

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Ninety-Two (92)



December 4, 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.

Mark your calendar - Sul Ross '25 Reunion will be March 3 – 5, 2025 in College Station at the Hilton Hotel. The room block is open and ready to book room nights. Room Rate is \$149 per night plus tax. The Group Code is ROSS25 and the cut-off date to make reservations is February 9, 2025. Hilton Hotel - 801 University Dr E, College Station, TX 77840, Phone (979) 693-7500. We look forward to seeing you there. For questions, please contact the Class Programs team at 979-845-7514 or at Class@AggieNetwork.com.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the SRG Board. May God continue to bless Texas A&M and the United States of America.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT – TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

President's Brief – November 22, 2024

Members of the Aggie Family,

The past few weeks have been busy across our campuses, and there are so many good things happening that will move us forward. Last week, we held a groundbreaking



Figure 1 - Jack K. Williams Building

for the long-anticipated Texas A&M University Space Institute in Houston. In the 35 years since we were designated a "space-grant university," we have made incredible progress in space-related research and innovation thanks to our out-of-this-world faculty, and the new institute will be the icing on the cake.

We have more than 280 faculty and investigators involved in space-related projects, with 300 ongoing projects and \$125 million in grants secured in the past five years. So, who better than Texas A&M to lead the charge? The Space Institute is going to be a game changer and will position us to solidify Texas' role as a leader in the new space economy.

The state-of-the-art facility, which will allow training and operational testing on both a Mars and Lunar surface environment, is located near NASA's Johnson Space Center and is planned to open in 2026.

Recent Board Of Regents Action

At their November meeting, the Board of Regents approved more than \$455.9 million in construction projects for the university. In addition to the \$200 million, four-story facility to house the new Space Institute in Houston, Regents approved:

\$181 million for the Clinical Veterinary and Research Complex, a 135,000 square-foot, two-story building, which will be the new home of the small animal hospital. Construction is scheduled to begin in January 2025.

\$74.9 million for utility and HVAC upgrades on the College Station campus.

Regents unanimously voted to name the Naresh K. Vashisht College of Medicine at Texas A&M. The naming comes as a result of the largest endowed gift ever to the College of Medicine from Naresh K. Vashisht '72, who received his master's degree in petroleum engineering from Texas A&M.

Finally, Regents passed a resolution instructing all A&M System schools to move forward with a review of minors and certificate programs to identify and remove under-performing programs. The resolution also directed our university to move forward with the elimination of 52 minors and certificates that were identified through a new process established by the Provost's Office and executed by a sub-committee of the Council of Deans. While several of our faculty expressed concerns during the meeting, the Board's directive was clear, and we are moving forward with this process per their direction.

Executive Order GA-48

As you may know, Governor Abbott issued an executive order (GA-48) this week relating to the hardening of state government. The order directs state agencies and Texas higher education institutions to "harden state systems and safeguard critical infrastructure, intellectual property and personal information from being accessed by hostile foreign nations that attempt to infiltrate Texas."

Quick-Look Implementation

Over the last year, we collaborated on several studies and projects to assess where we are as a university to help determine our path forward. As I shared at Investiture, I have received final reports for both the Capacity and Student Experience

studies, as well as the Academic Roadmap project. I am still digesting the information, but plan to discuss the final recommendations with university leaders before the Winter Break and finalize decisions on the recommendations by early January. The Capacity Study, which focuses on “right-sizing” our infrastructure, operations, faculty and staff, and student services, presents some big issues we need to address. These are tough problems, like funding prioritization for critical needs such as faculty shortfalls in departments with rapidly growing student populations, updating research facilities, building new student housing, additional classroom space and additional dining facility space, and expanding/upgrading health care facilities.

AI Steering Committee

I recently asked Dr. Alan Sams to lead the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy Coordination Committee, which is charged with coordinating the overall AI strategy at Texas A&M, including efforts to apply AI in education and research, enhancing the efficiency of campus operations and establishing ethical AI usage standards and policies.

