



April 9, 2021

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 to advance the goals of SMU's strategic plan and continue to move SMU forward and upward. If you have suggestions for what we should include in future communications, please send your ideas to this [email address](#). Previous newsletters are available [here](#). Today's update falls into three categories: 1) Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence, 2) Spring 2021, and 3) News and Noteworthy.

### **Road to R-1 and Research/Creative Excellence**

On Monday, April 5, nearly 30 faculty members joined me and Jim Quick, Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Moody School, in a virtual Townhall to discuss 3-5 areas of distinction for SMU. Our hope is that being able to hire additional, interdisciplinary clusters of faculty in strategic performance computing, will set SMU apart in these fields. We recorded this session and are letter.

To begin the meeting, I reviewed our academic priorities for the next 3-5 years and shared a high-level timeline and roadmap for achieving our goals. Dean Quick then reviewed efforts taken to date, in partnership with the Deans, to develop an initial grouping of priority areas

He also shared insights on the most recent and anticipated federal research and development landscape. While there are other sources of funding (including corporate and philanthropic) that will need to be considered, we believe that the federal funding priorities as presented by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) can serve as an effective guide for SMU as we seek opportunities for strategic growth within our research faculty.

Dean Quick concluded his prepared remarks by reviewing OMB priorities (as articulated by the

- class education in every zip code
- 3. Technology: application of Data Science, AI, ML, HPC to health, national security, education, economic development

We then invited faculty feedback, recommendations, and questions on this initial list of priorities. To highlight a few key discussion topics:

- o In response to faculty concerns about limiting the focus of our initial round of cluster hires, we emphasized that the goal of this initiative is to attract clusters of faculty in 3-5 areas of academic distinction that will set SMU apart as world-class in terms of research, post-docs, and Ph.D. support. These cluster hires will not be our only areas of investment in terms of faculty hires or other forms of research support for faculty, but they will be a significant part of our research footprint.
- o Faculty also offered suggestions on other areas for consideration, such as the intersection of big data with the humanities, neuroscience, and social justice.

All faculty are encouraged to attend the remaining sessions. Click [here](#) to register.

Thank you to the faculty, department chairs and

My office has begun the process of reviewing drafts and will return comments as quickly as possible so that department chairs and faculty will have the opportunity to make revisions through the month of May.

While I anticipate that we will continue to iterate on these policies across the next academic year, your efforts this year will have gone a very long way towards establishing greater transparency in support of our research goals as well as our commitments in response to the Black Unity Forum action plan.

Be on the lookout for additional information once draft workload policies are finalized. We

- We are honored to announce that Bridwell Library will soon be the new home to the entire World Methodist Museum collections. This gift represents the single largest acquisition of materials to Bridwell at once in its seventy-year history. Anthony Elia, Director of Bridwell Library, deserves our gratitude for expertly shepherding this tremendous gift. You can read the [announcement](#) from the World Methodist Council or view a video with [collection highlights](#).

- o Last week, *US News and World Report* [released its 2022 rankings of graduate schools](#). I am pleased to highlight two of the most #1 ranked schools in 2022. Congratulations to Dean Jennifer O'Connell, who ranked 1st this year, up 10th among the best law schools in America. And, kudos to Dean Stephanie Knight and the School of Business staff and students for ranking 59th this year, up nearly fifty places from their ranking of 105 in 2020.

## **Spring 2021**

As announced in previous newsletters, we are currently planning for the continued utilization of Virtual and SMUFlex modalities during the May and summer terms, with hopes of a return to normal, in-person operations in fall 2021.

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Plan to reflect changes, and we plan to share those updates with you before the end of the  
spring 2021 semester. If faculty have ideas or questions, we encourage them to reach out to  
any of the four representatives of Academic Affairs on the EOC: Dean Sam Holland, Associate  
Provost for Curricular Innovation Peter Moore, Associate Provost for Faculty Success Paige  
Ware, or directly to me.

person or watch the webcast, I hope you will join with your colleagues in support of these events and the values they represent.

- **Reminder to report your COVID-19 vaccination** – To tailor the University’s requests for vaccine allotments each week and assess the quantity of doses that best meet the needs of our campus, it is important to know how many people have already been vaccinated or are scheduled to get either a single dose of the Johnson and Johnson or the first and/or second doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.

As of April 8, over 327 faculty and 689 staff (greater than 40%) have reported receiving at least a first-dose of the vaccine.

If you have already received your vaccine, please remember to fill out the self-reporting tool – *and keep it up to date if a second dose is required* – on the [Mustang Strong vaccine page](#). Your voluntary submission will not be used to communicate to you directly about your own vaccine status. Unsure of what activities are safe after you are vaccinated? [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer guidelines for what vaccinated individuals may do.](#)

