

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Eighty-Five (85)



June 6, 2024

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.

### UPDATE ON BONFIRE



*Figure 1 - Bonfire Stack*

From the Office of the President – Texas  
A&M University

**GENERAL (RET.) MARK A. WELSH III**  
PRESIDENT, June 4, 2024

Members of the Aggie Family,

As you may recall, we formed a special exploratory committee last fall to study and recommend ways to appropriately commemorate the return of the university's

storied football rivalry with The University of Texas at Austin (t.u.).

Among the committee's recommendations was to reinstitute the annual Bonfire tradition with an engineer-designed, contractor-built bonfire on West Campus. However, after careful consideration, I have decided it is not in the best interest of Texas A&M and the Aggie Family to bring Bonfire back to campus. I heard from many of you, as well as former students and friends of the university on this topic, and I thank you for your honest, thoughtful feedback. While the input varied, the majority of those who reached out were not in favor of reinstituting Bonfire. Among those who supported bringing Bonfire back, most highlighted the bonding experience and leadership and organizational skills learned by student body participants during the cut and build phases of Bonfire. Therefore, if students weren't organizing, leading, and building the Bonfire, then they didn't think we should bring it back. The committee was also clear in its position that the only legally viable option for the return of the campus Bonfire was for

it to be an engineer-designed, contractor-built project. After careful consideration, I decided that Bonfire, both a wonderful and tragic part of Aggie history, should remain in our treasured past.

The lives of the 12 Aggies lost and 27 injured on Nov. 18, 1999, are commemorated at the Bonfire Memorial, and that sacred place will remain the centerpiece of how we remember the beloved tradition and the dedication of those involved in the tragic 1999 collapse. I look forward to joining many of you at Bonfire Remembrance this year at 2:42 a.m. on Nov. 18 to honor our fallen Aggies on the 25th anniversary of their loss. We will continue to hold them and their families close at that event and always.

*General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III, President*

To read the full story go to: Bonfire Is Not Returning To The Texas A&M Campus - WTAW | 1620AM & 94.5FM

## **TEXAS A&M AWARDS MORE THAN 12,000 DIPLOMAS IN MAY '24**

Texas A&M University Office of Provost Communications MAY 3, 2024



*Figure 2 - May 2024 Graduation*

Texas A&M University awarded approximately 12,400 degrees to spring graduates at commencement ceremonies this month. Commencements were held at Reed Arena on May 9, 10 and 11 for undergraduate, master's and doctoral students. A military commissioning ceremony for members of the Corps of Cadets was set for the 2 p.m. Friday ceremony.

Texas A&M To Award More Than 12,000 Diplomas At Spring Commencements - Texas A&M Today ([tamu.edu](https://www.tamu.edu))

## CORPS OF CADETS COMMISSIONS LARGEST CLASS OF MILITARY OFFICERS IN NEARLY 40 YEARS

By Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets MAY 9, 2024



Figure 3 - May 2024 Commissioning

The Texas A&M Corps of Cadets commissioned 165 cadets into the U.S. armed forces on May 9<sup>th</sup> — an indication of the confidence the Department of Defense has in the Corps to produce some of the nation's finest military officers. These newly commissioned officers will enter the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Space Force as second lieutenants and ensigns.

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Patrick R. Michaelis, commandant of the Corps of Cadets, administered the oath of office to the cadets during Friday's commencement ceremony at Reed Arena.

"Just as countless Aggies who have gone before them, these young men and women will step forward and swear to support and defend the constitution of the United States of America. Commissioning new officers into our military is a tradition that is as old as the Corps and Texas A&M", Michaelis said.

Texas A&M has routinely commissioned more officers into the military than any other university in the nation, except for the military academies.

Texas A&M Corps of Cadets To Commission Largest Class Of Military Officers In Nearly 40 Years - Texas A&M Today (tamu.edu)

## SMALL NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO BE BUILT ON RELLIS CAMPUS



Figure 4 - John Sharp and Dr. Sean McDeavitt

May 29, 2024 - WTAW - Bill Oliver

System chancellor John Sharp told reporters Wednesday (May 29) that they have targeted locations to build four or five reactors from different manufacturers that would take care of rising electrical demand on a permanent basis.