Leadership Updates

Cabinet

Commandant, Corps of Cadets: Applications closed on Nov. 12 and the committee — led by my Chief of Staff Dr. Susan Ballabina — is now selecting the top candidates to move forward with first-round interviews. Three or four finalists will be invited to campus for candidate forums in late January. During these visits, members of the university community will have an opportunity to meet the finalists and provide feedback to aid in my final decision.

Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice President for Human Resources: The search for permanent leadership for these positions will launch soon.

Chief Operating Officer, Texas A&M University-DC: Earlier this week, Lt. General (Ret.) Jay Silveria was appointed as the next president of the University of Arkansas System (a position similar to our System Chancellor).

Deans

College of Architecture, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy: The members of the Search Advisory Committees have been announced and calls for nominations have been distributed.

College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences: The members of the Search Advisory Committee have been announced and a call for nominations is imminent.

School of Engineering Medicine: We’re currently considering potential start dates for this search. In the meantime, Dr. Tim Boone is off to a great start as our Interim Dean.

Community Engagement Survey

Our community engagement team is conducting a survey to help us learn about the effectiveness of their programs and how we can be even better at engaging with our local communities.

As we head into the holiday season, I want you all to know how grateful I am to be surrounded by such a wonderful group of people. The faculty and staff at all our campuses are not just great at their jobs — they are some of the most caring and hard-working people I know. I'm grateful to work *for* the best university in the country and work *with* the best people anywhere.

I'm also looking forward to all the events we have planned next week to celebrate the Return of the Rivalry. Before we BTHO t.u., there's plenty of fun to be had, including the 12th Man Fireworks Show, Ruck Across the Brazos, Movies at Rudder Theatre and the 13-0 Burn BBQ Cook-Off.

We have entered into a friendly competition with our frenemies in Austin, which will do a lot of good for students here in Aggieland. Texas A&M and The University of Texas at Austin are hosting a giving challenge through Nov. 29. Every dollar donated as part of this challenge will directly support students and their experiences at each of our schools. Be sure to check back on Rivalry-Challenge.com to see which school wins the challenge. Spoiler – it will be us! Head over to The Association of Former Students to donate today. An important tip: The score is based on the total number of gifts, not the total amount of money contributed. So, give your gift, \$1 at a time! Just sayin' ...

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't address the recent issues with the ticket pull. I was deeply disappointed in how this played out. We are taking a hard look at how we handle ticket distribution in the future. Quite simply, what occurred was unacceptable. From policy, to supervision, to execution, to safety and security, we need to relook at everything. I'll take the hit for the fact that we didn't distinguish ourselves in any facet of this operation. But those of you who took advantage of the situation and created self-serving chaos outside the ticket windows need to think hard about the lack of respect you showed to fellow Aggies who were in line and the potentially dangerous situations you created. As we head into the rivalry game next week, let's remember who we are and what we stand for. Those Core Values apply all day, every day ... or they mean nothing.

OK, please forgive me for the lecture, but I couldn't help myself.

Gig 'em!

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

President's Brief - November 2024 | Office of the President | Texas A&M University



Figure 2 - A&M Water Tower

A&M COULD BE THE FIRST HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE IN THE US WITH A NUCLEAR REACTOR SITE LICENSE

By Claire Hao, Staff writer Houston Chronicle - Nov 7, 2024

Texas A&M University has started the process to offer companies land at its Rellis Campus in Bryan for construction of the latest

generation of nuclear reactors. If approved by federal regulators, the Texas A&M System would be the only higher education institution in the country with a commercial nuclear reactor site license, according to John Sharp, its chancellor. The university had offered up land it owns around the state for developers to build natural gas power plants in May.

The university is now courting nuclear energy companies because its leaders believe building more nuclear plants is the “obvious and only answer to the power supply problems in Texas,” Sharp said in an interview. “The reason that we decided to look at it is because we can. If you look at the politics of the West Coast, the politics of the East Coast, in some places even in Texas, any mention of the nuclear reactors is politically not feasible. That's not the case here,” Sharp said. He cited existing nuclear facilities throughout campus, including a 1-megawatt reactor near Easterwood Airport used for research.

