

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Sixty-one



December 10, 2022

The opinions expressed in this bulletin are those of the Board of Directors of the Sul Ross Group and do not represent the opinions of The Association of Former Students, its officers, or its Leadership.

A PRIMER Texas A&M University's Corps of Cadets

Sul Ross Group Board of Directors

TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY
CORPS OF CADETS

Preface

To say the least, it's important to know exactly what the destination is before embarking on a journey! We, the SRG Board of Directors, have been welcomed as helpers by our new Commandant of Cadets, BG Patrick Michaelis who is hard at work on a plan to execute the "March to 3000" decision to grow the Corps and sustain it. A clear "end" has been established in policy, so we now need the "ways and means" to support it. The great news is that the Texas A&M University and System administrations are fully in support. We are too!

Introduction and Context

One hundred, forty-six years ago, The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (TAMC), and now Texas A&M University, TAMU) was founded as THE FIRST public institution of higher education for service to the Great State of Texas as a result of the federal Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. This act mandated that a state college be provided to respective states in service to their people by providing training and practical education with emphasis on the advancement of agricultural technology,

enabled by the development and advancement of engineering, as the United States of America emerged into the 20th Century as a world power. In addition, one of the specifications was to train and provide a corps of reserve officers of citizen soldier-officers (and in 1918 from the Reserve Officer Training Program (ROTC) programs).

At that time in early Texas statehood, two visionary governors – Richard Coke and then L.S. Ross (who later became AMC President) - established, along with the Corps and the accompanying mandates of “service” to Texans, an ethos of transcendent “calls to duty” in support of the US and the State of Texas based on “honor, service and duty.” These were and still are (perpetuated by some great Aggie leaders since) the cornerstone for Texas Aggie former students as the Aggie institution has grown and changed from its meager beginnings to the largest, diverse and one of the very best-by-every-measure academic institutions in America. Former students’ achievements in the academic, military, commercial and civil sectors are all testaments to a reputation which is admired, coveted and to “We are the Aggies, the Aggies are We.” All are manifested in resultant nationally recognized Aggie traditions and the Core Values – “**RELLIS**”: **Respect, Excellence, Loyalty, Leadership, Integrity, and Selfless Service.**

Texas AMC began as an all-male Corps, but such is NOT the requirement today. Being a member in the “non-compulsory” Corps is one of many choices in America’s largest student body, and joining the Corps affords choices other than follow-on commissioning and military service. The emphasis remains on creating educated leaders of character prepared for ALL SECTORS (military, civil, and commercial) and endeavors in life.

It is significant today that the Land Grant (Morrill of 1862) Act’s military training requirement captured the essence of the “citizen soldier” concept so important to and within the responsibilities of our free, democratic system. Thus, TAMU never was, and certainly is not today, a US Service Academy (although we are one of six “Senior US Military Colleges” and produce more officers than any other institution other than the Service Academies). There is no doubt about the long record of valor of Texas Aggies since the Spanish American War, but so is our reputation of service in all the other sectors. It’s also a testament to the strength of a Corps-provided regimen of team building, leadership enhancement and spirit of getting any job done. It provides a very compelling clue to one’s future having experienced it.

Texas Aggie Corps members are amongst the most sought after graduates in America with attendant hiring and employment rates, in all sectors, not just military, approaching at about 93% before graduation. Importantly, it should be noted (unlike a Military Academy admission process) that a decision on military service (or not) does not have to be made until three semesters into the Corps experience at TAMU. And for those choosing not to continue toward commissioning, they receive leadership training in the Hollingsworth Leadership Program afforded by the University and Corps – another great benefit of flexibility and choices to fit everyone, no matter the choice. This flexibility in getting started in an initial career path is a huge benefit in a young life full of formative decisions!

Texas Aggie culture (honor, duty and selfless service) is imparted to students during their rich experience at Aggieland, and along with a great education and the leadership tools to get things accomplished enables them a proud, productive, fulfilled, and

successful life as a leader of character after graduation in a multitude of endeavors. Today's Corps is but a small part of a much bigger student body "whole." But this does not diminish its effect, because without "The keepers of the Spirit" as it is known, Texas A&M University would lose its distinctiveness and transcendence, and thus become just another exceptional academic institution. Therefore, the Corps' leadership development part is an important element and basis for the answer to the question: "Why the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets?"

