

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Seventy (70)



June 27, 2023

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 leadership. Our intention is in keeping with one of our four charged SRG Constitution's purposes, to keep the Sul Ross Group membership informed on pertinent topics and occurrences at TAMU in a timely manner and enlist their support when required.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Figure 1 - The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands ...

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator...

DEI BAN AT COLLEGES SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOVERNOR ABBOTT



Figure 2 - The 88th Texas legislature in Session.

As reported by Megan Menchaca in the Austin American Statesman on Sunday, May 30, 2023, both houses of the 88th Texas Legislature passed SB 17 which bans DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs at Texas colleges and universities and sent the bill to Governor Abbott to sign it into law. This culminates, but does not end, a long effort by the SRG board to expose its effect on the culture, traditions, and character of Texas A&M University.

The SRG board's effort to expose DEI commenced with Bulletin One that was initiated in response to the efforts by DEI proponents to remove the 103-year-old statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross over claims of racism and white supremacy. We have written sixty-nine bulletins arguing that DEI is an existential threat to the Aggie culture of meritocracy, duty, and selfless service. We have argued that DEI is not about true "diversity" of race, culture, and importantly free speech and political opinion. The DEI version of diversity is about affirmative action, quotas, and racial preferences, all of which have been ruled illegal by the U.S. Supreme Court. The term "Equity" is not about the American goal manifested since the sixties of equal opportunity. It is about forcing equal outcomes regardless of ability or effort. And finally, "Inclusion" misrepresents our Aggie heritage of "We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we". DEI has been exposed as a concept developed at Berkley, CA which weaponizes words to mean something completely different from the normally understood meaning of those words.

Texas becomes the second state to ban DEI programs at colleges after Florida. Once approved by the governor, the new law will prohibit the following activities:

Menchaca's article said "Both chambers of the Legislature approved the final version of Senate Bill 17, which would ban public higher education institutions from maintaining or establishing DEI offices. It also prohibits higher education institutions from requiring anyone to provide DEI statements or participate in DEI training."

"SB 17 defines a DEI office as one that provides different treatment to people based on race, sex, color or ethnicity through any policies, procedures, training, programs or activities. Under the bill, college students or employees could sue their university for 'injunctive or declaratory relief' if they are required to participate in any DEI training." This is a very important provision because it waives the State of Texas' sovereign immunity against lawsuits.

The bill stipulates that no state funds can be used to pay for "diversity" offices or employees. This bill's authors feared the DEI proponents will attempt work-arounds to continue to promote their practices in the colleges and universities so they included enforcement provisions with real teeth.

Menchaca's article elaborates, "The bill would also require the state auditor to conduct audits of public colleges and universities at least every four years to determine whether the schools have spent state money in violation of the ban. If institutions are found in violation, they would need to resolve the matter within 180 days or they would be ineligible to receive formula funding increases or funding for 'exceptional items' in the next biennium."

"SB 17's passage comes after lawmakers approved House Bill 1 — the state budget — with language prohibiting the use of state money for 'unconstitutional' diversity, equity and inclusion programs and practices at public higher education institutions, sending it to Abbott for signature."

The bill's author, Sen. Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe, said in a statement, "The days of political oaths, compelled speech, and racial profiling in university hiring are behind us. Moving forward, Texas will prioritize the advancement of the most qualified individuals and endorse policies that promote diversity and equality for our great state."

A subsequent article by Marcela Rodrigues appearing first in The Dallas Morning News on June 16, 2023 reported that Governor Greg Abbott signed SB 17 into law on June 13, 2023.

To read more, go to the link below and read the June 2, 2023 issue.

Austin American-Statesman (newsmeory.com)

TEXAS A&M SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVE FLAGSHIP PROPOSALS FOR TWO INSTITUTES, A NEW GOLFING ATTRACTION, AND MOVING UP THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TRACK FACILITY

May 22, 2023 Bill Oliver



Figure 3 - Seal of The Texas A&M University System

Telehealth Institute

The telehealth institute will be operated by the health science center and supported by the schools of medicine, education and human development, and nursing. There will also be collaboration with the schools of public health, dentistry, law, business, and architecture. The institute is supposed to improve health care by producing more students in health care professions...an area that A&M says Texas ranks next to last in the United States. The

institute will cost \$26 million dollars over the next three years. Funding will come from grants, contracts, and industry sponsorships.

Semiconductor Institute

And a semiconductor institute will focus on advancing semiconductor manufacturing technology and promoting workforce development in the semiconductor industry. Additionally, A&M will provide secure production of semiconductors for the defense department. The board of regents was told that over 85 faculty members in the A&M system and 52 public and private collaborators have an interest in semiconductor manufacturing. The regents were told that administrators have proposed \$200 million dollars in start-up funding to the state. Once established, the institute will pursue a share of \$13 billion dollars in federal money to operate the program for five years.