Demand for power in Texas could almost double by 2030 as the state welcomes more people and businesses, especially power-hungry data centers necessary for the development of artificial intelligence, further straining the already stretched-thin Texas power grid.

As Big Tech and nuclear power companies forge deals, however, few suitable locations have been identified for where those new plants will go, according to a statement issued Thursday by Texas A&M. That's where the university hopes to step in. Texas A&M's Board of Regents voted unanimously at a Thursday meeting to send the Nuclear Regulatory Commission a notice of its intent to seek an early site permit that would allow nuclear reactors to be built on Rellis Campus, the first official step in providing land to developers.

The goal is to have about five nuclear reactors from different companies scattered across parcels of the 2,300-acre campus by the early- to mid-2030s, Sharp said. They'd range from 10 megawatts to 200 megawatts – much bigger than the research nuclear generator near the airport – and be connected to the grid operated by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, he said. (One megawatt can power 250 Texas homes, according to ERCOT.) Earlier this year, 23 organizations replied to a request from Texas A&M for feedback on its plans to potentially invite nuclear reactors to campus, Sharp said.

The type of nuclear plants Texas A&M wants to host are known as small modular reactors, which are smaller and designed to be cheaper to build than traditional reactors. They're often touted as safer,

Texas A&M aims to serve as a proving ground for the new technology given that it has the largest nuclear engineering program in the country, Sharp said. How the university would participate in the projects is subject to negotiations with potential developers, which are expected to begin soon.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas has put together a working group to study how the state can encourage nuclear development, with its report due to Gov. Greg Abbott by Dec. 1, 2024.

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/energy/article/texas-a-m-land-small-nuclear-reactor-19894147.php>



Figure 3 - RELLIS Entrance

BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVE 5 ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RELLIS CAMPUS

November 8, 2024 Bill Oliver - WTAW

Thursday's meeting (November 7, 2024) Texas A&M system board of regents meeting included approving five items associated with the RELLIS campus.

The board increased the budget for the new Texas A&M semiconductor institute to \$189 million dollars and set aside \$19 million for pre-construction services.

The regents also approved moving ahead with building a hypersonic wind tunnel. Construction starts in December on the \$10 million dollar project, which the system says will become the largest academic facility of its kind in the country by providing large-scale aerodynamic testing in the range of Mach 5 to 9. The single-story facility will complement research at the adjacent Ballistics Aero-optics and Materials (BAM) Range and the Detonation Research Test Facility. Chancellor John Sharp says the hypersonic wind tunnel will be used by a company that wants to build an aircraft that can get from Houston to Tokyo in one hour and 25 minutes.

The board approved creating a \$25 million dollar training complex operated by TEEX...the Texas A&M Engineering and Extension Service. The 86-acre site will allow construction of an urban simulation grid, drive track, skills pad, props building and classrooms. The site also will eventually be the location for a future headquarters.

The regents agreed to purchase 77 acres of land that will expand the RELLIS campus to the west. The purchase price was not disclosed. And the regents agreed to apply to the federal nuclear regulatory commission to allow the construction of small nuclear reactors at RELLIS. Nuclear power companies and technology giants now can look to The Texas A&M University System for much sought-after land to test the latest nuclear reactors. Several agreements have been made between reactor manufacturers and technology behemoths to provide the power that is necessary for modern computing, but few suitable locations have been identified...until now. Today, officials with the Texas A&M System took the first official step to provide the sites that nuclear companies desperately need. Also notably, the Texas A&M System will be the only higher education institution with a commercial reactor site license.

The Texas A&M System, along with Texas A&M University, is uniquely qualified to take on a venture as ambitious as building, testing and running nuclear reactors. Texas A&M University is home to the largest nuclear engineering department of any university in the country. The A&M System also helps manage the Los Alamos National Laboratory and Pantex, the nation's primary plant for the assembly and disassembly of nuclear weapons.

Chancellor John Sharp said: "From the people, to the land, to the enthusiasm to innovate, the Texas A&M System has everything we need to help the country meet its clean energy needs."