Proactively Getting Started

Before we discuss some facts and aspects of the Corps of Cadets experience which are compelling advantages to a successful and fulfilled life, we should also mention here that since Texas A&M University is a State of Texas flagship university, application for admission falls under the State of Texas admission and application process for all state universities and colleges – namely "[Apply Texas](#)" which can be found at [ApplyTexas.org](#) on the internet. We emphasize two things about this process: it is not only an electronic application but a progression of tasks which must be completed before the submit button can be activated – and it takes time. So, no later than the student's sophomore year is completed in high school, the family should be started on this (applicable to all Texas universities) process. More times than not, a family gets started on this too late which creates problems later.

Second, to be accepted in the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets, an applicant has first to be accepted into Texas A&M University, since the Corps is a student organization within the university student body. Because of the reputation of the student experience at TAMU, and the resultant high demand for its graduates, the application and admission process is based on merit and is competitive – many more apply than are selected the first time around. This should NOT BE feared or construed as negative at all, because determined applicants, who keep trying, are almost all accepted. And there is an ample Texas Aggie staff of experts to help one with it.

To that end, our new Assistant Commandant for Corps Recruiting, Colonel Sherri LeVan, USAF (ret), is building a staff ready to proactively help prospective students and their families navigate the process described above. And there are a variety of on-campus orientation programs available and listed on the Corps website (such as "Spend the Night with the Corps", and "Spend the day with the Corps") to help families understand everything that they need to know to make this important and advantageous decision. Colonel LeVan can be found at 979 845-3723, and her email address is slevan@corps.tamu.edu.

Facts Leading to the Advantages to Joining the Texas Aggie Corps

We shall exclude here the myriad of detailed information that can be conveniently accessed on a very-well-done Corps website ([corps.tamu.edu](#)), and will leave that part to the family to explore.

First things first - academics! TAMU is one of only 64 accredited American Association of Universities (AAU), so its academic credentials are no doubt among the very best. As

a comparison, there are only three others accredited in the Southeast Conference. Mentioned earlier, admission into TAMU is dependent on being competitive primarily in academic performance in a State-established merit system. So, understanding this early-on and completing the application process no matter what Texas school is chosen is VERY important. BUT it's worth it when considering that Texas Aggie graduates are among the most sought after for employment in the workplaces in all sectors internationally. And the record of fiscal and other rewards to them is confirmation.

The Texas A&M Corps of Cadets, being a significant part of the great "whole" of the largest student body in America, must therefore focus on academic performance as a top priority, and that is exactly what our new Commandant of Cadets, BG Patrick Michaelis, USAR (Ret) has established. Fortunately, he had some help before taking over in his new office of responsibility, for this has been the case over the past several years, and the grades posted by cadets are proof positive. Typically, the TAMU student body posts a 3.1 (B+) grade point ratio (GPR) with over 50% women who make better grades than men. The Corps, with 20% women, posts a 3.2 GPR! And this is accomplished with most of their enrollment into challenging degree programs such as engineering, business and the sciences.

How can this be? And why is it an important fact to consider by families and students about to make this important life's choice? The answers about the Corps academic success reside in a genuine buy-in from the Commandant and his student Corps of Cadets unit commanders who make this happen as their priority every day! They accept their responsibilities and accountability as leaders of character to ensure their subordinate unit members get the best support possible meaning that they, and their unit academic officers and first sergeants, pay attention to this as accessible leader-mentors.

We must add here that the assistance does not just reside in the Corps units! Within the Quadrangle (the building layout where the Corps resides in the middle of the Aggie campus) there are established facilities called Academic Leadership Learning Centers (LLCs) for the expressed purpose of academic support. They are dedicated to studying and preparing for class. Noteworthy is that the Commandant provides tutors for "fish" (freshman at Aggieland) who are in a new, challenging environment away from home. They help with tough classes such as math, English, biology, physics and chemistry. There is a dedicated support staff who administer this support program. Oh by the way, it is OK to take engineering, business and Agriculture and life science – and over one third of the Corps is taking engineering.