Another attraction is coming to College Station's Century Square district. The board of regents, without public discussion, approved leasing land for a PopStroke golf

entertainment venue. PopStroke's parent company is co-owned by Tiger Woods. The attraction includes a pair of 18 hole putting courses. Construction is expected to start this summer and be completed in about a year. The A&M system did not make public, details of their agreement.

Construction has officially been moved up one year for Texas A&M's new outdoor track project. The board of regents approved the request that was made by A&M chief operating officer Greg Hartman. The more than \$9 million dollar project includes a warmup track and an outdoor competition throws area. Hartman was also asked by new regent Sam Torn of Houston about how much A&M has spent on track...including this facility and those that have been torn down...how that compares with other SEC universities, and what are the net positive revenues that the track facilities have produced. Hartman told Torn he would get him that information. Hartman also told WTAW News that he would send that information to us.

<https://wtaw.com/texas-am-system-board-of-regents-approve-flagship-proposals-for-two-institutes-a-new-golfing-attraction-and-moving-up-the-construction-of-a-new-track-facility/>

ALAN SAMS PROMOTED TO PROVOST



Figure 4 - Provost Alan Sams

As reported by Alex Miller of the Bryan Eagle on May 23, 2023, Alan Sams has been promoted to be Texas A&M University's provost and vice president for academic affairs, A&M officials announced Tuesday. Sams will begin June 1 after serving as the university's interim provost since last August.

"I am honored to have the support of Chancellor Sharp and President Banks and thank them for allowing me to serve our students, faculty and staff as provost," Sams said in a statement. "Our shared vision of transformative education and translational research will foster the

learning environment of Texas A&M and propel us to greater heights among the world's leading institutions of higher learning."

The search was internal to schools in the A&M System and facilitated by Executive Searches, which is within A&M's Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness. A search advisory committee for the position was appointed by A&M President M. Katherine Banks and made up of A&M faculty and staff, a student representative, and other university officials, according to co-chair Dale Rice. Candidates could apply or be nominated for the position.

“Dr. Sams’ wealth of experience, as well as his knowledge and affinity for Texas A&M, uniquely qualifies him to lead our academic enterprise,” Banks said in a statement.

Sams first came to A&M in 1987 and became a professor before he served as head of A&M’s poultry science department and interim head of the nutrition and nutrition and food science department.

Sams later served as dean of agriculture, forestry and life sciences at Clemson University, and dean of agricultural sciences and director of the statewide agricultural experiment station agency at Oregon State University. He returned to A&M as vice president of operational innovation.

https://theeagle.com/news/a_m/alan-sams-promoted-as-texas-a-m-s-new-provost/article_d8f2d160-f9af-11ed-

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT’S MONTHLY UP-DATE: MAY 2023



Figure 5 - President M. Katherine Banks

This month, we celebrate the graduation of 11,900 undergraduate and graduate students in College Station, our branch campuses in Galveston and Qatar, and our educational sites across Texas. I have great confidence that, like the half million Aggies who came before them, the achievements of the Class of 2023 will be exceptional.

This year, we advanced important efforts to assist students with the cost of education. We announced a \$100 million scholarship development initiative and are supporting the expansion of open educational resources across campus. We launched the Good Bull Fund to support promising student-led projects that benefit the campus and community. We also committed to strengthening mental health services and support for our students by expanding access and services. To date, we have added 10 new embedded mental health professional positions across campus in key academic locations, and created a comprehensive online resource for quick identification of mental health services.

Aggie Park continues to be a destination for our students, faculty, staff and community. Since opening last year, the 20-acre green space hosted more than 70 events and has become the home of countless memories. This weekend, the venue will host its first music and barbecue festival - the Troubadour Festival . Aggie Park was made possible by the generosity of individual donors and the vision of The Association of Former Students.

In April, we celebrated outstanding members of the Texas A&M family at our inaugural University Awards Ceremony . Ninety-eight exceptional faculty, staff and

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students were honored for their contributions in academics, teaching, research and service. Congratulations again to our awardees for representing the university so well.

This week, we announced the inaugural recipients of the Research Leadership Fellowships, the first of two awards through ASCEND, our collaborative research seed grant initiative to encourage research partnerships across all disciplines. Recipients of the second phase of our ASCEND awards, Targeted Proposal Teams, will be announced in July.

In April, the search committee for the next provost, vice president for academic affairs and chief academic officer hosted five candidates on campus for second-round interviews, open forums, presentations and Q&A sessions. Thank you for your active engagement in this important process.