Texas A&M System Board Of Regents Approve Five Items Associated With The RELLIS Campus - WTAW | 1620AM & 94.5FM



Figure 4 - Ft. Worth campus

A&M SYSTEM, FORT WORTH OFFICIALS 'TOP OUT' FIRST CAMPUS BUILDING

Posted on November 11, 2024 Updated on November 12, 2024

FORT WORTH, Texas — Officials with the Texas A&M University System, City of Fort Worth and Tarrant County gathered Monday to celebrate the “topping out” of the first building at Texas A&M-Fort Worth.

Once it is completed in 2026, the eight-story, \$185 million building will feature academic programs including law, medical

technology, nursing, engineering and others designed to meet the economic development and workforce needs of one of the fastest growing cities in America and one of the most robust economic regions of Texas. Other workforce training and professional development opportunities specific to the region will be offered.

On Monday, officials thanked construction workers with a ceremony celebrating “topping out” the building with a barbecue lunch and the ceremonial signing of a girder representing the final piece completing the top of the building.

“It was only three years ago; I stood on this site – a parking lot at the time – and announced the intent to build an urban research campus,” said Chancellor John Sharp of The Texas A&M University System. “Today, only three years later, our first building – the Law & Education Building is being “topped out,” thanks to our hardworking construction team.”

The A&M System, City of Fort Worth and Tarrant County are in the process of designing the second building, Research & Innovation Building A. The original vision was for the partnership to construct a campus of at least three buildings on the four blocks the A&M System owns in southeast downtown.

<https://news.tamus.edu/am-system-fort-worth-officials-top-out-first-campus-building/>



Figure 5 - Naresh K. Vashisht '72 - by Josh Lewis/A&M Foundation

TEXAS A&M RECEIVES HISTORIC GIFT FOR COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

By Texas A&M Foundation November 7, 2024

Naresh K. Vashisht '72, an entrepreneur from Arlington, Texas, has made the largest endowed gift ever to Texas A&M University's College of Medicine. As a result, The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents voted unanimously to name the Texas A&M University Naresh K. Vashisht College of Medicine during its November

meeting.

The gift will further the university's land-grant mission through supporting the Vashisht College of Medicine's innovative work. "Texas A&M is a place that tackles the biggest challenges facing our state, our nation and our world head on," said General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III, president of Texas A&M University. "Mr. Vashisht's generous gift ensures that we can expand upon our land-grant mission by educating outstanding Aggie doctors, discovering new knowledge, and leading the charge in the areas of medical research and health care, all while supporting our rural and underserved communities."

Vashisht's career has spanned four decades and two continents. He initially worked with major and independent oil companies in a variety of engineering and management positions before founding and becoming CEO of Omimex Resources Inc. in 1987.

Vashisht's gift through the Texas A&M Foundation is tied to his passion for the role that education can have on individuals, families and society. "Once one person in a family is educated, the whole family's quality of life improves."

He is also focused on making financial commitments that create an immediate impact on health care and underserved populations. Impressed with the College of Medicine's innovative work, his gift will create full-tuition scholarships for Aggie medical students and a dean's excellence fund to support the college's strategic needs, establish an innovation and discovery fund for medical research, and support Texas A&M's groundbreaking Rural Medicine Program.

Strong philanthropic support helps create a critical margin of excellence for the university's leading-edge academics, programs and research. "Mr. Vashisht's gift embodies hard work, brilliance and the American Dream," said Tyson Voelkel '96, president and CEO of the Texas A&M Foundation. "A true patriot, his endowed gift will save lives, elevate health care outcomes and spark generational change for Texas A&M medical students for years to come."

Texas A&M University Receives Historic Gift For College Of Medicine - Texas A&M Today



Figure 6 - Students walking by MSC - Ishika Samant for The Texas Tribune

A&M REGENTS OVERRULE FACULTY, CUT 52 "LOW PRODUCING" PROGRAMS

By Kate McGee - Nov. 7, 2024 - Texas Tribune

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents on Thursday unanimously directed its flagship university to disband an LGBTQ+ studies minor, months after conservative lawmakers and websites accused the program of promoting "liberal indoctrination" on campus.

