

Office of the Provost

October 16, 2020

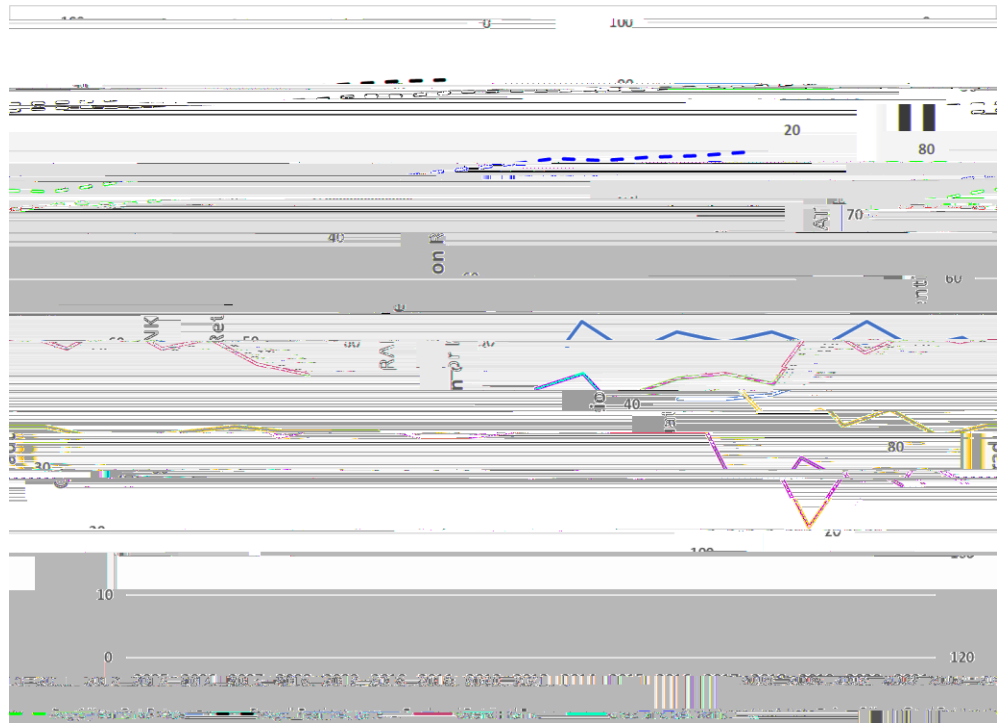
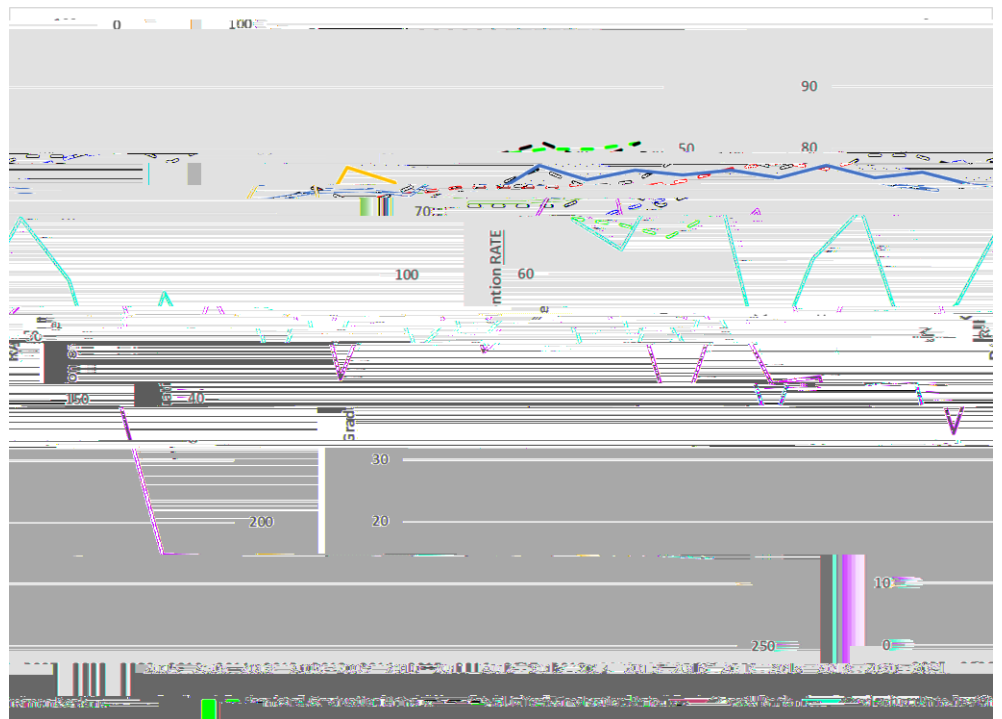


Figure 2: Comparison of SMU's predicted six-year graduation rate and actual six-year graduation rates with overall and graduation performance rankings



When thinking about making improvements in the area of graduation, it is important to remember that six-year graduation rates are a lagging metric. SMU's decisions made in 2014 will only be made manifest in 2020. Any decisions SMU makes in 2021, for example, will not be realized until 2027. Despite these challenges, it will be critical that we continue to find ways to expand recent improvements in retention and six-year graduation rates for our students.

