

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Seventy-Eight (78)



November 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. The SRG is a nonpartisan organization. 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.

INTERIM PRESIDENT GEN. MARK WELSH NAMED SOLE FINALIST AS PRESIDENT



Figure 1 - Texas A&M Interim President Mark Welsh

Chancellor John Sharp '72 submitted the named of Interim President G. Mark Welsh to the Texas A&M Board of Regents as the sole finalist in the selection process for the president of the university. Under Texas law there is a twenty-one-day waiting period before Welsh can be name president.

Welsh has served since mid-July as interim president and has spent that time reviewing The Path Forward, a comprehensive organization plan initiated by President M.

Katherine Banks. He has conducted many listening sessions himself and through members of his cabinet. In addition, he has conducted a review of The March to 3,000 which is the plan to grow the Corps of Cadets to a steady-state 3,000+.

Welsh conducted a comprehensive meeting with staff, faculty, and students at the Kyle Field Hall of Honor where he explained his decisions and the reasons, he made his choices. He named Dr. Susan Ballabina Chief of Staff and made other changes in the President's Cabinet. General Mark Welsh's organizational skills are on display as he

has calmed the waters with the faculty after a tumultuous summer. Texas A&M is fortunate to have a man like Mark Welsh to lead our university forward.

JIMBO FISHER FIRED AS HEAD FOOTBALL COACH IN SIXTH YEAR



Figure 2 - Head Football Coach Jimbo Fisher.

Head Football Coach Jimbo Fisher was fired Sunday morning, November 12 in a meeting with Interim President Mark Welsh and Athletic Director Ross Bjork. Fisher was hired in December, 2017 in a ten-year contract for seven million dollars a year, and in 2020, the contract was renewed for another three years.

In nearly six years Fisher's best year was a 9-1 record in the Covid year 2020. Since that time his record has been 8-4, 5-7, and this year 6-4 at the time of his firing. Assistant Head Coach Elijah Robinson was named his replacement to complete the 2023 season. Numerous problems were visible in the program including a poorly performing offensive line, two kickoffs returned for touchdowns this year, and two quarterbacks lost to injuries.

Athletic Director Ross Bjork said that he saw no reasonable prospect for improvement in the program, and that he hoped to have a new head coach in place by December 1, 2023. He said there is some urgency because the early national signing day is December 12, and it is important to hold the current highly ranked class together. He also said that the portal opens on December 4, and players are eligible to transfer after that date.

Numerous media outlets have said that the Texas A&M job is a nationwide top 3 opening. This is supported by the top facilities with Kyle Field, the new largest indoor practice facility in the nation, the new Bright-Slocum Academic and Nutrition Center, loyal former students and 12th Man student body, financial resources, and geographical location in the center of the Texas recruiting hotbeds of the DFW Metroplex, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio. Bjork also said there has been unprecedented interest in the Texas A&M job from the many calls and inquiries from top Power Five coaches around the country. He also said the \$76 million buyout of the remainder of Fisher's contract will be shared by the 12th Man Foundation and the Athletic Department. No university funds will be used.

Elijah Robinson and the staff will coach the Aggies in the final two games against LSU in Baton Rouge, and yet to be named opponent in a bowl game.

BUZZ ALDRIN HONORED AT TEXAS A&M RELLIS



Figure 3 - "Buzz" Aldrin, Chancellor John Sharp, and Regent Bill Mahomes

As reported by the Texas A&M University Communications Department on November 13, 2023, a statue was unveiled at the RELLIS campus to honor former Astronaut Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. known as "Buzz" Aldrin who flew Apollo 11 with Neil Armstrong and Michael Collins. Aldrin was the second man to walk on the moon immediately following Armstrong to step down from the Lunar Lander

As a 22-year-old second lieutenant in 1952, Aldrin trained to become a pilot at the former Bryann AFB as he prepared for his Air Force career. Aldrin flew 66 combat missions in Korea, and he shot down two Mig-15 fighters. He returned to Bryan AFB in 1954 as a flight instructor before being selected for the space program. "Aldrin witnessed the unveiling of a bronze statue in his honor: an eight-and-one-half-foot likeness of the young fighter pilot and a depiction of the Apollo 11 flight path that he flew with Neil Armstrong and Michael Collins." The ceremony was witnessed by

approximately 200 people.

