



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

Good afternoon, Academic Affairs!

We have made it to the end of the semester and as we prepare for the Summer and Fall, I want to leave you with a few updates for this academic year.

- Please join me in welcoming Dr. April Sanders as the incoming Interim Dean for the College of Innovation and Design (CID), effective this July 1. April has a history of serving in leadership positions at TAMUC, including Assistant Department Head and Department Head for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education and Human Services, as well as Assistant and Associate Dean for CID. She is collaborative, insightful, and well-known for being hard-working, jovial, motivated, and efficient. I have no doubt that she will be an excellent addition to the leadership team in Academic Affairs.
- I want to thank Dr. Jeff Herndon for his leadership as the Chair of the Department Heads Council over the past several years. I know I speak for many of us, as I note appreciation for his efforts on behalf of the university. I am pleased to share that Dr. Dean Culpepper has been identified by his peers as the next chair of this council. Congratulations, Dean!
- Also congratulations to the newly selected fellows for the Texas Academic Leadership Academy: Dr. Maria Carlson, Dr. Carrie Klypchak, Dr. Marcella Smith, and Dr. Robert Rodriguez. This year-long program is aimed at developing leadership skills among aspiring academic leaders across the state. Through monthly webinars and several in-person retreats, fellows will learn more about topics such as conflict management, free speech, faculty concerns, continuous improvement through assessment, strategic planning, and the finance of higher education.
- As some of you may have noticed, the President and Student Affairs offices have temporarily relocated to the second floor of the nursing building (Room 220) as their spaces in McDowell are under construction. Please stop by to say hello if you have a chance.
- A quick update on our current academic leader searches:

- We hosted two CASNR finalists last week for the dean position. Dr. Marshall Swafford and Dr. Mike Bradley joined us to share more about their views on leadership, while also learning more about the college and our university.
  - The profile for the dean of the College of Business is in the process of being finalized, with plans to post in the upcoming month or so.
  - Currently, there are over 40 applications for the Vice Provost search. The committee will be meeting later this month or early next month to explore the next steps and possible on-campus interviews.
- I want to extend my appreciation to Dr. Yvonne Villanueva-Russell, founding dean of the College of Innovation and Design (CID), who will soon begin serving as the Provost at UNC Asheville. Here at TAMUC, Yvonne is well known for her visionary leadership, playing a critical role in establishing CID in 2019. Under her leadership, CID has led the university year after year in both enrollment growth and the number of students graduated by an academic college. President Mark Rudin has praised Yvonne, sharing, “She possesses the skills and pioneering spirit that made CID successful,” noting that her efforts provided numerous educational opportunities throughout Texas, and often to many who did not believe a college degree was within their reach. There’s no doubt that Yvonne was the right person to develop the new college, turning the new business model into reality, and being crucial in the growth of CBE new programs. For each program she created, Yvonne conquered the unique logistical challenges and fostered needed collaborations across the university and beyond.

Since first joining TAMUC, Yvonne has been described as an experimental, animated, and invested teacher, consistently working to design an experience for her students, but also improvising in response to the students in her courses. Outside of the classroom, she has been able to utilize her creative skills to imagine new ways of tackling curriculum challenges and ideas in the CBE environment.

Yvonne has also been described as practical, creative, determined, and courageous. She is insightful and focused, with a truly great sense of humor. Yvonne will certainly be missed here on campus and on the leadership team for the Division of Academic Affairs! Please make sure to thank Yvonne for all she has done for TAMUC, and wish her well in her next adventure!

- Thank you to everyone for a productive semester! This spring, we have searched for three dean positions, completed an extremely successful SACSCOC reaffirmation visit, made it to the final steps in approval of two crucial policies for the Division (Department Head Selection and Responsibilities and Tenure and Promotion), and are coming closer to finalizing the metrics for our refreshed Strategic Plan. That is only the beginning of a long, long list of accomplishments, in addition to ensuring that over 1500 students completed their degrees, as well as the many that are registering to return or join us as new students this summer or in the fall. Well done, Lion Family; excellent work!

- If you are curious about summer plans and topics for this fall, a few things I am working on include a space audit for the division, exploring additional support and professional development for administrative assistants, and putting together targeted committees to address our policies for merit and workload. Also on the list is continued planning to be a student-ready university and moving advisors, life coaches, and money center staff to the second floor of the library. There is also more to come!

On a final note, I want to state what so many of you already know: There's something very special about this university— reasons why so many people stay here for years. Like me, I am sure that you have heard stories with the recurring sentiment of faculty or staff accepting a position at this university, planning to stay for only a short time, but years later recognizing they have stayed for a decade or more. Their own lives seem to have been transformed, as they have worked to transform the lives of others. Here at TAMUC, there are so many who not only care for our students and each other, but who continue to embrace all the opportunities offered. Through the national searches, our increasing state and national visibility, and our growing profile, others are seeing the incredible strength of the Lion community and what we know to be true. We care about our students and one another. TAMUC is truly a place where lives are transformed for not only students and their families, but for faculty and staff as well. Day in and day out I am continuously impressed and proud of all the work we do here for our students and each other. We are better together!

Have a great summer! If you are on campus, feel free to stop by our office. Otherwise, see you this fall!

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