

Weekly Update | September 27, 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

Executive Board Meeting

Dedman Law Executive Board

On Tuesday, September 24, I had the opportunity to provide Academic Affairs updates to members of the Dedman School of Law's Executive Board. My presentation began by highlighting the fall 2024 class. SMU's record-breaking enrollment for first-year and transfer students, combined with strong retention and an overall 2.5% increase in graduate program enrollments put our all-student enrollment at 12,129 as of the fall census. Next, I gave updates on each of the 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 emerging field of Artificial Intelligence. My thanks to the [members of the search committee](#) and our co-chairs, Drs. Neena Imam, Peter O'Donnell Jr. Director of the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (ODSRCI), and Rita Kirk, William F. May Endowed Chair of

the Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility and Professor in the Meadows School of the Arts Division of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs.

Call for Nominations: New Moody Outstanding Mentor Awards

The Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies and the Center for Teaching Excellence are now accepting nominations for the Moody Outstanding Mentor Awards. These awards recognize SMU faculty for their exceptional mentoring of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Four awards are given annually. Each department may nominate one faculty member; all full-time SMU faculty who work closely with graduate students and/or postdoctoral scholars are eligible for nomination.

Moody Outstanding Mentor Awards provide funds of \$10,000 to be used by the end of the following academic year to support research and professional development expenses for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars under the awardee's mentorship. In addition, awardees will each receive \$1,000 for their personal use from SMU's Fikes Fund.

Nominations should be submitted via the [online form here](#) no later than Friday, October 11. Further nomination instructions and selection criteria can be found in the [Call for Nominations packet](#) as well as in [the evaluation rubric](#).

Family Weekend

Family Weekend begins today. With more people on campus, some of whom may be less familiar with building and/or parking locations, I encourage you to be patient and to offer assistance if and when you are able. To learn more about the Family Weekend schedule, which includes SMU's ACC football home opener vs. Florida State, on Saturday, September 28, [click here](#).

Share ideas with SMU's Generative AI affinity groups

Several groups at SMU have been exploring how Generative AI is shaping university campuses. These groups are inviting faculty to share their ideas and, if interested, to engage further in these conversations.

If you are interested in sharing your ideas or concerns, [please use this link to offer your input](#) by Friday, October 11. All responses will be synthesized by a team of faculty colleagues participating in two distinct AI affinity groups, 1) *Research Focus*: Led by Suku Nair, vice provost for research and chief innovation officer, and Neena Imam, Peter O'Donnell Jr. director of the Peter O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute; and 2) *Teaching/Learning Focus*: Led by Constantin Icleanu, director for the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE); Jason Warner, associate chief information officer for academic technology services; and Paige Ware, associate provost for faculty success.

The Research Affinity Group is exploring the following areas: ethical considerations; privacy and data protection; safety and robustness; global societal impact; governance, regulations, and compliance; capability/capacity development; inclusivity and access equity; promotion of collaborative innovation; sustainability; public awareness and training; and hybrid systems (AI with non-AI) and their implications.

The Teaching/Learning Affinity Group has been working to support faculty in the classroom.

Academic Excellence

Encourage undergraduate students to complete my.SMU Degree Planner activity by October 1

On Friday, September 13, pre-major and declared major students received a task and message in my.SMU asking them to complete one of two paths in Degree Planner by Tuesday, October 1, 2024. Pre-major students were asked to complete a “path to major” declaration and declared major students were asked to complete a “path to graduation.”

This task was assigned to all undergraduates, regardless of Degree Planner completion status, and will be removed on October 1, also regardless of completion status. Although there is no negative consequence for students who do not complete their assigned path in Degree Planner, fulfilling this requirement will be a semesterly expectation for all students as they work in coordination with their advisors.

Please encourage your students to submit a Degree Planner path. By doing so, students will have the start of a plan for course enrollment, advisors will have more insight and information pertaining to course scheduling, and departments will see a clearer picture of course demand for future semesters. The tool becomes increasingly useful as more students and advisors participate.