"This is a meaningful day for me, and one I will never forget," Aldrin told the crowd of 200 well-wishers outside on a rainy afternoon. Age 93 and recovering from pneumonia, Aldrin asked a longtime friend to finish his remarks. The statue "represents all those who climbed into a cockpit to do battle and those who were at home praying for them," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Robert Charles, speaking for Aldrin. "It represents those who fly for this country and rise to defend freedom against whatever and whoever threatens us."

John Sharp, Chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, described Aldrin as a "courageous patriot" and "genuine hero."

The piece also reported "Sharp recalled Aldrin's touch of humor when Mission Control told the Apollo 11 landing craft, the Eagle, that it was cleared for liftoff from the lunar surface."

"Roger, understand," Aldrin quipped at the time. "We're number one on the runway."

Sharp told Aldrin: "You are number one on America's runway, a man of courage and passion, a living testament to what is possible when this nation aims high for all mankind."

BUZZ WILLIAMS EMBRACES AGGIE LEADERSHIP TRADITION



Figure 4 - Texas A&M Head Basketball Coach Buzz Williams.

Texas A&M University traces a long history of producing leaders back to its founding history. Training tomorrow's leaders has been a hallmark tradition of the Aggies in all phases of the military, government, and business for nearly one-hundred seventy-five years. Texas A&M basketball coach Buzz Williams has embraced that tradition by becoming an instructor in the university's Workshop in Leadership Education in partnership with the Hollingsworth Center for Ethical leadership in the Corps of Cadets.

As reported in a piece written by Cody Hutchins, Texas A&M University Marketing & Communications and published in Texas A&M Today on November 16, 2023, "The world needs as many good leaders as possible," Williams said. "Anything I can do from the chair that I sit in to potentially contribute an inkling of that, that's what I want to do."

"I just hope maybe that one thing I'll say, because I'm probably saying it in a different way than the way they've heard, maybe it will resonate, maybe it will help them on their path of leadership," Williams said.

Hutchins further reported that the athletic department and the Corps of Cadets have a long history of collaborative efforts. Former baseball coach Rob Childress spoke to the Corps of Cadets in its leadership classes, and former football coaches R. C. Slocumb and Mike Sherman did so as well. Williams has graciously agreed to teach the first lesson each month.

Hutchins also reports that this program is particularly important now because most members of the Corps of Cadets will not enter military service, but instead will enter government service business. They can leverage their Corps experience to develop the leadership skills necessary for success in serving our state and nation.

Producing tomorrow's leaders is a core value of Texas A&M and continues at a time when ethical leadership for our state and nation is needed as never before.

BUSH POINTS OF LIGHT FOUNDATION HONORS AGGIE WOMEN



Figure 5 - Rebecca Taylor and Chrystina Taylor '98.

As reported in a press release from Chancellor John Sharp, the George H.W. Bush Points of Light Foundation honored with an award for two exceptional Aggie women at its gal in Washington, D.C. in November.

The piece reported that Rebecca Taylor, 21, a biomedical engineering undergraduate at A&M and her mother, Chrystyn Taylor '98 founded a charity, Rebecca's Wish to support medical research for pediatric pancreatitis which she contracted at age 7.

The piece further reported "Rebecca's Wish has raised over \$3 million, funded pediatrician training, and started support programs for children across the United States who are fighting the debilitating disease. Rebecca has endured 1,500 days in hospitals and 150 surgeries. She continues her schooling and charitable work despite ongoing health challenges. Her goal is to become a researcher to improve treatment for pancreatitis sufferers."

Even though she has no formal medical training, Chrystyn has become a highly sought medical advisor and serves on the board of the National Pancreatitis Foundation while also managing the charity.

"As Texans, this award is especially meaningful given our lifelong admiration for President Bush," Chrystyn said. "This recognition acknowledges that great purpose can evolve from great adversity."

Rebecca and Chrystyn are further examples of Aggies showing leadership in diverse fields.