Sharp says they have been working on this project for more than six months. He says his interest came after looking at power projections for companies involved in artificial intelligence.

Joining the chancellor at Wednesday's news conference was Dr. Sean McDeavitt, a system associate vice chancellor who heads the National Laboratories Office. McDeavitt and Sharp both brought up the student involvement in this project. McDeavitt said the student education component is a key element in the request for information (RFI) process that has started.

Sharp said companies can respond to the system's RFI announcement for three

weeks. That will be followed by a 30-day period for requests for proposals (RFP). After the RFP's are reviewed by a committee, Sharp says recommendations will go to the board of regents for final action.

Wednesday's announcement comes the week after Sharp said the system was taking proposals to build power plants on system properties around the state to provide electricity on a short-term basis. Sharp said the Texas A&M System is committed to developing power generation capabilities to ensure reliable electrical power provision to the RELLIS campus.

"This effort at Texas A&M-RELLIS will usher in a new era of sustainable and reliable power generation," Sharp said.

Representatives from the System and from the companies hope to stand up operational reactors within the next five to seven years. To read more go to: [Small Nuclear Power Plants To Be Built On The RELLIS Campus - WTAW | 1620AM & 94.5FM](#)

## **TEXAS A&M CADETS WIN SANDHURST TROPHY FOR 2<sup>ND</sup> STRAIGHT YEAR**

Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications MAY 1, 2024



*Figure 5 - Cadets Win Sandhurst Trophy*

Texas A&M University's Army ROTC program recently claimed first place among ROTC teams in the 55th Sandhurst Military Skills Competition at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. It is the second straight year the Texas A&M team won the ROTC Cup following the two-day competition of 48 teams from service academies, ROTC programs and international militaries.

"I am so proud of the Aggies for coming out here and giving it their all," said Maj. Gen. Antonio Munera, commanding general of U.S.

Army Cadet Command. "The team's performance on the international stage demonstrates their commitment to leadership excellence." This year's team, which is part of Texas A&M University's Corps of Cadets, is led by Nicholas Nolan '24, an English major from Kingwood, Texas.

Teams qualified for the championship event through regional Ranger Challenge competitions open to Army ROTC programs around the nation. The West Point competition, which was held April 26-27, tested the cadets through fitness events, long-distance movements over rough terrain, small boat movements, and marksmanship and medical skill challenges, among other tasks.

In addition to winning the ROTC Cup, the Texas A&M team placed fourth in the overall international competition for the second year in a row.

"What got us here was consistency in our training plan and a lot of dedication



and hard work from our team, along with so many hours of volunteering from our coaches and cadre,” said Nolan, the team’s captain. “It’s an honor to represent Texas A&M. ... It’s a fantastic school, and we have the best of the best of the student body represented in the Corps of Cadets.”

Texas A&M Cadets Win Sandhurst Trophy For Second Straight Year - Texas A&M Today (tamu.edu)



*Figure 6 - 4141 Locomotive*

## **BUSH LIBRARY UNVEILS 4141 LOCOMOTIVE**

Anna Maynard - May. 2, 2024

The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum unveiled the former President’s 4141 locomotive in its new home Thursday. The locomotive joined the former president’s retired Marine One helicopter in the museum’s new

addition, the Marine One/4141 Locomotive Pavilion. The train was renamed in honor of President Bush in 2005, painted to match Air Force One. In 2018, the same train led the former president’s funeral procession to his final resting place in College Station.

His lifelong love of trains made the addition to the museum particularly special ahead of the library and museum’s 41@100 celebration on what would have been President Bush’s 100th birthday. “He would treat this building, and everything else as an iconic building where people can come and learn. So, this is a special place. This is a very special train, but it’s special because President Bush was a special person,” Andy Card, CEO of the George and Barbara Bush Foundation and longtime member of President Bush’s staff, said. The pavilion will be open to the public on June 13.