We should also note that a Corps of Cadets member, residing in the Quadrangle, can and does walk to classes saving substantial time and expense in a busy regime each day! And the time saved (from the difference of having to live off-campus and travel back and forth) yields significantly more time to study and/or take advantage of participating in over a thousand university sanctioned, available student-run organizations and their activities.

Also, we repeatedly hear families, who are considering the Corps of Cadets, saying, "We are concerned that because of the huge size of the TAMU campus and student body that my new Aggie Corps member will get lost in the maze!" This is a pertinent

point! We also hear parents say (and we agree), “the Corps is undoubtedly seamlessly integrated into the largest student body in America, but the Corps also is sort of a small entity in itself, providing a respite and support to my child.” This should allay the concern. As feedback from cadets regarding the physical fitness programs associated with the Corps regimen, “My fitness changed me as positive – never felt better or more confident!” Additionally, we heard from several commissioned former cadets that, “The Corps experience provided me with a clear insight about being an officer in the US Armed Forces – a very big advantage.”

To families and prospective students, this is important because of, first, the job market recognizes that good grades very much matter. Second, universities exist as academic institutions and are graded on how they accomplish their missions. And last, it is logical that the Corps, being a part of the foregoing, must perform! And they do as a student led organization and the resultant leadership development experience is unmatched. Also, to the families of prospective Aggie Corps students, if you believe the facts of emphasis and academic performance stated here, then there is no better, wholesome and supportive place on the planet to which you could entrust your child and college student than the Fighin’ Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets!

The Advantage of Choice Flexibility and Options in the Decision

We mean no disrespect to the US Service Academies. They are great institutions for a multitude of reasons. But when it comes to a “life’s decision” for a young person regarding choosing a career path after a college experience and graduation, then we ponder the question, “If one is not totally sure, why would one enter into a contract on “day one” after graduation, take the US Oath of Military Service, and if things do not work out regarding adaption or aspirations, one cannot quit except under penalty?”

As mentioned earlier, Texas A&M University is NOT a service academy. It has always been a State of Texas flagship and public university which was originally built around a Corps of Cadets mandated by the Land Grant Act. Change is inevitable and today the Corps remains “Land Grant mandated” and very important to the University, but is now a small part of a huge 70,000 member student body, but still qualifies TAMU as one of five “US Senior Military Colleges.” In this regard, being in the Corps of Cadets has long been NON COMPULSORY (it’s a choice and we believe a great one for a lot of reasons). And the second piece to this, which is most MISUNDERSTOOD, is that, if one choose the Corps, then entering military service after graduation IS NOT REQUIRED (another choice!). Therefore, what this means to families and prospective Corps members is there is flexibility in the choices and options with TIME built into the program for, first experience in the military regimen, BEFORE DECIDING!

So now let us please explain how this all works when your new high school graduate joins the Aggie Corps! First, all new members must enter the ROTC for the first three semesters (in other words halfway through into their sophomore year). THEN IT BECOMES DECISION TIME for some all-good options! Either cadets continue with ROTC training until graduation and get commissioned into one of the US Military Services (all have programs for the Corps, typically about 40%), OR, then cadets discontinue ROTC training (about 60%) and become what are known as “Drill and

Ceremony (D&C) Cadets while REMAINING in the Corps. These D&C Cadets get to continue leadership training offered (not by ROTC) but by the TAMU Hollingsworth Institute for Ethical Leadership – earning a certificate at graduation as an addendum to their TAMU diploma to verify completion. Notably, while the junior ROTC cadets are off at ROTC summer training camps, the D&C Cadets almost all choose to accept internships with Texas Aggie owned businesses! You will recall there are over a half million living Texas Aggie former students who make up the famous “Texas Aggie Network,” many who own businesses and who eagerly support these internships and who desire to hire our incredible new Aggies grads and leaders of character! Of note, 400 businesses are registered with the Hollingsworth Institute and actively support this.