For students seeking assistance with Degree Planner, numerous Peer Academic Leaders (PAL) and University Advising Center (UAC) workshops, as well as one-on-one meetings, are [available here](#).

Writing Center announces new online scheduling platform

The Writing Center will be adopting [WCOOnline](#) as its new scheduling platform starting now in fall 2024. This innovative tool is designed to streamline the scheduling process for faculty, staff, and students, making it easier to manage appointments and resources. WCOOnline offers an intuitive design that simplifies the scheduling process, allowing users to book appointments easily and with just a few clicks. With features like reminder emails and a waitlist for services, the implementation of WCOOnline will enhance scheduling capabilities and improve the overall experience for everyone visiting the Writing Center.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to Lydia Allen at lrallen@smu.edu or Shon Phillips at shonphillips@smu.edu.

Road to R1: Research and Scholarly/Creative Excellence

Shuler-Foscue Chair in the Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences named American Geophysical Union Fellow

SMU geophysicist Zhong Lu, the Shuler-Foscue Chair in the Roy M. Huffington Department of Earth Sciences, has been named an [American Geophysical Union](#) (AGU) Fellow.

AGU Fellows are recognized for their [scientific eminence](#), demonstrated through breakthroughs, discoveries, or innovations that advance the Earth and space sciences. This honor is bestowed annually to a select number of individuals who have made exceptional contributions over the course of their

career. Since the organization's inception in 1962, fewer than 0.1 percent of AGU members have been selected as Fellows.

Professor Lu and his fellow honorees will be recognized in December at AGU's annual meeting, which will convene in Washington, D.C. and online.

Inclusive Excellence

SMU joins The National GEM Consortium

Lyle School of Engineering and Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies are pleased to announce that SMU has officially joined [The National GEM Consortium](#). This national consortium is dedicated to enhancing "the value of the nation's human capital by increasing the participation of primarily underrepresented groups (African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic Americans) at the master's and doctoral levels in engineering and science. "SMU's successful application was made possible by outstanding efforts from individuals in both schools, namely, Kathy Hubbard, assistant dean of student success and inclusive excellence at Lyle School of Engineering; and both Robin Poston, associate provost for graduate education and dean, and Alan Itkin, senior assistant dean for academic affairs and chief of staff, at Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies.

Thank you to everyone who supported this effort. This partnership will positively impact our students' post-graduation outcomes whether they choose to pursue careers in industry or to further their education.

News and Noteworthy

Center for Presidential History hosting Third Rail Lecture Series

The Center for Presidential History will host the first of the semester's Third Rail lectures on September 30, 2024, at 6 p.m. entitled "Who Gets Your Vote? This interactive discussion will feature Peniel Joseph of The University of Texas–Austin and Stephen Moore of the Heritage Foundation. Each guest speaker will make the case for one of the two leading presidential candidates' U.S. domestic policy plans. The event will be located in the Mack Ballroom on the third floor of the Umphrey Lee Center. This event is free and open to the public, but [registration is required here](#).

The Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility will host an immediate follow-up event just for students, "Beyond the Third Rail: An Interactive and Supported Student Dialogue on Issues that Matter." The workshop is designed to improve students' discussion skills by pulling examples from the Third Rail lecture. The event will be facilitated by SMU professor Jill DeTemple. Interested students should [register for the event here](#).

Leading-edge technology, Digital Twins, growing across SMU campus thanks to the support of the O'Donnell Foundation

On September 19, the O'Donnell Data Science and Research Computing Institute (ODSRICI) held a workshop on Digital Twins. The workshop was sponsored by SMU's industry partners [NVIDIA](#) and [Mark III Systems](#), drawing a large audience, including attendees from local industry. The workshop discussed challenges and opportunities in Digital Twin research. NVIDIA and Mark III Systems walked through practical case studies to see how researchers can get started or accelerate their use of digital twins and visualization.



Also advancing the world of Digital Twin technology is [Lyle School of Engineering's new Center for Digital and Human-Augmented Manufacturing](#), which, like the ODSRCI, was made possible through the support of the O'Donnell Foundation. The Center for Digital and Human-Augmented Manufacturing is specifically investigating how digital twin technology will shape the future of manufacturing. By fostering innovation and collaboration, SMU is positioned to lead in this impactful field.

