

Weekly Update | March 1, 2024

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear Faculty and Staff,

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 send your ideas to provost@smu.edu. Suggestions received before noon on Tuesday will be reviewed and published the following week. Previous newsletters are available [here](#).

Strategic Plan and 4) News and Noteworthy.

Spring 2024

Mandatory staff and faculty active threat safety training

On Monday, February 26, SMU Aware sent a message to employees regarding the implementation of active threat training starting February 28. This short 30-minute training is a key commitment to fostering a safe and secure campus.

On Wednesday, you should have received an email notification with a prompt to complete the training. Please prioritize reviewing and completing it within 90 days, by Tuesday, May 28, to do your part in improving our overall safety preparedness.

Thank you for your dedication to the security of our community. If you have any issues accessing the course once it is assigned, please contact help@smu.edu.

Microsoft Skype to Teams conversion update

Since Microsoft has announced it will be terminating support for Skype for Business in 2025, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) is currently working to transition from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams. This transition will require SMU to migrate phone services to Microsoft Teams, which can be used for voice, video, chat, workgroup collaboration, calendar and file storage.

Unfortunately, the current desk phones are proprietary to Skype for Business and are not compatible with Microsoft Teams. This will require all employees to transition either to a new desk phone or to a headset that plugs into your computer.

To begin this transition, in October 2023 OIT sent a survey to faculty and staff to assess interest in replacing desk phones with headsets for making voice calls through the PC instead of through desk phones. Almost 200 employees signed up at that time to replace their desk phones with headsets. Deployment of these new headsets began last month and will continue throughout the spring 2024 semester.

OIT will distribute a second survey in the near future to provide faculty and staff with another opportunity to specify their preferred Teams device for phone services. If someone requires a physical telephone rather than a headset, it is important to notify OIT through this survey. In the coming months, all SMU employees will receive either Microsoft Teams-compatible desk phones or headsets to replace their current desk phones.

To learn more about the Teams Migrations project, timeline and frequently asked questions navigate to the [Teams Migration Project website](#).

Call for applications: SMU Impact Lab for social and environmental ventures

The SMU Impact Lab is seeking applicants from entrepreneurial faculty, students, and alumni for social and/or environmental ventures. The Impact Lab is looking to invest up to \$50,000 in these ventures. Entrepreneurial concepts must align with investment themes but may span any stage of business development from idea to working prototype to go-to-market.

For additional information on the Impact Lab and application instructions

Academic Excellence

Search update: Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences Dean

The search is underway for the next Elisabeth Martin Armstrong Dean of Dedman College. The search committee members have been confirmed and we are pleased to announce [the complete roster](#) and to thank them in advance for their service.

News and Noteworthy

SMU Financial Literacy program hosted conference for financial literacy peer mentors

On February 16, SMU's Financial Literacy program, managed by Jennifer Gomez, welcomed peer mentors to campus for the third annual financial literacy conference. SMU hosted the conference where 10 advisors and 40 financial literacy peer mentors attended from the University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas at Dallas and Tarleton State University. This conference provided an opportunity for mentors to collaborate with and learn from each other.

Hunt Leadership Scholars featured on FOX 4 News volunteering at food bank

Students from the Hunt Leadership Scholars Program were featured on [FOX 4 News](#) for volunteering at the [North Texas Food Bank](#) that were used to create 15,000 meals to be distributed throughout the Dallas Fort Worth metroplex.

Sincerely,



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