Earlier this month, we announced the appointment of Dr. Leann Horsley as dean of the School of Nursing. Currently dean and professor at the College of Nursing at East Tennessee State University, Dr. Horsley brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this important role as our nursing programs continue to expand and gain national prominence.

Our national search for the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is underway. Search committee members have been nominated, an election will soon be held to install these individuals, and committee activities are planned for the summer. More information will follow as the search progresses.

The search for the vice chancellor and dean of the College of Engineering is progressing with campus interviews expected in the fall. Also in the fall, we will launch national dean searches for the School of Architecture and School of Performance, Visualization and Fine Arts.

Texas A&M's commitment to excellence in graduate education was recognized in the latest Best Graduate Schools rankings just released by U.S. News & World Report. Our College of Engineering and School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences both ranked nationally in the top 10. Our School of Law rose to 29, an all-time high and a 54-spot climb over the last four years. Overall, 41 programs ranked in the top 50.

The School of Medicine rankings also improved significantly. Our primary care program ranking rose more than 50 spots from last year to 44 and the medical school's research ranking rose from 80 to 64. Rankings are one of many metrics used to determine the success of our programs. Our investments in graduate education have positioned Texas A&M among the nation's best universities.

M. KATHERINE BANKS, PRESIDENT

<https://president.tamu.edu/messages/monthly-update-may-2023.html>

GOV. ABBOTT APPOINTS A&M LAW STUDENT TO HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

As reported by the Eagle Staff on June 2, 2023, Gov. Greg Abbott appointed Texas A&M Law School student Cage Sawyers of Van Alstyne to serve as a student representative on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, according to the governor's office.

Sawyers is pursuing a Juris Doctor from A&M Law School after receiving a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy with a minor in energy technology, management and policy from Texas Christian University. He will serve as a board representative until May 31, 2024.

https://theeagle.com/news/local/abbott-nominates-texas-a-m-university-system-student-to-texas-higher-education-coordinating-board/article_c028d1fe-0150-11ee-a0b7-1b99bc5e0355.html

A&M TAKES NEW DIRECTION IN JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT



Figure 6 - Dean Joe Luis Bermudez with Dr. Kathleen McElroy '81

The Texas A&M Division of Marketing and Communication reported on June 13, 2023, that Dr. Kathleen O. McElroy '81, a veteran journalist with more than 40 years of experience, has been hired to direct Texas A&M University's new journalism program. This story was originally published by Texas A&M Today.

Dr. McElroy, a 1981 Texas A&M graduate, will oversee the program's vision to prepare the next generation of journalists, forge collaborations and work to rebuild community confidence in the free press.

"There is so much trust in A&M and the Aggie core values, and we want to position the planned new journalism degrees and program as an integral part of the Aggie brand," McElroy said.

Dr. McElroy has extensive experience working for several newspapers including approximately ten years at the New York Times where she rose to the position of Senior Editor. According to the Texas Scorecard in an article by Valerie Munoz published June 15, 2023 "during her time there she was part of the Council for Race, Equity and Diversity (CREED)."

She was a Pulitzer juror for the national journalism awards announced in May. Her research includes the relationship between news media and race, particularly regarding newsroom practices — including the Pulitzers — as well as obituaries and sports.

According to the Texas A&M press release, “most recently, McElroy was a professor in the School of Journalism and Media at The University of Texas at Austin, where she served as director for four years through 2022. She received her doctorate in journalism from UT in 2014 where she focused on race and its intersection with journalism in her PhD program at UT Austin. She earned her master’s degree from New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Her thesis was on the obituaries of civil rights leaders.”

The Texas Scorecard piece further quotes McElroy as saying “every faculty member and staff member of color is an ad hoc Diversity, Equity and Inclusion officer at UT because our numbers are so small. I have been attending seminars and reading articles about attracting faculty of color because we all have to identify, hire and nurture faculty of color as we have done for privileged groups.”

Munoz’s Texas Scorecard articles further says, “McElroy has also spoken numerous times about her unique perspective towards objectivity and activism in journalism. ‘We can’t just give people a set of facts anymore. I think we know that, and we have to tell our students that. This is not about getting two sides of a story or 3 sides of a story, if one side is illegitimate. I think now you cannot cover education; you cannot cover criminal justice; you can’t cover all of these institutions without recognizing how all these institutions were built.”

McElroy was inducted into the A&M Former Journalism Student Association Hall of Honor in 2007, and in 2013, she became the first Aggie selected to the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Hall of Fame. She is a founding board member of Friends of *The Battalion*, a nonprofit created to promote the long-term sustainability of the independent student newspaper.