The term Digital Twin was originally coined by Michael Grieves of the Florida Institute of Technology in 2002. A Digital Twin is a digital representation of an object, process, or service that exists in the physical world. It replicates the physical entity to a higher degree of detail and resolution than a traditional simulation model. A well-built Digital Twin allows the user to continuously monitor the performance of the physical entity, via two-way data flows that connect the physical and the digital counterparts.

"The future of manufacturing is digital connectedness and moving toward total automation – that's where the digital twin comes in," said Chris Colaw, the Co-Executive Director of the new Center and Associate Professor of Practice in Mechanical Engineering. By fostering innovation and collaboration, SMU Lyle is positioned to lead in this exciting field, preparing engineers to integrate AI and machine learning into traditional practices for a more resilient workforce. Read more [here](#).

Business Council for the Arts announces Meadows School of the Arts' Algur H. Meadows Dean as Obelisk Award recipient

On September 24, 2024, the Business Council for the Arts CEO Stacie Wheelock Adams announced the [2024 recipients of the Obelisk Awards](#). Algur H. Meadows Dean of the Meadows School of the Arts, Sam Holland, won the Visionary Non-Profit Arts Leader Award after being nominated by SMU Board of Trustees member Caren Prothro. A luncheon honoring this year's recipients will be held on November 14, in downtown Dallas.

The Obelisk Awards were established by the Nasher family to annually recognize outstanding North Texas businesses, nonprofit organizations, and individuals for their extraordinary support of arts and culture.

Office of Engaged Learning launches First Year Research Experience (FYRE) pilot program

The Office of Engaged Learning is excited to launch a new pilot program, the [First Year Research Experience \(FYRE\)](#). FYRE (pronounced “fire”) is a unique opportunity for first-year students to get involved in research from the start of their academic careers.

Students in FYRE take a fall semester course, taught by Jennifer Ebinger, executive director in the Office of Engaged Learning, and Adam Scott Neal, program manager for research programs in the Office of Engaged Learning. In this course, students work through exercises to understand their faculty mentor’s research, to develop research questions, and to refine their networking and communication skills. Students will also work as Undergraduate Research Assistants throughout the academic year.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff involved with this pilot program for FYRE and for mentoring these promising first-year students.

Global, Online and Continuing Education (GOCE) hosts first Master of Public Policy immersion experience

The Office of Global, Online, and Continuing Education (GOCE) hosted the first Master of Public Policy (MPP) immersion experience September 13–14, as a landmark component of their new online degree. Students from as close as DFW to as far as Washinton D.C. gathered on SMU’s main campus to explore the public policy process and its many complexities.

Over the course of the weekend, students heard from inspiring policy speakers, learned research strategies from university librarian Megan Heuer, and discussed policy with experts from the George W. Bush Presidential Center. Dallas Mayor Eric L. Johnson also spoke with the cohort regarding effective policymaking and the role of SMU’s MPP program in shaping students to be better policy professionals. Students left this immersive experience feeling like a more integral part of the SMU community.

GOCE’s MPP program, the first online degree offered through the Moody School of Graduate and Advanced Studies, grants flexibility to busy working professionals who wish to achieve their higher education and professional goals. For more information, visit the [Master of Public Policy program webpage](#) or contact Eva Chiang at echiang@smu.edu.



Meadows School of the Arts marketing department launches new podcast

The marketing department at Meadows School of the Arts is launching a new podcast called Meadows on the Mic. The podcast will feature interviews with outstanding faculty, students, and staff, and cover upcoming events and special guests to Meadows.

The podcast's inaugural episode features an interview with Professor Margaret Winchell, the school's new director of choral activities. The interview covers Winchell's early interest in the arts, how she came to be at the Meadows School, and what students can expect in her classroom and rehearsals. The show can be found on all major podcast distributors [including Spotify](#).

Sincerely,

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

