



OFFICE OF THE  
**Provost and Vice President  
for Academic Affairs**  
A&M-COMMERCE

Good morning, Academic Affairs!

First and foremost, please let me once again welcome you to the new academic year. I know it is going to be an incredible one! I am delighted to see the campus coming back to life and am enjoying welcoming both new and returning students. I hope that after a relaxing summer, your time back has been productive.

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the President's Fall Assembly last week. I'll start with a few updates from his presentation, and then share some additional things you might want to be aware of in the Division of Academic Affairs.

- Dr. Rudin highlighted many remarkable accomplishments. In talking with him afterward about what I might highlight from his messages, he identified the following:
  - It is important for our students that everyone, including deans, department heads, and faculty, become intimately familiar with the list of services we are providing through our Student Ready Center on the second floor of the Library. Faculty in the classroom are on the front line of observing issues our students may be struggling with such as academics, financial matters, etc. Having firsthand knowledge of the Center's resources will help our faculty direct students to the right place.
  - Get ready for the Career Readiness QEP! We are rolling out Phase 1 this Fall, primarily in Freshman-level CID courses, but faculty participation will be critical to the success of this program in future years. More information to come.
  - TAMUC is enjoying success in securing sponsored project dollars at our institution. There has never been a better time for faculty to write grants to advance their research programs. Reach out to Vice President Brent Donham with any questions. All are encouraged to brainstorm with their colleagues, Brent, the Provost, or even the President to discuss and explore possible opportunities.
- As the President mentioned, the Refreshed Strategic Plan has received approval from the System. The 5-year roadmap, including this year, includes our mission, vision, and five goals. I have attached a copy of the text for the Refreshed Strategic Plan to this email. In the upcoming several weeks you will also be able to find it on our website. Please join me in thanking all those who served on the three committees. They are owed a great deal of gratitude, and I encourage you to help me to recognize their contributions. I also want to thank each and every one of you for sharing your insights. Your voices were critical in updating the plan. We have this plan because so many of you were willing to come together. I hope everyone sees themselves in this dynamic document that guides us over the next few years.
- I am excited about this year's [new cohort of provost fellows](#). Dr. Flavia Belpoliti, Dr. Dean Culpepper, and Dr. Brian Zator are all exceptional faculty, who in addition to sharpening

their leadership skills, will be working across Academic Affairs and beyond on a variety of initiatives. Additionally, Dr. Sharonda Pruitt is serving as the inaugural Junior Provost Fellow. This role is for an assistant professor interested in learning more about the university and who is committed to investigating strategies for and providing opportunities for assistant professor colleagues. All four are outstanding members of our division and I look forward to seeing the work they accomplish.

- A lot has happened this summer with remodeling in the Library:
  - As you are likely already aware, the student success teams have all moved to the second floor, which includes The Office of Student Preparedness, the Blue to Gold Money Management Center, and Undergraduate Academic Advising. As mentioned above, please encourage your students to take advantage of these localized services to bolster their success while enrolled here and in life after graduation.
  - There is more remodeling in the library to come for students, faculty, and staff including additional study and comfort areas. This past week we received the needed approval to move forward with remodeling on the first floor of the library. With the intention to commit some of our division's HEF financial support, the President approved not only moving forward with the remodeling but also identified this project as a top priority for our university. The goal is to have the first floor completed in ten months or less. I believe we can complete the third floor, including the Writing Center and math tutoring, in several months as well. There is no doubt that this will be a comfortable and useful space for all to enjoy. A special thank you to Dean Lanee Dunlap who has been a steady and fierce proponent for getting these projects moving!
  
- I want to thank Cece Gassner who has been overseeing extended sites and providing direct support for large projects through the Provost Office. At the end of this month, she will end her affiliation with our university as she moves on to new opportunities and spends more time with her family. I appreciate her commitment to this university over the past several years, and wish her all the best!
  
- Effective September 1st, Dr. Laura Isbell will serve as the Executive Director for Industry Partnerships. In this role, she will be responsible for the coordination and administration of all extended university sites for A&M-Commerce (other than the Northpark Site and RELLIS), as well as fostering relationships with individual industry partners, industry associations, Chambers of Commerce such as Dallas, Collin, Tarrant, Grayson and Hunt Counties, and independent school districts. In this position, she will also actively engage in identified enrollment and academic recruitment activities with a specific focus on establishing new relationships with industry partners.
  
- The Division of Student Affairs and the Division of Academic Affairs are partnering to better address expressive campus activity options for students, faculty, and staff. With so many topics ripe for polarization throughout the country, we are interested in educating and supporting our students as they learn more about the critical issues of today. Amanda Horne, executive director of student engagement and operations, and Taron Green, associate director of student engagement, will be working alongside the Provost Fellows on this initiative.

- Although it has been a busy summer, there is still much to do. Below I've listed several topics that I would like to see the Division of Academic Affairs address over the upcoming academic year:
  - Space utilization
  - Teaching excellence
  - Workload
  - Faculty salaries
  - Merit
  
- As a reminder, deans and department heads are continuing to work on the identified Seven Expectations. These are the areas that our division's leadership will be assessed on in the upcoming spring annual evaluation:
  - Enrollment management
  - Developing a culture of mentoring
  - Optimizing work processes
  - Innovation and relevance
  - Strengthening human resources
  - Sense of belonging
  - Academic platform for the Dallas site

Two additional topics that the Deans Council has identified as priorities for this year include teaching excellence and growing interdisciplinary academic programs. If you have a specific interest in either of these two areas, I encourage you to connect with the dean of your college to learn more about how you might contribute to our progress.

As always, thanks for all you do. I hope this semester proves to be productive for everyone and I look forward to seeing all the great work we accomplish this year!

Go Lions!

tvh