The LGBTQ Studies minor is one of 14 minors and 38 certificate programs that administrators said were "low-producing,"

according to a new process developed administrators to identify and eliminate programs with low enrollments. But faculty argue the process used inaccurate information and faulty data. It also kept faculty from providing input about curriculum decisions, they said. “This has never happened before,” said Angie Hill Price, a professor and speaker of A&M’s Faculty Senate. “We have no precedent for a board to decide [to end academic programs] over the wishes of faculty and the president which they deemed low-performing.” Dozens of the faculty attended the board meeting Thursday to oppose the regents’ decision.

The board’s vote to eliminate these programs came a few days before a Texas Senate subcommittee meeting Monday where lawmakers reviewed the role of faculty senates at Texas public universities. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick directed the Senate to examine these groups, which are elected governing bodies made up of professors from colleges across a university who represent their colleagues and work with university leadership on academic matters. Patrick also asked lawmakers ahead of next year’s legislative session to make recommendations to establish guidelines for what faculty senates’ role on campuses should be.

According to the regents’ resolution to end the programs, their decision ignored a request by Texas A&M University President Mark Welsh III to halt the review process and gather more input from other faculty senates in the A&M system. The board of regents believed there was sufficient faculty review and directed the school to move forward.

Yet board members and university administrators contend that these minors and certificates should be eliminated because they don’t meet new enrollment thresholds recently established by the university.

At the board meeting Thursday, Board Member Robert Albritton denied accusations that the decision to eliminate the LGBTQ Studies minor was politically motivated. He said the board has a fiduciary responsibility to eliminate programs with low enrollment. But faculty say that the reasoning lacks an understanding of how these departments manage enrollment in these minor and certificate programs.

According to a Texas A&M spokesperson, the university started receiving questions from inside and outside the university about the LGBTQ Studies minor the semester after it was launched, prompting the school to examine its programs. Administrators identified 70 certificates and minors that had zero or few graduates or enrollees.

In August 2023, Provost Sams started to work with the university’s deans to create a way to evaluate a program’s performance. It was modeled after the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s standards for majors, an A&M spokesperson said. The state classifies a bachelor’s degree program as “low-producing” if it awards fewer than five degrees in a year and fewer than 25 degrees in five years. Using this system, A&M identified 52 minors and certificates to eliminate.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2024/11/07/texas-a-m-lgbtq-studies-minor/>

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION AWARDS A&M FOR SERVICE TO VETERANS

By Lesley Henton, Texas A&M University Division of
Marketing and Communications November 11, 2024

Texas A&M University has been selected as a Gold Recipient of the 2024 Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA) by the Texas Veterans Commission. The award recognizes institutions of higher education for providing excellence in education and related services to student veterans.

Texas A&M is a premier destination for the education of veterans. With roots planted firmly in its history as a military college, Texas A&M prides itself on its continued connections to and support of America's active-duty soldiers and veterans. An estimated 60,000 Aggies have served in the U.S. military and over 1,100 student veterans are currently enrolled. Through its Corps of Cadets, the university commissions more officers into the armed forces than any other institution outside the military academies.

"I'm proud of our university for proving once again that Aggies serve well those who have served," said General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III, president of Texas A&M University. "Congratulations to the teams at the Don & Ellie Knauss Veteran Resource and Support Center, Military Admissions, and all the partners across campus who dedicate their time, their talent, and their hearts to ensuring veterans have a successful experience as students at Texas A&M."

A total of 24 Texas public institutions of higher education were awarded this year; of those, five are Texas A&M University System institutions. Texas A&M commissions more officers into the military than any other institution outside the military academies.



