SMU Office of the Provost

Weekly Update | May 10, 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 four categories: 1) Spring 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2024

Closing out the 2023–2024 Academic Year

As the 2023–2024 Academic Year closes and we prepare for the start of summer sessions and/or well-deserved breaks during the summer, I want to convey my sincerest thanks to our faculty and staff. I greatly appreciate the hard work you've put in during this past year, from teaching courses to conducting research and from supporting institutional operations to providing student service, each of you contributes greatly to our community.

As we have done in previous years, the cadence for my Weekly Update emails will change over the summer months. With many faculty and staff taking hard-earned vacation time during part of the summer, barring the need for additional communication, I will decrease the number of Weekly Updates sent. I will send one additional Weekly Update in late May, two in June, two in July, and one in August before the start of the fall 2024 semester in August. Once the fall semester begins, I will return to the regular every Friday cadence.

Academic end-of-year events

Honorary Degree Symposium

Yesterday, Thursday, May 9, I hosted the Honorary Degree Symposium featuring a conversation with this year's Honorary Degree recipient Opal Lee, civil rights icon and grandmother of Juneteenth.

Joining Ms. Lee for yesterday's conversation was her granddaughter, Dione Sims, founding executive director of the National Juneteenth Museum. Candice Lucas-Bledsoe, director of the Action Research Center in Dallas and SMU Cox Executive Education facilitator, moderated the discussion.

All-University May Commencement

The All-University May Commencement will occur tomorrow, Saturday, May 11, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. in Moody Coliseum. Participating faculty should assemble in academic dress no later than 8 a.m. in the Miller Event Center in Moody Coliseum. The faculty entrance is located on the north side of the building on Binkley Avenue.

For more information on SMU's end-of-year academic ceremonies, please click here.

Looking ahead to May and Summer 2024 Terms

At the conclusion of the 2023–2024 academic year, intersession terms will begin throughout the summer on both SMU's Dallas campus and Taos, NM campus. Please note that each campus has different sessions, dates, and deadlines tailored to that campus.

The Dallas campus May Term session began yesterday, May 9, and will end on May 23. The Taos campus May Term session will begin on May 13 and end on May 28. Full and first summer sessions on both campuses will begin in early June. Second summer sessions will meet exclusively on the Dallas campus starting in July. August Term will be hosted solely on the Taos campus from August 8–23.

For references to more academic calendar dates, University holidays, and add/drop/withdrawal dates, please reference the SMU 2023-2024 academic calendar.

Call for applications: Provost Faculty Fellow for Undergraduate Academic Success

This week, the Office of Faculty Success announced a call for applications for a new Provost Faculty Fellow position. This open position will focus on the priority area of Undergraduate Academic Success.

As SMU moves into Year Four of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), SMU in Four, we will begin implementing several recommended solutions from that initiative's Early Alert and Advising Pillars. The Provost Faculty Fellow will assist in engagement with academic departments regarding the best way to implement two of the most critical recommendations: 1) building an academic alert system using information in Canvas, and 2) implementing professional advising across SMU's five undergraduate schools. During the fall term, the Fellow will be part of a small group that will meet with each academic department to gather critical feedback. In the spring, the Fellow will support this group in developing an implementation plan.

All full-time faculty members are eligible to apply. A full application should include a CV and a cover letter that describes your interest: 1) in the area of Undergraduate Academic Success and 2) in the professional development opportunities associated with the Fellow role. Applications should be submitted to facultysuccess@smu.edu by Friday, May 17, for priority consideration. Any questions can also be sent to facultysuccess@smu.edu.

Three faculty members to be recognized at Graduation Breakfast with Tom Tunks University Distinguished Teaching Award

Each year, faculty members are selected to receive the Thomas W. Tunks Distinguished University Citizen Award at the faculty's University Graduation Breakfast. The award is given to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding citizenship through dedicated service to the University and its governance.

This year, three faculty members have been selected as recipients of this award:

- **Anthony "Tony" Cuevas** – assistant dean for technology and innovation and clinical professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Simmons School of Education and Human Development
- **Jennifer Dworak** – associate director of the SMU AT&T Center for Virtualization and professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Lyle School of Engineering
- **Jill E. Kelly** – associate professor and Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor in the William P. Clements Department of History at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences

Academic Excellence

Placement tests now required for calculus and chemistry enrollment to boost student preparation and success in challenging courses

To gauge students' knowledge base and ensure they are enrolling in courses that present an appropriate level of challenge, SMU offers placement tests for select courses. SMU currently offers placement testing for second languages so that students with previous experience in a second language do not automatically have to start at the introductory level or enroll in an advanced course they struggle to pass.