To read more, click on the link below:

<https://sharparoundtexas.com/rebeccas-wish/>

TEXAS A&M TABS MIKE ELKO AS THE NEW HEAD FOOTBALL COACH



Figure 6 - New Texas A&M Head Football Coach Mike Elko.

Athletic Director Ross Bjork announced Sunday night, November 26, 2023, that Mike Elko has been selected to become the 30th head football coach at Texas A&M. The selection follows a two-week search and evaluation of potential candidates. In the meantime, Acting Head Coach Elijah

Robinson has led the program to the final two games of the regular season.

Mike Elko previously served as the defensive coordinator for four years under former head coach Jimbo Fisher at A&M. Elko left A&M in December 2021 to become the head football coach at Duke University where in two seasons he compiled a record of 16-9. His Aggie defenses were ranked ninth in the country in 2020, and 14th in the country in 2021. Elko is well-known at A&M and was considered a top candidate to replace Fisher when the job became open.

Elko is 46 years old and has experience coaching defenses at Wake Forest and Notre Dame after stints at smaller programs. He is highly regarded as very intelligent and well-organized. He is expected to retain the beloved Elijah Robinson on his new staff. Over the next month he will be interviewing and selecting his new coaching staff. Most likely Elijah Robinson will continue to coach the team for an expected bowl game.

Becoming head coach of an immense program such as that at Texas A&M is a massive job which includes not only coaching football in the SEC, but developing and managing a recruiting staff, a nutrition and weight training program the NIL and transfer portal for players, and the academic and tutoring staff. Managing the administrative staff that plans travel arrangements for road games along with the training and medical staff are all part of the job of a head football coach. So, Coach Elko will have his schedule filled from dawn till dusk for the next few weeks.

Coach Elko grew up in South Brunswick, NJ, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania where he played basketball, baseball, and safety for the Ivy League championship football team.

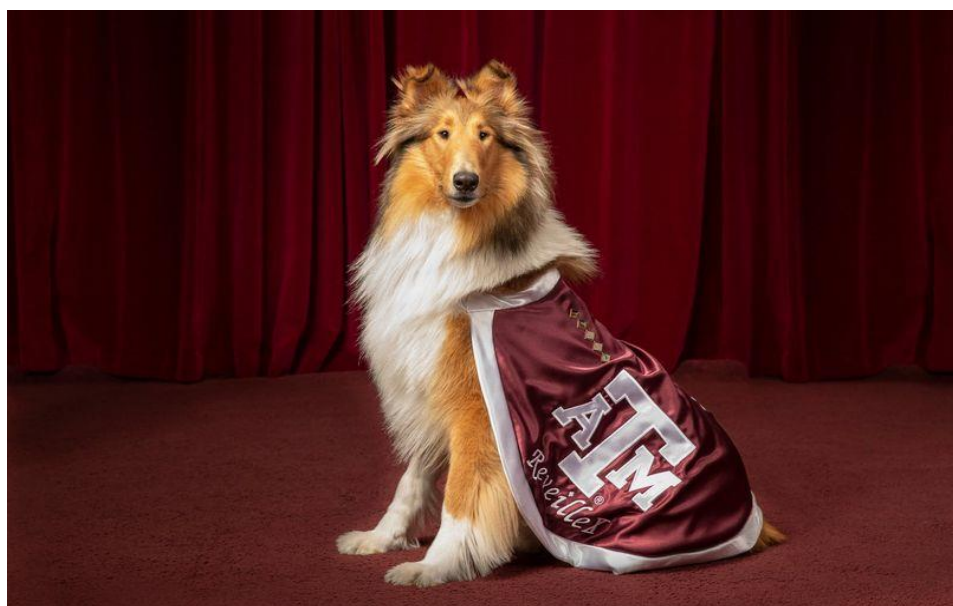


Figure 7 - Reveille X – April 2021 – Texas A&M Today – Jesse Everett/Texas A&M Marketing & Communications

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

The Hilton Hotel room block is open and ready to book room nights. The Group Code is ROSS24 and the cut-off date to make reservations is February 12, 2024.

**Hilton Hotel - 801 University Dr E, College Station, TX 77840
Phone (979) 693-7500**

If you wish to comment to those who decide:

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