximately one-third of the Common Curriculum's components each year (using a three-year cycle). In 2022-2023, student work was assessed in the following components: Exploring Sciences (ES) Breadth, Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) Breadth, Technological Advances and

Society (TAS) Breadth, Global Perspectives (GPS) Proficiency and Human Diversity (HD) Proficiency.

Work is taken from courses in fall, spring and intersession terms for review and falls into two broad categories: rated (e.g., papers, essays, oral presentations, art projects) and objective (quizzes and tests with a single, discrete answer). Student work is evaluated by trained teams of faculty volunteers, supported and coordinated by the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness. The “juried assessment” strategy we use involves having each example of student work scored or rated by two to three trained faculty evaluators using the rubric associated with each Common Curriculum Component. Results are presented to each department delivering courses in the assessed component, and each department uses the results to identify and document potential improvements in their courses. Course changes can include improvements to assignments, improvements to the delivery of particular content in the course, or improvements to the course overall. Starting this year, we are also sharing the results with all SMU stakeholders and they are available for viewing [here using your SMU login credentials](#).

It is important to note that we are using this first cycle of assessment to establish a baseline (determining where student performance actually fell in each component) that can be used to determine the appropriate targets for future improvement. Targets listed in this year’s report were inherited from the University Curriculum and were not based on student learning or performance in the Common Curriculum nor set using the current learning outcomes. These targets will be replaced in the second cycle of assessment with targets established at one-half of a standard deviation from the mean of student performance, as demonstrated in the first cycle of assessment, as this is an accepted method of establishing targets for improvement. Going forward, in addition to reporting on the results of the Common Curriculum assessment, we will give a progress report on efforts to seek improvement in the delivery of the Common Curriculum and student educational attainment in the Common Curriculum.

It is also important to note that work was done in this first cycle of assessment on “tuning” or reviewing, refining, and improving the rubrics that we use to assess learning in the Common Curriculum. The revisions reflected in the assessment report are those proposed by the faculty raters who participated in the assessment process over the summer of 2023. These revisions, once proposed, are reviewed and approved by the Council on General Education (CoGE), which may elect to propose additional revisions and changes. The revised rubrics that result from this process go into effect after review and approval by CoGE, and the final version of the rubric will be communicated to the SMU community by CoGE through the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success.

SMU Townhall on the Report from the SMU Internationalization Steering Committee

The SMU Internationalization Steering Committee invites members of the SMU Community to a virtual townhall to review and give feedback on the results, findings, and recommendations made by the Steering Committee after its careful study of SMU’s current internationalization practices, those of our cohort and aspirational peer institutions, and best practices in internationalization in higher education. The virtual town hall is planned for April 24 from 3 p.m.–4:30 p.m. and will take place via Zoom. The Zoom link will be shared with SMU stakeholders, along with the draft report from the Internationalization Committee, in a separate communication in advance of the virtual town hall meeting. We invite all members of the SMU community who are interested in attending to hold this

date and time on their calendars. Following the town hall, the internationalization report will be revised and presented to SMU leadership for further consideration.

Provost monthly lunch at the Commons Table next week

On Monday, April 1, from 12–1 p.m., I will be having lunch in the Faculty-Staff Dining Room located in Umphrey Lee. The “Commons Table,” created 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 look forward to seeing you there and hope you will join me for a relaxed lunch and conversation.

Academic Excellence

SMU junior selected to participate in prestigious Center for Disease Control's John R. Lewis Undergraduate Public Health Scholars Program

Vivian Thai, a third-year biological sciences, health and society, and human rights major, and member of the Dedman College Scholars Program and the University Honors Program, was chosen to participate in the prestigious [Center for Disease Control's \(CDC\) John R. Lewis Undergraduate Public Health Scholars Program](#). This award, sponsored by the Center for Disease Control's Office of Health Equity, funds summer fellowship experiences for undergraduate students seeking careers in public health. Lewis Scholars participate in one of seven programs throughout the U.S. where they receive additional classroom training, hands-on internships, and mentorship from public health professionals. The scholarship covers tuition, room and board, travel and a stipend for living expenses.

As a Lewis Scholar, Vivian will join the University of Pittsburgh's eight-week Public Health Scholars Program this summer, where she will explore maternal and child health, environmental justice, and climate and health. Participants travel to Atlanta at the end of the program to present their experience as part of a CDC poster showcase.