George Bush Presidential Library & Museum unveils 4141 locomotive in new addition (kbtv.com)



*Figure 7 - NCAA*

## **HOW NEAR IS PAYING COLLEGE ATHLETES AND WHERE DOES TEXAS A&M STAND?**

As reported in an Associate Press article written by D. Russo on May 7, 2024

Paying college athletes may be closer than we think. An Arizona swimmer named Grant House has filed what has become another class action lawsuit against the NCAA. The suit alleges billions of dollars in compensation is owed to athletes going back to 2016 for name, image, and likeness (NIL) and media rights paid to the NCAA and the wealthiest conferences including the Big 10, Big XII, SEC and ACC predominately for basketball and football.

Settlements being discussed run as high as \$4 billion in damages. Many questions are raised by the lawsuit and the implications are huge. Most of the revenues come from football and men's basketball. So, would the settlement address federal Title IX requirements for gender equity for men's and women's sports? Who will make the final decision for the plaintiffs in the settlement? Since the four conferences will pay it is assumed that the presidential boards of the four conferences and the NCAA board of governors will make the call.

How many NCAA schools actually earn a profit from their athletic programs? According to a recent NCAA study, only 12% earn a profit and the profit all comes from football and men's basketball. The "Olympic sports" are virtually all funded by the revenue from men's basketball and football. How many colleges can afford to continue to fund the Olympic sports when confronted with these additional costs? In the present world of uncertainty many of the non-revenue sports will be dropped.

NIL is already creating a separation among the haves and have-nots. The collectives of the wealthier colleges are allowing the programs to recruit more elite players and create an unequal level of competition. Here is a list of the top ten estimated NIL.

**2024 NIL COLLECTIVE ESTIMATES**

| <b>NIL Collectives<br/>Public Universities</b> | <b>2024<br/>Conf</b> | <b>Funding<br/>Estimate<br/>*</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Texas                                          | SEC                  | \$ 22,272,474                     |
| Ohio State                                     | Big Ten              | \$ 20,253,400                     |
| LSU                                            | SEC                  | \$ 20,137,141                     |
| Georgia                                        | SEC                  | \$ 18,326,566                     |
| <b>Texas A&amp;M</b>                           | <b>SEC</b>           | <b>\$ 17,228,714</b>              |
| Michigan                                       | Big Ten              | \$ 16,357,054                     |
| Alabama                                        | SEC                  | \$ 15,995,406                     |
| Florida                                        | SEC                  | \$ 15,802,237                     |
| Clemson                                        | ACC                  | \$ 15,258,374 <sup>1</sup>        |

<sup>1</sup> Listing of all NIL Collectives & Revenues by School, <https://nil.ncaa.com>

A further complication is state laws regarding paying players related to NIL. There is a wide variation among the state laws which further distorts the ability of many schools to match the NIL deals of other states. The wide disparity for college athletics makes anything but a level

playing field.

Most knowledgeable people agree that some form of congressional legislation is required to address the complexity of the issues. Baseball is exempted from the antitrust laws. The NFL has legal approval for the salary cap, and college athletics needs similar protections in order to pass rules and regulations to level the playing field among all states and colleges. Clearly the larger and more affluent conferences and colleges will always have the advantages of scale resulting from increased ticket sales and media popularity, but the advantages must not be the result of a wild west where there are no rules as is presently the case.

## **FINANCIAL CHANGES FORCE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT TO REEVALUATE EXPENSES**

By Olin Buchanan – TexAgs - DESTIN, Fla - May 29, 2024



*Figure 8 - Trev Alberts*

Surrounded by reporters on Tuesday afternoon at the Southeastern Conference Spring Meetings, Texas A&M Director of Athletics Trev Alberts revealed the secret everybody already knew. “We’re not very good at running good businesses,” Alberts said. The ‘we,’ of course, is college athletics administrators.

The notion they spend money like politicians isn’t surprising. The surprise is that someone admitted as much. As SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey once said: “Times ... they are a changin’.” From awarding coaches’ outrageous salaries,

paying huge buy-outs to fire coaches, to accumulating large administrative staffs, to paying seven figures to host an opponent in football to excessive travel, college athletics has typically spent without conscious because... well, because it could.

