

Weekly Update | September 20, 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 five categories: 1) Fall 2024, 2) Academic Excellence, 3) Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence, 4) Inclusive Excellence, and 5) News and Noteworthy.

Fall 2024

SMU anti-sexual harassment resources, policies and procedures

As mentioned in President Turner and Samantha Thomas' [letter to the SMU community](#) last week, SMU works to eliminate sexual harassment, provide compassionate support to those affected and hold violators accountable. All forms of sexual harassment – including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking – are violations of University policy, state law and the federal law Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

The University provides support via multiple departments for those who experience sexual harassment. Contact any of the following for more information on campus and community support and options, including pursuing criminal charges and/or SMU's internal grievance process: [SMU Police](#), the [SMU Title IX Coordinator and Deputy Coordinators](#), [Office of the Dean of Students](#), confidential counselors at [SMU Counseling Services](#) and confidential pastoral support at the [SMU Chaplain's Office](#).

Additional [faculty and staff](#) resources are available online, including information about support through the [Employee Assistance Program](#). Please [reference the letter for further details](#) regarding policy, resources and mandatory reporting.

SMU announces 2024 distinguished alumni, emerging leader and distinguished honorary alumni awards

SMU will honor five outstanding alumni leaders in the areas of entrepreneurship, community advocacy, public service, sports management, and philanthropy at 7 p.m. on Thursday, October 31, at SMU's [Distinguished Alumni Award](#) presentation and dinner.

Each year SMU awards a group of world changers with the highest honor the University can bestow upon its graduates – SMU's Distinguished Alumni Award. The 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients are Jorge Baldor '93, founder and board chair of After8toEducate; Kelly Hoglund Compton '79, executive director of The Hoglund Foundation, and Hon. Terry R. Means '70, '74, senior U.S. district judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

Trent Redden '06, general manager of the NBA's Los Angeles Clippers, will receive the University's Emerging Leader Award, which recognizes the outstanding achievements of an alumnus or alumna who has graduated in the last 15 years.

New for this year, Caren Prothro, a celebrated Dallas philanthropist, servant leader, and owner and president of Prothro Clark Company, will receive the University's Distinguished Honorary Alumni Award. Prothro is a past chair of SMU's Board of Trustees and has co-chaired several of SMU's major fundraising campaigns.

To learn more about each of this year's award winners, [click here](#).

Research Administrators Day is September 25

Research Administrator Day is September 25, 2024. The Office of Research and Innovation and the Office of Grants and Contract Accounting support research in countless ways every day from proposal submission, contract negotiation, compliance, IRB and IACUC protocols, award spending, effort reporting, research commercialization and more. Please join me in giving our research administration staff special thanks on September 25, to recognize the contributions they make every day in supporting SMU's research mission and research excellence.

Academic Excellence

Update: Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences dean search

Search committee members continue to receive and review applicant dossiers as they move toward developing the final candidate pool. The committee plans to meet once more this month and again in early October to deliberate and recommend a slate of semifinalists for airport interviews in mid/late October. Should all proceed according to plan, we will be in position to conduct finalist interviews in early/mid-November and identify our finalist by early December. We will provide more information about how you can be engaged in subsequent newsletters as plans materialize.

SMU professional schools garner recognition for commitment to student outcomes

Dedman School of Law

[U.S. News and World Report](#) recently published a list of law schools whose students could offset debt with high salaries after graduation. SMU Dedman School of Law ranked number three on the top 24 list for having its salary-to-debt ratio of 2.14:1. With the average debt accrued from an SMU law degree at \$56,083, and a starting median private sector salary of \$120,000, Dedman Law students overall have an easier time paying off debt than at other law school students nationwide.

Cox School of Business

SMU Cox School of Business continued its string of great successes in terms of MBA rankings this past week. The Cox School was named number 25 in the U.S. and 44 in the world on [LinkedIn's second annual list of Top MBA programs](#), number 30 on [Fortune's list of Best MBA Programs for 2025](#), and number 26 in [Bloomberg Businessweek's 2024-25 Best Business School rankings](#). These high rankings, from a broad range of reviewers, are a tribute to our faculty and staff's hard work and reflect commitment to delivering positive student outcomes to each Cox MBA student.

Submit a Retention Alert for students of concern

Faculty and staff can submit a Retention Alert regarding undergraduate students who they suspect may want to leave SMU. Using the Office of Student Success and Retention's reporting tool at smu.edu/retentionalert, faculty, staff, parents and families can bring a specific student to the attention of specially trained student success personnel. To learn more about the tool and how to submit, refer to the [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

Faculty member in the Department of Chemistry at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences named American Chemical Society Fellow

The [American Chemical Society](#) (ACS) has named Nicolay V. Tsarevsky, associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, an [ACS Fellow](#). The ACS is one of the world's largest scientific organizations and seeks to "improve all people's lives through the transforming power of chemistry".

The honor – given to approximately one percent of the 200,000 ACS members each year – recognizes Tsarevsky's outstanding achievements and contributions to science, the profession, and the ACS community. Specifically, Tsarevsky was recognized for contributions to synthetic polymer chemistry, particularly the synthesis of well-defined and functional polymers with controlled macromolecular architectures, and for leadership in the popularization of chemistry.

Congratulations to Professor Tsarevsky.

Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences professor and colleagues develop new technique to uncover compounds that could lead to next-generation antibiotics

SMU professor Alexander Chase is paving the way for medical advancements through marine research.

Using an innovative and leading-edge technique, Small Molecule In situ Resin Capture (SMIRC), Professor Chase and his colleagues have made it possible to collect microbial natural products directly from their source in the wild without a lab culture. This is a significant step forward in discovering new compounds that could lead to next-generation antibiotics, addressing critical global health challenges such as antibiotic resistance. A recent study, published in [Nature Communications](#) by Professor Chase and researchers at the University of California San Diego and the University of California San Francisco, explains how SMIRC utilizes a specialized resin, HP-20, to capture chemicals released by marine microorganisms, enabling the exploration of previously unreachable natural compounds.

Although none of the new compounds the research team found in the waters of San Diego, CA, proved to be a path to new antibiotics, one of the compounds discovered, dubbed cabrillostatin, does show bioactivity and is being pursued as a possible new approach to cancer and heart care.

[Learn more about the study here.](#)

Inclusive Excellence

Black Unity Forum (BUF) quarterly meeting

Today, President Turner; Maria Dixon Hall, Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Advisor to the President for Cultural Intelligence; K.C. Mmeje, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs; Wes Waggoner, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Chief Enrollment Officer, and I joined with members of SMU's Black Unity Forum (BUF) for our quarterly progress report on achieving the goals outlined in BUF's *Moving Forward Together* action plan. This week's meeting marked the fourth anniversary of the BUF action plan, and I was grateful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Academic Affairs. In addition to reviewing Academic Affairs' quarterly submissions, I responded to forum members' questions about the racial demographics of SMU's Urban Cluster hire and discussed with BUF ways to increase diversity both within faculty lines and academic leadership positions.

News and Noteworthy

SMU Continuing and Professional Education (CAPE) earns Eligible Training Provider status via Texas Workforce Commission

SMU Continuing and Professional Education (CAPE) is now an Eligible Training Provider with the Texas Workforce Commission. Participants can utilize Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to pay for select CAPE programs. WIOA supports training for individuals who wish to develop the occupational and job-seeking skills needed to obtain employment by funding their tuition. If you know someone looking to boost their skills and increase their likelihood of securing a position in today's competitive job market, you can refer them to [CAPE for more information](#).

Sincerely,



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

SMU