



OFFICE OF THE
**Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs**

A&M-COMMERCE

Good morning, Academic Affairs! The end of the fall semester is on the horizon and the new year is just around the corner. With this semester's hard work come many exciting updates:

- Thanks to everyone's commitment, we are a university on the move! Through embracing the goal of transforming lives, there is no doubt that we are on a positive trajectory with an increasing national profile. Just a few of our many accomplishments:
 - We have had impressive enrollment growth, with the highest percent enrollment increase in Texas for Fall 2023. With declining enrollment in higher education throughout the nation, I thank each of you for your dedication to helping our institution set a positive pace.
 - Additionally, I am excited to announce we are making our way to being classified as a Doctoral University with High Research Spending and Doctorate Production (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, R2), having awarded over 20 research doctoral degrees a year and spending at least \$5 million annually in total research expenditures. We won't know the final outcome until next fall, but all indications show that we are definitely a contender. Please reach out to Vice President Brent Donham with any questions.
 - We are now ranked within the top 60 universities in the nation for social mobility, rising 47 spots in the national rankings from 105th to 58th for 2023-2024.
- Last week Dr. Young, a Vice President for SACS, came to the campus to complete an Advisory Visit in preparation for our accreditation site visit scheduled for March 25-28, 2024. Dr. Young met with the president as well as Dr. Ricky Dobbs, who serves as our SACS liaison, and other leaders and members of our accreditation team to share more about what to expect in the upcoming year, as well as tour our facilities and the surrounding area. I am pleased to share that the visit went quite well, and my gratitude to all who participated.
- A quick reminder that registration for Investing in Us has recently opened. We have another set of exciting classes to choose from at no cost to you. I highly encourage you to take advantage of these courses to continue to build on your strengths, talents, and skills. Visit the [Investing in Us webpage](#), or register [here](#). Please reach out to InvestinginUs@tamuc.edu with any questions.
- The call for applications for Provost Fellows came out earlier this week. As most of you are likely aware, this is a professional development opportunity for faculty to hone their leadership skills. Provost Fellows attend administrative meetings within the Division of

Academic Affairs and across the university, shadow senior leaders, participate in mentoring opportunities, help move initiatives from the Provost Office forward, and are responsible for an identified campus-wide project. Please take a close look at the announcement that went out Monday, which includes more information.

- Two newly identified targeted workgroups in our division began their work last month, with an expected timeline to finish no later than the end of next semester.
 - One of the workgroups is chaired by Dean Jennifer Schroeder and Department Head Hunter Hayes. In brief, the general focus of the workgroup includes the review and update of the recently revised (Summer 2023) department head annual evaluation to ensure compliance with SB 17 and promote congruence with the Seven Expectations, identification of processes regarding implementation of the above evaluation tool, and addressing the selection of department heads, assessment, and terms.
 - The other workgroup is chaired by Dean Andrea Graham and Department Head Kathy Dixon. This group is charged with taking a comprehensive look at our tenure and promotion policies. The general purpose of the workgroup is to continue to review and update the current version of the revised policy (Spring 2023). This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring compliance with SB 18 and System Policy 12.06, while exploring additional issues that have been identified for further discussion on our campus.

Both workgroups are time-limited, inclusive of strategic membership (including two Faculty Senators in each group), and will follow an iterative process. I have shared with the chairs that it is crucial for all voices to be heard. I anticipate each group will provide specific recommendations (policy updates) and general guidance regarding how and/or when changes might go into effect. I will make sure to keep you updated. Thank you to all of the co-chairs and committee members!

- My gratitude also goes to the Strategic Plan Updating Committee for their efforts that began early last spring. It looks like they are making good progress, and will be wrapping up their work before the winter break. We should learn more about the refreshed strategic plan early next semester, possibly even at the Spring Assembly scheduled for Tuesday, January 9. Again, I appreciate the hard work of the co-chairs of the Strategic Plan Updating Committee, Amanda Horne and Dr. Mike Tapia, and their team. Next semester, the Strategic Plan Implementation Committee, chaired by Dr. Hattie Powell and Dr. Greg Lubiani, will take over from there. Thank you to all those who are a part of this important endeavor.
- As of December 1, dual credit has moved from being a shared initiative with the Division of Enrollment Management to living entirely under the Division of Academic Affairs as its own unit. Please help me in welcoming Nikki Steele as the new Executive Director of Secondary Education Partnerships and Initiatives, Dr. Hattie Powell as director, Lesly Suarez as assistant director, and graduate student Rakshita Bastola, who have joined

our division and can be found in BA 259. I look forward to seeing the great work this team accomplishes!

- The search committees have been hard at work on the external searches for dean positions in the Honors College, CHSSA, and CASNR. Working with AGB Search on these nationwide searches, search members have been reviewing candidates and are on schedule to select semifinalists for the first round of interviews. The goal remains to have finalists for all three positions on campus throughout February. Much more to come!
- I want to remind everyone that my open-door meetings are on Tuesdays from 4-6 pm and Wednesdays from 11 am to 2 pm through December 20th. I am interested in learning more about you and your teaching/scholarship interests, hearing about your students, or learning new ideas you have for helping our university move forward. Or, just stop by to share an update from your semester, something you are excited about for the spring, or for holiday greetings! Please contact Cynthia Rhodes at Cynthia.Rhodes@tamuc.edu to schedule a 15-30 minute time.

Thank you to everyone for your dedication as we work to finish out this calendar year strong. Go Lions!

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