In essence, Corps of Cadets leadership training continues all the way through the Corps experience for ALL cadets depending on THEIR CHOICES about postgraduate employment endeavors (after a time period built into the Corps experience) to FLEXIBLY DECIDE about military service, or the civil sector, the commercial sector, or private sector. This embodies the famous Texas Aggie culture of selfless service while answering the Nation’s and State of Texas’ calls to duty no matter where that may eventually end up. Texas Aggies are famous for and have been distinguished at this for 146 years! And notably, for a compelling decision consideration, is that 93% of all these young Corps Aggies annually get hired before or just after graduation, compared to 57% in the total Aggie student body.

We trust that this explains some important “how’s” leading to the “why’s” of this process; and the experience it affords for great, flexible choices and options, for a young person to aspire to become a Texas Aggie leader of character in preparation to enter one of the sectors (military, civil, commercial or private). And in addition, Corps graduates inherit a support system in the “Texas Aggie Network” for life – a game changer!

How and Why the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets Matters to the Nation, the State of Texas, the TAMU System Regents, the Chancellor, and the TAMU President:

- A&M College and now University was mandated and established to serve the Nation and the State of Texas by the Land Grant (Morrill) Act of 1862
- Texas A&M is established as one of six “Senior US Military Colleges” by US Law, and produces more officers for the US Armed Forces than any other institution other than the US Service Academies
- TAMU was named the Military College of Texas by the Governor
- Aggies served with valor in every combat operation in US history since the Spanish American War with nine being recipients of the US Medal of Honor; with more Texas Aggies serving in WWII than West Point and the US Naval Academy combined
- Regents established a separate committee especially to support the Corps of Cadets with which the Commandant interfaces regularly
- Of the TAMU President’s “Six Priorities,” the TAMU Corps of Cadets is one of them

- The Commandant of Cadets' three top priorities focus on academic excellence, the leadership experience afforded to students leading the Corps, and growing and sustaining the Corps to 3000 by the year 2030
- Ninety-seven (97%) of current cadets receive a scholarship which is the result of generosity from Texas Aggie donors to the endowment from which they are enabled; but these need to be increased in annual value to every cadet, and to that end will soon lead to the establishment of a Capital Campaign
- The priority for the Corps of Cadets is codified by the Administration's policy to grow and sustain it ("March to 3000" plan) with attendant resources including added scholarship programs such as the Patriot Scholarship (full ride for cadets in ROTC scholarships) and Murry Scholarship (in-state tuition for out-of-state resident students who are in the Corps, and soon to be the establishment of a Capital Campaign to significantly add to existing scholarship, recruiting, leadership, facility and recruiting-marketing programs
- The Corps regularly earns a 3.2 GPR per semester which is higher than the entire TAMU student body (3.1); Deans ask, "How can we get more Corps students in our classes?"
- The Commandant of Cadets reports directly to the TAMU President as the leader of the only student led organization to do so as a matter of the Presidents priority
- The Corps is not a military academy, but significantly, a part of a flagship, State of Texas, AAU recognized (only 64 total) public university, which produces leaders of character for all sectors – military, civil, commercial and private sectors
- The Corps is one of many Aggie "student led organizations" meaning that students get great leadership experience and training while at Texas A&M – a principle reason why, besides a great education, employing Aggies post-graduation is incredibly high. This arrangement cannot be without some supervision and that is the job of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) who also oversees the large student Government (SGA) organization. For the Corps, it's the Commandant of Cadets. The element of risk is part of the calculus to consider about this activity. Too much supervision results in it being risk averse while detracting from the leadership-learning outcome. No supervision is not an option since Texas A&M is a public university. The goal (and policy) is to introduce as little supervision as possible which MAXIMIZES the leadership experience result! This requires RISK BALANCE and mitigation, in other words as little supervision as possible while holding student leaders responsible and accountable. Again, THIS IS WHY employers want Texas Aggie graduates!
- More Texas Aggie graduates are CEOs of Fortune 100 companies than any other university
- Corps of Cadets graduates are among the most sought after in America with 93% being hired by, or just after, graduation (compared to 57% for the entire TAMU graduating class) because of attained qualities of discipline, grit, values, intellect, leadership, sense of duty, practicality, persistence and the TAMU Core Values (RELLIS)
- With the Corps providing much of the pageantry that is so admired, "game day" at Aggieland and Kyle Field is easily in the top three venues in America by everyone's ranking – starting with "midnight Yell Practice," "step off from the Quad and then march-in, a part of the largest student section in the nation "yelling" yells as part of the famous "12th Man" tradition, and more