“We just always had enough increasing revenue to overcome dumb expenses,” Alberts said. “I’ve said it 100 times, I’ll say it again: We don’t have a revenue problem in college athletics. We have an expense problem.” Expanses of expenses are widening so much that some steadfast traditions and opportunities could be swallowed up.

Power 5 conference programs have agreed to share about \$20 million in revenue with athletes. That creates a huge annual expenditure for which athletic departments previously never had to account. Now, they’re accounting like accountants. Balancing budgets has been the primary topic of discussion among athletic directors here this week at the SEC Spring Meetings.

Alberts has a lot to say, too. “There’s X amount of dollars in the ecosystem,”

Alberts said. “Some of it is being redirected (to athletes). We essentially have a new expense category of \$21-and-a-half million annually that we haven’t had previously. By the way, that gets to be reframed every three years. “It’s an entirely new world. Tough decisions, tough cuts. Things we haven’t done previously are going to have to be contemplated.” Preaching about tough decisions and tough cuts would be like tough love for the frivolous ADs.

Administrators are mainly trying to figure out how to balance future budgets. Alberts knows what that’s going to take: Increase revenue and decrease expenses. “I would anticipate there’s going to be a continuing push of those limits,” Sankey said. “We’re going to have to come to some agreement in this new environment on where those limits exist.” Teams will probably limit the money they’re willing to pay to play host to a non-conference opponent.

In fact, Alberts predicted the SEC will change its scheduling format from eight conference football games to nine. “I think it’s inevitable,” Alberts said. “As you think about these finances, how much are we paying some schools to come play us? “It’s inevitable that more conference games are coming rather than fewer. That’s just a reality.”

Unfortunately, limiting a football roster to 85 scholarship players may also become a reality. That could mean abolishing walk-on programs. That’d be devastating for A&M, the Home of the 12th Man.

Alberts seemingly isn’t sure. “Roster limits are a part of it. ... a part of the settlement,” he said. “No decisions have been made. We’re sorting through some of those deals. There’s financial components to all of it. “The good news is we’re having very robust conversations. We’ll have some more. No details or decisions have been made in those areas.” To read more go to:

Financial changes force athletic departments to act like accountants | TexAgs

## CHAMPIONS! A&M WOMEN’S TENNIS CAPTURES FIRST NATIONAL TITLE



Figure 9 - National Champions - Women's Tennis

By Kay Naegeli - May 19, 2024 – TexAgs

Etched into the history books. For the first time ever, the Texas A&M women’s tennis team has won a national championship. In Stillwater, Oklahoma, the No. 13 Aggies upset the No. 7 Georgia Bulldogs, 4-1, to bring a title back to College Station. “It’s been a wild rush,” head coach Mark Weaver said. “I don’t know that reality has set in. There is so much excitement right now.”

A&M’s path to glory came by way of a dominant 2024 SEC campaign. With a 12-1



conference record, the Aggies are no stranger to crowns. They claimed a third straight SEC regular-season title earlier this year.

In his ninth year at the helm and 25th with the program, this serves as Mark Weaver's first-ever national title in what has been an incredibly successful coaching career thus far. His nickname, "Dream Weaver," based on Gary Wright's 1975 hit song, held true on Sunday night. A&M's dream run is now woven into the fabric of NCAA women's tennis history. "It means the absolute world to us," Stoiana said. "It's a goal we have been working towards all season." To read the whole story, go to: CHAMPIONS! Texas A&M women's tennis captures first national title | TexAgs

### **HISTORY! ADELA CERNOUSEK BECOMES 1<sup>ST</sup> AGGIE TO WIN NCAA INDIVIDUAL CROWN** - By Richard Zane – TexAgs - May 20, 2024



*Figure 10 - Adela Cernousek - National Champion*

Texas A&M's historic couple of days continues. This time, the attention turned to the links. On Monday evening, junior Adela Cernousek became the first Aggie to win the individual national championship when she finished 12-under par at the 2024 NCAA Women's National Championship. Not only is she the first A&M golfer to ascend to the mountain top, but it is her first collegiate victory. "It's a dream. It's crazy," Cernousek said. "It's awesome. I had a couple of opportunities to win this year in the fall, and I was never able to finish it off. "It's special and crazy that my first college win is a national championship. I think

it's really cool. It means a lot."