Undergraduate students interested in learning more about this program should contact Dr. Brandon Gray Miller, assistant dean for University Honors Program and undergraduate fellowships at bgmiller@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Lyle School of Engineering professor elected to the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE) College of Fellows Class of 2024

Faculty member MinJun Kim, professor and Robert C. Womack Chair in Engineering in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Lyle School of Engineering has been elected to the [American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering \(AIMBE\) College of Fellows Class of 2024](#). Professor Kim was formally inducted as an AIMBE Fellow during the [AIMBE's Annual Event](#) on March 25, 2024. As a fellow, he will continue to contribute to AIMBE's mission of advocating and advancing excellence in the fields of medical and biological engineering.

This year, AIMBE received a record number of fellow nominations, prompting AIMBE's review and election process to become more rigorous than in previous years. AIMBE Fellows represent the top 2% of medical and biological engineers, including the most accomplished medical and biological engineers in academia, industry, education, clinical practice, and government.

Congratulations to Professor Kim on this well-deserved recognition.

Cox School of Business faculty member and colleagues' blockchain and cryptocurrency research study published

Jingxing (Rowena) Gan, professor in the Department of Information Technology and Operations Management at Cox School of Business along with Gerry Tsoukalas of Boston University and Serguei Netessine of the University of Pennsylvania recently had their research study "Decentralized Platforms: Governance, Tokenomics, and ICO Design" published in [Management Science](#).

[Professor Gan's research](#) focuses on the rapid growth of blockchain and cryptocurrencies since 2017, an important and emerging field that has been understudied to date.

Inclusive Excellence

Second annual Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander Voices in Higher Education Symposium

SMU's Association of Asian and American Pacific Scholars and Allies is hosting its second annual [Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander \(AAPI\) Voices in Higher Education Symposium](#) on the SMU campus. The Symposium is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2024, from 9:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m. in Frances Anne Moody Hall. The event is part of the AAPI Heritage Month celebration at SMU and is open, free of charge, to all faculty, staff, students, and the public. Those interested in attending can [register here](#).

The theme of this year's symposium is community building and resilience, with the goal of creating a better understanding of issues affecting the AAPI community on college campuses and promoting inclusion, empowerment, and solidarity among AAPI and allies.

Thank you to Piyawan Charoensap-Kelly, symposium chair; Rachel Ball-Phillips; LaiYee Leong, the Symposium Committee and the Asian Studies and Asian American Experiences Research Cluster, for organizing and hosting this impactful event.

News and Noteworthy

SMU's chief information officer named to CIO Hall of Fame

Michael Hites, SMU's chief information officer, has been named to [Foundry's CIO Hall of Fame](#), honoring his career-spanning contributions to information technology management. The CIO Hall of Fame recognizes executives who have significantly impacted the CIO or other C-level technology role during their tenure of 10 or more years across various organizations.

Dr. Hites will be inducted on August 7, 2024, in Colorado Springs, CO as part of the annual [CIO 100 Symposium and Awards conference](#). Read more about [Dr. Hites and the CIO Hall of Fame here](#).

Congratulations, Michael, on this well-deserved accomplishment.

SMU Guildhall launches two new student-created games on online gaming platform

SMU Guildhall's Cohort 32 launched two free games on Steam and the Epic Games Store as the culmination of this year's 2023-24 Capstone projects. Steve Stringer, professor at Guildhall and director of GameLab, the studio at SMU Guildhall that publishes student work, supported the student teams that created these two newly-launched games, [Kneedle Knight](#) and [Asurya's Embers](#).

Both projects featured collaborative work with the students in Meadows School of the Arts' music, film, and voice acting courses and featured a live orchestra recording of the games' original soundtracks thanks to an SMU Engaged Learning Fellowship grant provided by the Office of Engaged Learning. In all, nearly a hundred SMU students played a role in bringing these games to life.

The two new games, along with SMU Guildhall's whole back catalog of games, are available on [Steam](#) for free.

Behind-the-scenes content and interviews with student creators are posted on the [SMU Guildhall's](#) and the [SMU Guildhall GameLab's](#) YouTube channels.

Director of Academics at Guildhall interviewed by online publishing platform in future of gaming industry series

Elizabeth Stringer, director of academics at SMU Guildhall and faculty member at the SMU AT&T Virtualization Center, was recently interviewed by David Leichner on [Medium](#) as part of a series discussing the future of the gaming industry. Professor Stringer and Leichner discussed the future of gaming, leadership, innovation, collaboration, and research.

Sincerely,



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