- The National Science Foundation (NSF) singled out Texas A&M University in February 2022 as one of the nation's best in research and development, announced as 14th in the national rankings. The \$1.13 billion total for Texas A&M includes spending at the flagship in College Station and Galveston, Texas A&M University System agencies and Texas A&M Health. It is the highest ranked institution in Texas and ahead of venerable research universities such as MIT
- The Corps is special when it comes to athletics with a super intermural program. And competitive in national competitions? Yes - the fish Drill Team wins the national championship every year, and Marksmanship teams win very often as examples

The Corps Provides a Support Foundation of High-Character Friends for Life :



It goes without saying that the influence of a sphere of close, high quality friends makes a difference at the start of a young person's life, and then afterwards also. It is one thing to talk about it, but another to understand it unless you have been through the challenging and principled Corps experience. We who have can all attest that this is a major factor in life's fulfillment, contribution and success. It is the basis for what "We are the Aggies, the Aggies are We" means and is admired. It cannot be "purchased," and nobody else, anywhere else, has it. It is embodied in the famous "Aggie Sprit" and selfless service culture that produced the famous Aggie Traditions over the years. One of many examples is the tradition of Muster which honors Aggies who passed away the previous year and which happens to be the largest gathering of a university aligned, same day event in the world - an expression of Aggie loyalty and respect! The Fightin' Texas Aggie Corps is the "keeper of this spirit" and should earn a family's serious interest in and consideration for becoming one of us!

To read more about The March to 3,000 and the history of the Corps, click on these links:

<https://today.tamu.edu/2022/04/28/texas-am-announces-march-to-3000-initiative-to-grow-corps-of-cadets/>

History of the Corp of Cadets <https://corps.tamu.edu/visit-he-corps/history/>

"March to 3000" <https://corps.tamu.edu/march-to-3000/>

WHO, WHY, AND HOW TO RECEIVE THE SRG BULLETINS?

It was previously The Association of Former Students' policy that anyone could "opt in" (register and grant permission) to receive the 56 SRG produced Bulletins which began in 2020. In mid-April 2022, the policy guidance was changed so that only SRG members can now receive them. The "opt in" system was rescinded by The Association so that now, non-SRG persons no longer can be recipients. That rescission and change in policy also included three conditions: (1) that SRG can no longer express opinions or include "opinion-based" material in the bulletins, (2) that the SRG can only issue one bulletin each month, and (3) that our "bulletins" be simply typical SRG newsletters. Accordingly, in order to maintain our independence of thought and communication with our membership, the SRG board has decided to abandon the email service of The Association, known as "ListServe", and to communicate with you directly through bulletins sent by email to the Class Agents. The Board intends to maintain our policy of complete transparency and that is the reason we have inserted the disclaimer on the front page of this bulletin. To communicate with the SRG address your emails to SRGPresident@gmail.com

The Sul Ross Group (SRG) Board of Directors (BoD) are responsible for producing the SRG Bulletins. We do so in keeping with one of our four charged SRG Constitution's Purposes, which is to ensure our represented SRG Membership is kept informed in a timely manner.

SAVE THE DATE SUL ROSS GROUP REUNION March 7-9, 2023

A block of rooms is available on a first-come, first-served basis, for the 2023 Sul Ross Group Reunion. Make your reservations by calling the College Station Hilton directly before Feb. 13, at 979-693-7500, or by booking online. Be sure to reference the group code **ROSS23** to receive the rate of \$129 per night, plus tax.

For more information, go to the Sul Ross Group web page link below:

<https://www.aggienetwork.com/events/2023/sulross.aspx>

IF YOU WISH COMMENT TO THOSE WHO DECIDE:

Chancellor Sharp: chancellor@tamus.edu

The Board of Regents: vickie@tamus.edu or jbell@tamus.edu

President Banks: president@tamu.edu

COO Hartman: gharman@tamu.edu

Interim Provost Alan Sams: asams@tamu.edu

VP Student Affairs Ramirez: jramirez@vpsa.tamu.edu

Athletic Director Bjork: rrabun@athletics.tamu.edu