

Weekly Update | October 11, 2024

Provost and Senior 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 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 week.

[Submit your story](#)

Previous newsletters are [available here](#).

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

Fall 2024

Recap: SMU Libraries Executive Board Meeting

On Thursday, October 10, I had the opportunity to provide Academic Affairs updates to members of the SMU Libraries Executive Board. My presentation began by highlighting the fall 2024 class of undergraduate and graduate students. Next, I gave short updates on each of SMU's three open dean searches: Cox School of Business, Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, and Perkins School of Theology. I concluded by announcing SMU's new search for the Scurlock Chair of Ethics in AI, a position that will allow SMU to bring a world-renowned scholar to campus with the power to elevate our reputation and impact in ethics within the fast-paced field of Artificial Intelligence.

Provost monthly lunch at the Commons Table next week

On Monday, October 14, from 12–1 p.m., I will be having lunch in the Faculty-Staff Dining Room located in Umphrey Lee. The "Commons Table," re-established 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 hope you will join me for a relaxed lunch and conversation, and I look forward to seeing you there.

SMU HR Fair this Wednesday, October 16

SMU's Department of Human Resources will be hosting the annual HR Fair on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. The event will take place on the lower level of the Hughes-Trigg Student Center.

During the fair, participants can receive free flu shots provided by the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center, learn about 2025 benefits, meet with HR and vendor representatives to have benefit questions answered, and explore options for the upcoming year.

Learn more about the [HR Fair here](#).

Open Enrollment for employee benefits is this month

SMU's open enrollment period starts Monday, October 14, and closes at 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, October 31. During this time period, benefit-eligible employees can review and update benefits through the [my.SMU portal](#), adjust coverage and set contributions for Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) or Health Savings Accounts (HSA) for the upcoming year. Remember that new FSA and HSA elections must be made each year to continue participation, and unless you have a qualifying life event in 2025, the upcoming open enrollment period is the only time when you will be able to make changes to your 2025 benefits.

More information about next year's offerings and the open enrollment process is available on the [SMU Human Resources website](#).

To help you make informed decisions, SMU's HR team will be available at the [HR Fair](#) on October 16 to answer questions. If you were unable to attend one of this past week's info sessions or the HR Fair and you still have questions, you can email benefitsu@smu.edu.

Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Award nominations now open

To support graduate students' development as classroom instructors, SMU allows a select number to gain teaching experience during their Ph.D. programs by instructing laboratory sections and co-instructing classes with experienced faculty. To recognize the graduate student instructors' and teaching assistants' contributions to the teaching of SMU undergraduates, the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and the Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success sponsors the Outstanding Graduate Student Instruction Awards. Two of these awards are presented annually, each including a \$1,000 prize.

In recognition of the range of ways graduate students can contribute to SMU undergraduate teaching, one award is granted to a graduate student whose primary teaching experience has been as a course's instructor of record, and one award is granted to a graduate student whose primary experience has been as a teaching assistant, lab instructor, or similar role.

All participating departments and programs, including independent programs, may nominate one graduate student for consideration each year. [Nominations should be submitted here](#) by the department chair or graduate program director by Friday, November 8, 2024.

Questions can be directed to Dr. Alan Itkin, senior assistant dean of the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, at aitkin@smu.edu.

Academic Excellence

SMU Intersessions planning courses for summer 2025

On October 7, 2024, [I sent a message](#) to department chairs about academic preparation for the 2025 summer term. Responsibilities for summer term administration are split between academic departments across campus, which manage the courses offered in summer 1, 2, and 3 sessions, and SMU Intersession, which primarily oversees the shorter, 11-day undergraduate sessions. Intersessions also oversees advertising activities for summer undergraduate courses, coordinating summer strategic goals and budgets, and working with the Division of Enrollment Service to help students through common enrollment matters where practices vary from fall/spring terms.

Department chairs can support the Intersessions Office's planning and marketing efforts by working with their faculty to identify their department's undergraduate offerings for summer 1, 2, and 3 sessions on the Dallas campus no later than Monday, November 4, 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Maeve Skidmore or Dr. Andrew Hamilton at intersessions@smu.edu or by phone at 214-768-1009.

SMU in Four Year-Three Progress Report Presentation

Join the [SMU in Four](#) team as they share Year-Three progress on SMU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The presentation will be held on Thursday, October 17, 2024, from 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. in the Moody Hall Auditorium in Frances Anne Moody Hall.

Information will include updates on early-alert mechanisms, undergraduate academic advising, technology enhancements, and gateway and introductory courses. In addition to reviewing informal student retention and graduation numbers, the team will review goals for year four of the five-year initiative.

Walk-ins are welcome, RSVPs are encouraged; please [register here](#).

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

SMU names new associate vice provost for research

SMU faculty member Scott Douglas from the Lyle School of Engineering's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering has agreed to serve as the inaugural associate vice provost for research (AVPR), reporting to SMU's Vice Provost for Research and Innovation and Chief Innovation Officer Suku Nair. Dr. Douglas began this position effective October 1, 2024, and will serve until September 30, 2025, with the possibility for renewal. SMU is realizing its goals for research excellence, thanks in no small part to contributions like Dr. Douglas' through the Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub, and we look forward to the expansion of his influence and impact as AVPR.