Texas A&M President M. Katherine Banks announced a revitalized journalism program as part of her vision for transformational education at A&M in September. The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents approved a new journalism major in February. The program will be administered by the Department of Communication and Journalism in the College of Arts and Sciences, pending approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

<https://today.tamu.edu/2023/06/13/aggie-with-distinguished-career-selected-to-lead-texas-am-journalism-program/>

A&M HEAD BASKETBALL COACH HAS RECEIVED A TWO-YEAR EXTENSION

On June 16, 2023, Travis L. Brown of the Bryan Eagle reported that Buzz Williams' extension through the 2027-28 season was approved by the A&M University System Board of Regents during a special meeting held via telephone Wednesday. The university exercised a one-year option, which was spelled out in Williams' initial contract, through the 2025-26 season.



Figure 7 - Buzz Williams

"Buzz Williams is a tremendous leader and role model for our student-athletes, and he's a great example of Texas A&M's core values," A&M athletic director Ross Bjork said in a statement. "He's taken our men's basketball team to new heights over the past two seasons with even brighter days ahead. It was an easy decision to ensure that Buzz is here in Aggieland for many years to come as we continue our mission of creating opportunities through championship athletics."

The Aggies made their first NCAA tournament under Williams last season as a No. 7 seed. The Aggies advanced to the final of the National Invitation Tournament, finishing as runner-up to Xavier. In four seasons at A&M, Williams holds a 76-47 record and earned SEC Coach of the Year honors in 2020 and 2023.

Williams said in a statement. "Our family loves the Bryan-College Station community and Aggieland, and we're grateful for the support of the 12th Man. We are excited about the future of Texas A&M basketball and humbled for the opportunity to be a part of it."

https://theeagle.com/sports/college/aggiesports/mens_basketball/texas-a-m-gives-mens-basketball-coach-buzz-williams-two-year-contract-extension/article_b7be7d36-0c75-11ee-ab5c-4f742fd8b27a.html#tracking-source=mp-sports

THE APLIN CENTER WILL OFFER TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Figure 8 - Arch Beaver Aplin III - June 12, 2023

Laura McKenzie with The Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications wrote on June 12, 2023 that Texas A&M has selected key partners to advance toward a fall groundbreaking for the Aplin Center.

Supported by a \$50 million gift from former student Arch “Beaver” Aplin III, owner of Buc-ee’s, the academic center will serve as an immersive learning laboratory for students. “The team we’ve assembled is creating a facility unlike anything else in the country,”

Texas A&M University President M. Katherine Banks said. “From the innovative building design to the function of the Aplin Center, students from many disciplines will have an unprecedented opportunity to bring their studies to life in a hands-on environment.”

The Aplin Center will offer a transformational student experience through new university programs in hospitality, retail studies and food product development involving innovative degree programs including viticulture, fermentation processes, coffee and food science. Product development laboratories and food tasting areas will offer collaboration with industry and experiential learning opportunities for students.

The Aplin Center will include outdoor and indoor student recreational space, as well as retail and food service areas managed by students and faculty through the educational programs.

The project will host corporate training and recruiting programs, along with professional development opportunities. Workforce training based on industry needs will be a key component of the center. Texas A&M is already exploring potential collaboration with industry for internship opportunities as students advance through the programs offered at the Aplin Center.

Primary academic partners will be the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Mays Business School, although other academic units will be involved in specialty projects.

Aplin graduated from Texas A&M in 1980 with a construction science degree and opened his first Buc-ee’s in Lake Jackson, Texas, in 1982.

Development Manager, Architects Selected For Design Of Texas A&M Aplin Center - Texas A&M Today (tamu.edu)



Figure 9- Reveille X

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

In order to maintain independence of thought and communication with our membership, the SRG board has decided to communicate directly through bulletins sent by email to the Class Agents and then shared with those in their Classes. Anyone is free to pass these bulletins to any Aggie, friends of Aggies, or just friends. The Board plans to maintain our policy of complete transparency and that is the reason we have inserted the disclaimer on the front page of this bulletin.

You can contact us at: SRGbulletin@gmail.com

The Sul Ross Group (SRG) Board of Directors (BoD) are solely 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 on pertinent topics in a timely manner.

To access information about us as the elected SRG Board of Directors, and our Constitution and By-Laws, and the SRG's history and what we are about, please refer to our new "**SRG Tab**" (Under "**Programs**") on The Association's website, at: **aggienetwork.com**.

Mark your calendar - Sul Ross '24 Reunion will be March 5 – 7, 2024 in College Station

If you wish to comment to those who decide:

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin

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