

*Office of the Provost*

July 24, 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff:

As mentioned in last week's inaugural [mail](#), 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 a safe and healthy reopening in fall 2020. To provide as broad an update as possible, my goal is to keep the content brief and to provide you links/attachments with additional information as needed. Today's update falls into two categories: 1) Virtual Town Hall Follow-ups and 2) Preparing for Fall 2020.

#### Virtual Town Hall Follow -Ups

- Faculty/Staff Town Hall on July 17th recap – President Turner and I held a town hall with faculty and staff to provide updates on SMU's plans for a safe and healthy fall 2020. Thank you to those who were able to attend. A recording of the event is available [here](#) for those who were not able to join.

In our opening remarks, President Turner and I emphasized that student choice, particularly among the undergraduate population which accounts for nearly 75% of the University's operating budget, has been an [@](#) or No. 1 priority for the fall is ensuring the safety and well-being of our students, faculty and staff. At the same time, we need to provide our students with the highly personalized, high-quality educational experience that is the hallmark of an SMU education. That is why students choose to come to SMU. This is truly a moment of crisis for universities across the country, and I know we all want SMU to succeed and thrive for generations to come.

operate to the level we all desire for SMU. A refreshed [website](#) to better describe the plans was launched last week.

- Additional town halls – Our next town hall, for students and parents, will take place on July 29 from 10:30– 11:30 p.m. Vice President for Student Affairs K.C. Mmeme and I will join President Turner in hosting this event. We anticipate hosting more engagement activities, focused on particular issues, so that we can invite more opportunities for synchronous faculty and staff input.
- Additional options for community members needing child care – During last week's town hall we had 5 Td (h5 Td (h5rd733 0 Td [2TT14B0st 35 0onal)2u

- Update on student outreach - Last week, Associate Provost Sheri

important to the University's research and teaching mission. To meet their needs, we have worked with deans and department chairs throughout the development of the base schedule for graduate students and will continue working to address concerns that arise. Many graduate programs polled their students to help determine the best instructional modalities for their students. We have given deans latitude to make college-level determinations about remote vs. SMUFlex delivery, including the red/blue strategy as needed, to support graduate student course instruction.

- Additional time between classes in response to a recommendation by the Academic Continuity subcommittee, and based on faculty requests and feedback from the Faculty Senate town hall, a five-minute increase to the time between classes has been approved. We are in the process of adjusting start/end times to provide a full class period for instruction. These changes to start/end times will extend to evening classes as well. Students who attend evening classes, typically a large number of graduate students, will be notified of these time shifts once finalized so that they can make arrangements to accommodate work schedules and child care.
- Faculty preparation for online-only course delivery— A joint team from the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), Office of Information Technology (OIT), and Libraries, with input from SMU Global and Online (SMU GO), has developed two required courses (one focused on Canvas, one focused on online teaching) to support faculty members in their delivery of high-quality instruction through online modalities. As of Thursday, 149 of the over 300 faculty members exempted to teach remotely have finished the Canvas course, and 40 of those have finished both courses. An additional 145 faculty have voluntarily self-selected to

- Standard syllabus language – Prior to the beginning of each semester, the Office of the Provost sends a letter to faculty providing guidance on required language of inclusion in course syllabi. Given the challenges we will be facing in fall 2020, you can anticipate additional language to include guidance on topics such as classroom attendance, participation and safety protocols related to instructional activities. Members of my office are currently developing a draft. Once drafting has been completed, we will work with deans, department chairs and the Faculty Senate to finalize and distribute to faculty before the beginning of the fall semester.
- SMU CAN and community “pledge to protect” – As a first step to promote a safe return, the SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN) has developed a community “pledge to protect” which has now been approved by the PEC. Prior to the start of the fall semester, all faculty, staff and students will review and sign the pledge to confirm our understanding and commitment to our personal responsibilities during these challenging times. Click [here](#) to review and sign. Please note that to submit, we request that community members provide their name and SMU ID. This is not an effort to identify individuals who have not signed, but rather to understand the level of commitment in the different segments of our campus community. This pledge is also included in the student return-to-campus training.

Sincerely,



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