Urban Research Faculty Cluster Kick-off meeting this Wednesday

The Urban Research Faculty Cluster will hold its kick-off meeting this Wednesday, October 16, 2024, from noon to 1 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Umphrey Lee (ULEE) Center, Room 303 and pizza

will be served. If you are interested in attending, please reach out to Jisub Shin at jisubs@smu.edu so the cluster can have a preliminary headcount for the meeting.

If you would like to learn more about the cluster, [visit its webpage here](#).

Call for applications: Sam Taylor Fellowship

The [Sam Taylor Fellowship](#) applications, funded by the United Methodist Church's [General Board of Higher Education and Ministry](#) (GBHEM), are now open.

The fellowship will fund up to \$2,000 to support continuing education and faculty development and is open to any full-time SMU faculty member. Administrators who hold faculty rank also are eligible, although full-time teaching faculty will be given priority. Find additional information, specific purpose and eligibility requirements for this opportunity [here](#).

Applications are due on November 6, 2024, to Brenna Rivas, director of faculty awards, at brivas@smu.edu. Please send Dr. Rivas the full application packet, including a support letter from your dean, as a single PDF file. The specific parameters for a complete application's components are laid out by the [GBHEM on their information site](#) and must be packaged as a single file that includes: 1) faculty member's curriculum vitae, 2) executive summary of the project, 3) detailed budget, 4) letter of support from the dean (check with your dean's office for internal deadlines) 5) letter of support from President (note: for applications submitted by November 6, 2024, this letter will be sourced and added to the application on your behalf).

If you have any questions or need any support in the application process, please contact Brenna Rivas at brivas@smu.edu.

Three Minute Thesis competition registration now open

Please encourage graduate students working on research projects to participate in SMU's annual [Three Minute Thesis \(3MT\) Competition](#) happening this November. 3MT is an excellent opportunity for graduate students to share their research with the SMU community, hone communication and presentation skills, and earn prizes of up to \$800. [Registration for the competition is open](#) now through November 4.

This year's competition will be held in the Moody Hall Auditorium in Frances Anne Moody Hall. First-round heats will take place between 9 a.m.–12 p.m. on Tuesday, November 12. The top competitors from each heat will advance to the finals, which will take place from 12–1 p.m. on Friday, November 15. All sessions are open to the SMU community.

News and Noteworthy

Fall Research Symposium

The Fall Research Symposium 2024 will take place in the Hughes-Trigg Student Center on Wednesday, October 30, from 4–7 p.m.

Each fall, students in select research and service programs are invited to give oral presentations at a miniature professional conference. The programs include the Engaged Learning Fellows, Summer Research Fellows, Cooper McElvaney Peace and Justice Fellows, Hamilton Scholars, Maguire Public Service Fellows, Mayer Fellows, McNair Scholars, Richter Fellows and Tower Scholars.

The schedule will be posted soon on the [fall symposium website](#).

Registration now open for second annual Exercise is Medicine - On Campus 5K Walk/Run

On Sunday, October 20, at 8 a.m., the second annual Exercise is Medicine 5K Walk/Run will take place on the SMU campus. The race is open to all active members of the SMU community including students, staff, faculty and family/friends. [Sign up for the race here.](#)

The SMU Exercise is Medicine (EIM) program is a collaboration between the Simmons School of Education's department of Applied Physiology and Sports Management, Campus Recreation, and the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center. EIM's mission is to encourage regular physical activity as a key to health, and it's committed to providing resources that help SMU's campus community make exercise a part of daily life for improved physical and mental well-being.

Dedman School of Law faculty co-chaired Sloan Foundation-funded Energy Justice Workshop & Policy Dialogue at Howard University

Professor Monika Ehrman from SMU Dedman School of Law co-chaired the Howard University Energy Justice Workshop & Policy Dialogue on September 26, 2024, alongside Anna Broughel from Johns Hopkins University and Debanjana Das from Howard University. The event, held in Washington, D.C., focused on "Energy Justice in the Energy Transition" and was made possible by a grant from the [Alfred P. Sloan Foundation](#) and co-sponsorship from [Resources for the Future](#).



Group picture of the Energy Justice Workshop & Policy Dialogue held at Howard University.

The workshop brought together leaders from academia, government, and the public policy sector to discuss key issues around energy justice and its role in the transition to cleaner energy. Discussions centered on policies, infrastructure, environmental justice, and community engagement with a goal to advance equity in energy systems, especially for vulnerable communities. Multidisciplinary publications from the project were published in Progress in Energy (IOP Science) and are [available here](#).

Keynote speakers included Anjuli Jain Figueroa, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Energy Justice and Equity; Kei Koizumi, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and Clifford Villa, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The event also featured five in-depth sessions held throughout the day.

This workshop marked an important step in advancing energy justice research via policymaking and building a more equitable and sustainable energy future. The success of this event would not have been possible without the dedicated support from SMU Dedman School of Law and SMU's Office of Research and Innovation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth G. Loba', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

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

SMU