"Elite. She's one of the best," Coach Chadwell said. "She's super proud of her university. You'll probably hear it from some of the stuff that she said. She just loves representing A&M, and she represents everything about A&M." To read more, go to: HISTORY! Adela Cernousek becomes first Aggie to win NCAA individual crown | TexAgs



Figure 11 - Gavin Grahovac - TexAgs – Photo by Zoe Kelton

## HOMER-HAPPY AGGIES RATTLE RAGIN' CAJUNS TO SECURE SUPER REGIONAL, 9-4

By Richard Zane – TexAgs - June 3, 2024

On Sunday, the Texas A&M offense taxed an already-spent Louisiana pitching staff at a record-breaking clip in-route to a 9-4 victory to clinch the Bryan-College Station Regional title.

Along with sweeping the regional, the No. 3 national seed Aggies set a program record for round-trippers in a year by launching five into the Aggieland night.

By the time Louisiana plated three in a sloppy ninth, there was no doubt that Oregon would be coming to Blue Bell Park. A successful weekend would clinch a trip to Omaha. To read the entire story go to: Homer-happy Aggies rattle Ragin' Cajuns to secure supers' spot, 9-4 | TexAgs

## JAMES EARL RUDDER'S LEGACY WAS BORN 80 YEARS AGO AT D-DAY

By Keith Randall, Texas A&M University Division of Marketing & Communications JUNE 5, 2019



Figure 12 - LTC. Rudder - D-Day

D-Day, June 6, 1944, 80 years ago, a young Lt. Col. named James Earl Rudder led a company of 225 Army Rangers on what seemed like an impossible task: scaling 90-foot vertical cliffs that were defended by German troops on the Normandy beaches. It was a task that took almost two full days before Rudder and his men successfully made it to the top. Rudder and his men captured the site, but at no small cost. Only 90 Rangers lived to fight another day. Rudder himself was wounded twice during the assault.

"In all that he did, he demonstrated uncommon ability to inspire men and lead them to exceptional achievement."

In remembrance of all who served in WWII.

James Earl Rudder's Legacy Was Born 75 Years Ago At D-Day - Texas A&M Today (tamu.edu)

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*Reveille X - April 2021 - Texas A&M Today - Jesse Everett – Texas A&M Marketing & Communication*

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**Mark your calendar - Sul Ross '25 Reunion will be March 3 – 5, 2025 in College Station at the Hilton Hotel - 801 University Dr E, College Station, TX 77840  
Phone (979) 693-7500**

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

To provide our thoughts and communication with our membership, the SRG board has decided to communicate directly through bulletins sent by email to the Class Agents who will then share 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](mailto: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.

**Note: All the Bulletins from Bulletin #1 to the current Bulletin are available to be viewed on the SRG Website at [www.ferrata.net/srg/portal.aspx](http://www.ferrata.net/srg/portal.aspx). Click on 'Uploaded Files.'**

**Suggest you use “Google Chrome”, “Foxfire”, or “Microsoft Edge” as a browser.**

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](http://aggienetwork.com)**.

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**If you wish to comment to those who decide:**

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**SRG Board of Directors’ Resolutions for: 2024 - 2025**

- To keep the Sul Ross Group (SRG) membership informed of pertinent topics and activities on campus through periodic SRG Bulletins.
- As investors of A&M, to continue to meet with and to offer our support and assistance to the leadership of TAMUS, TAMU, the Association of Former Students, A&M Foundation, the Commandant, the Corps Commander, and student government leaders.
- To support A&M’s Core Values and traditions and share these with all we meet, especially students, stressing unity of purpose and effort within the A&M community.
- To continue the ongoing review, execution and improvement of new student integration and assimilation into TAMU, working with and assisting the V.P. of Student Affairs, if invited, by periodically observing new student orientation – avoiding “not too much nor too little” oversight of student run organizations.
- Be it resolved that the SRG support their strategic goal of preserving what sets TAMU apart as distinctive and transcendent, as elder statesmen, and in accordance with the SRG’s four established Constitutional objectives while serving TAMU, the Association, and our membership.