Fall 2020

Flu shots are available at Expressway Tower and remote pharmacy locations – A limited number of flu shots are available at tents on campus set up by the Dr. Bob Smith Health Center. With the next shipment of vaccines delayed, as staff and faculty, you are encouraged to help preserve the supply for students by getting your vaccine at the Urgent Care drive-thru tent at Expressway Tower. Visit this [website](#) for additional information.

Campus health and safety update – As of today, we have 45 student cases and 11 employee positive COVID-19 cases. With a recent slight increase in cases, we are working with impacted areas to make the necessary operational changes to limit the risk of additional spread. All recent positive COVID-19 cases have been students or staff. There are currently no reported active faculty cases. Our operational level remains in the “moderate” category. Remember that our operational level is reviewed each week and any necessary updates made are posted each Monday afternoon on the [Mustang Strong website](#). SMU's recent, and so far, modest increase in cases mirrors similar trends within the region. Working together, we have done a great job remaining safe and vigilant. Now is not the time to let up! Thank you for your continued flexibility and vigilance in these challenging times.

New COVID-19 case count dashboard - As a reminder, last week SMU released a refreshed, interactive dashboard to keep community members informed about key information such as case counts, infection rates and isolation capacity. SMU has identified a technical issue in the automated system that feeds case numbers into the COVID-19 dashboard. The discrepancy only affected the previously reported student cases on October 12-13, not faculty or staff cases. The dashboard was put on hold October 14-15 while the issue was resolved. As of October 16, all numbers have now been verified, corrected and updated manually. Going forward, automated updates to the dashboard will reflect the previous day's case counts.

Investigating new outdoor seating options for spring 2021 – In response to requests from student leadership, the Office of Facilities Planning and

Management and the Division of Student Affairs are putting together a proposal to develop new outdoor seating options for our campus community by spring 2021. The President's Executive Council (PEC) is currently reviewing this proposal and will update the campus once our plans are finalized.

Reminder: Exams, tests and quizzes to be delivered exclusively online in fall 2020 – All exams, tests and quizzes will be delivered online this fall so that all students, regardless of mode of instruction, have equitable access to testing. We are discouraging in-class, paper-based testing because of the flexibility that everyone might need if case health issues arise. Consult SMU's Keep Teaching [website](#) for additional information and support for this important interim requirement. You can also view this [webinar on Online Exam Basics](#) created by CTE and sent to all faculty by email in late September.

October faculty/student survey – Last week, we gave faculty and students another opportunity to provide feedback on the survey. The survey is now closed and the results will be shared with the faculty and students in the coming weeks.

are planning for a safe and healthy celebration to mark this important achievement by our soon-to-be alums.

Spring 2021

Spring operations plan development underway – The [Fall Operations Plan](#) that has guided our campus response will feed into a carefully reviewed and updated operations plan for spring 2021. Development is currently underway on a Spring Operations Plan with an anticipated release to the campus community around Thanksgiving. Through these efforts, our University will remain flexible to the fluid nature of the coronavirus with a clear focus on continuing to offer safely our excellent education and exceptional campus experience to the greatest extent possible.

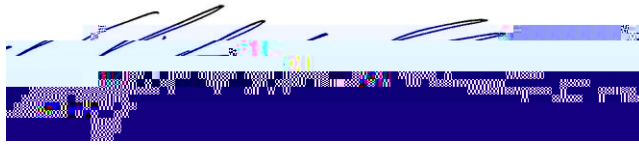
Spring 2021 calendar – As President Turner [announced](#) this week, we will start our spring 2021 semester a week later than originally planned, on January 25, and continuing straight forward without a spring break through the conclusion of exams on May 12. Good Friday will remain a University holiday. Jan Term classes will be also be available beginning January 7, 2021. The Dedman School of Law will start classes on January 13, and also will continue straight through until the end of exams without a spring break. To accommodate graduating accounting majors with full-time spring internships (30–50 students), the Cox School of Business will offer accelerated accounting courses beginning January 15, 2021. The first four days of class (January 15, 19, 21 and 22) will be fully online.

Many thanks again to the [Spring 2021 Calendar Committee](#) for developing options to promote campus health while maintaining the strength of teaching and learning. I, along with members of the President’s Executive Council (PEC), will be meeting with student leadership in the coming days to discuss their concerns with the spring 2021 calendar and will provide you with updates on our efforts to reduce the added stress of a condensed schedule without built-in pauses such as spring break.

Assessment underway for 2021 academic operations at SMU-in-Taos and SMU Abroad – This week, Dr. Peter Moore and Dr. David Lee

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Sincerely,



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