Beginning on May 1 for fall 2024 enrollment and beyond, students who wish to enroll in MATH 1309, MATH 1337, and CHEM 1303 will need a passing score on the placement test or have completed one of the following pre-requisite courses: MATH 1303 or 1304 for MATH 1309 and 1337, and CHEM 1302 for CHEM 1303. Students with AP or transfer credits that satisfy the pre-requisite courses will not need to take the placement test.

Further information about placement tests can be found on the University Testing Center's placement testing website and the placement test blog post. Any questions about placement tests can be directed to the University Testing Center at universitytestingcenter@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Two faculty members make Dallas Innovates' inaugural AI 75 list

Dallas Innovates, the Dallas Regional Chamber, and Dallas AI launched the first AI 75 list. The 2024 AI 75 list consisted of Dallas-Fort Worth area academics, entrepreneurs, researchers, consultants, investors, lawmakers, thought leaders, and corporate leaders making waves in the AI field.

Two of SMU's faculty members were among the 2024 AI 75. Khaled Abdelghany, professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Lyle School of Engineering, was hailed as a transit visionary in the category of AI Academics, and Corey Clark, deputy director for SMU Guildhall and director of the Human and Machine Intelligence (HuMIn) Game Lab at SMU, was recognized for co-founding BALANCED Media Technology.

SMU-led research team publishes study on South America and Africa supercontinent split

An SMU-led research team has found that ancient rocks and fossils from long-extinct marine reptiles in Angola show a key part of Earth's past in one place – the splitting of South America and Africa and the subsequent formation of the South Atlantic Ocean.

Their study was published in *The Geological Society, London, Special Publications* by SMU researchers Louis L. Jacobs, lead author, emeritus professor, president of the Institute for the Study

of Earth and Man; Michael J. Polcyn, research associate director of the Digital Earth Sciences Laboratory; Diana P. Vineyard, research associate at the Institute for the Study of Earth and Man, and their colleagues.

Congratulations to Provost's Summer Research Grant Awardees

The Provost's Summer Research Grant accelerates degree completion for doctoral students by supporting them while they conduct dissertation research during the summer months. Thank you to all who applied and to all who encouraged their doctoral students to apply. Many strong applications were received and the application cycle has now closed.

The following doctoral students were selected for the 2024 Provost's Summer Research Grant:

- **Eugene Alviar** – Department of History, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Farshid Asadi** – Department of Mechanical Engineering, Lyle School of Engineering
- **Hsin-Wei Chang** – Department of Economics, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Nicolette Edwards** – Department of Anthropology, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Sergio Escudero Restrepo** – Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Lyle School of Engineering
- **MD Shakhawat Hossain** – Department of Anthropology, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Rose Hurwitz** – Department of Anthropology, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Maricela Leon** – Education Ph.D. program, Simmons School of Education and Human Development
- **Charity Lewallen** – Education Ph.D. program, Simmons School of Education and Human Development
- **Arvin Maghsoudlou** – Division of Art History, Meadows School of the Arts
- **Laura Narvaez** – Department of History, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Matthew Neumann** – Department of Religious Studies, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Kristel Orta-Puente** – Department of History, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Thomas Pelchat** – Department of History, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Abdullah Saifee** – Department of Mathematics, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Marie Schrampfer** – Department of Religious Studies, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences

News and Noteworthy

Student journalists earn awards in local, regional and national competitions

Students in Meadows School of the Arts' Division of Journalism have won more than 20 awards for work as individual journalists and for the SMU student-run media groups as a whole. Publications from the student-run media groups, SMU Daily Campus newspaper, SMU Look magazine, and SMU-TV have been recognized on local, regional, and national levels this school year.

Additionally, two journalism majors have been recognized by the Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing (SABEW), the world's largest organization of business and financial journalists. Elizabeth Guevara, a senior, recently accepted SMU's first-ever national award for student business reporting at the annual SABEW conference in Chicago for her work as a business reporting intern for *The Dallas Morning News*. Caroline Corbin, a double major in journalism and environmental

engineering, contributed as an intern to The Outlaw Ocean Project's "China: The Superpower of Seafood" publication, which won a SABEW award in the International Reporting category.

A full list of Meadows' student award winners can be found here.

SMU hosts and celebrates winners of 2024 Beal Bank Dallas Regional Science and Engineering Fair

More than 800 young scientists in grades 6–12 and their families gathered at SMU to celebrate the 2024 Beal Bank Dallas Regional Science and Engineering Fair winners on April 29. SMU has sponsored the science fair since its inception in 1957 and hosts the awards banquet on campus annually. Faculty and staff from the University have always played significant roles in organizing, volunteering, and supplying judges for the primary competition in February and providing logistical support for the banquet in April.

See the full list of students who won first-, second-, and third-place honors in various categories, as well as the students advancing to the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles, here.

Sincerely,

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