Figure 7 - Aggies come together to honor the 12 who lost their lives in the 1999 tragedy with the annual Remembrance Ceremony at the Bonfire Memorial - Laura McKenzie/Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications

A&M MARKS 25th ANNIVERSARY OF AGGIE BONFIRE COLLAPSE

By Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and
Communications November 13, 2024

Twenty-five years after the Aggie Bonfire collapse that claimed the lives of 11 students and one former student, Texas A&M University continues to honor these fallen members of the Aggie Family and those affected by the 1999 tragedy.

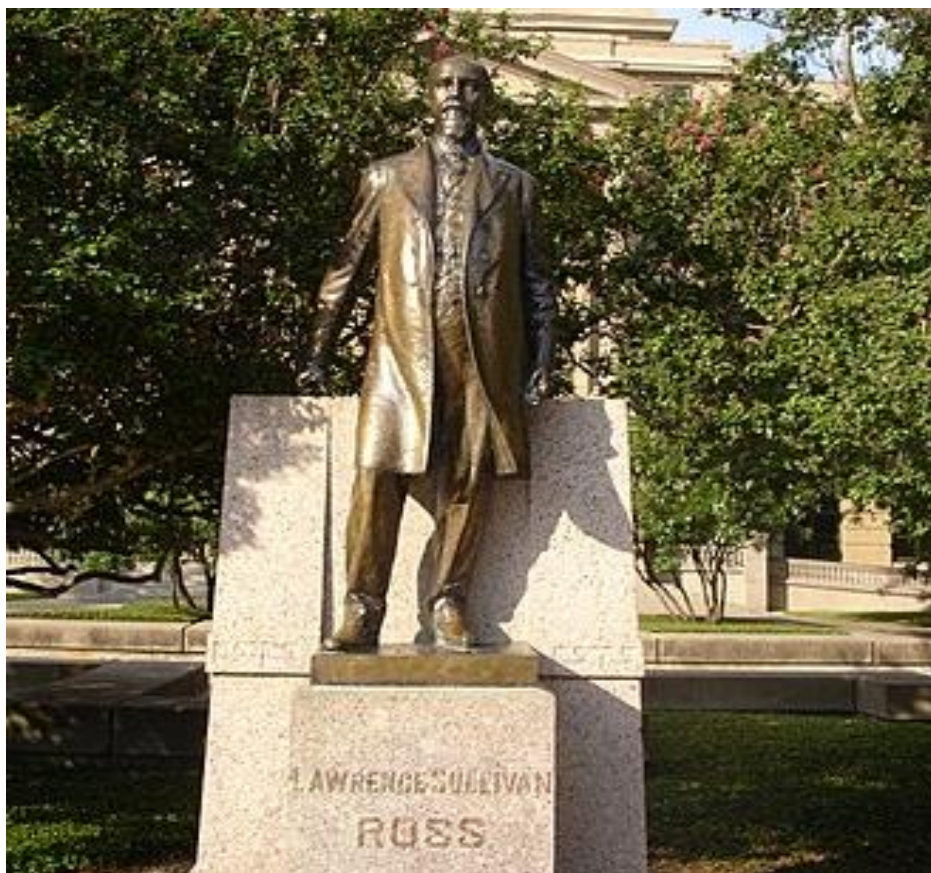
"Year after year, Texas A&M students

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have worked to ensure that we never forget those members of the Aggie Family who were taken from us 25 years ago. Today and always, we hold these 12 Aggies and their families close to our hearts,” said General (Ret.) Mark A. Welsh III, president of Texas A&M University. “As we reflect on the events of Nov. 18, 1999, I encourage all Aggies to join me in honoring the 12 and preserving their memory for future generations.”

Since the collapse, Aggies have gathered annually at the memorial site to honor the 12 and reflect on their lasting legacy. May they Rest in Peace.

Texas A&M Marks 25th Anniversary Of Aggie Bonfire Collapse - Texas A&M Today



Lawrence Sullivan Ross – Soldier, Statesman, Knightly Gentleman

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

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. Click on 'Uploaded Files.'

Suggest you use “Google Chrome”, “Firefox”, 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**.

If you wish to comment to those who decide:

Chancellor John Sharp: **chancellor@tamus.edu**

The Board of Regents: **vickie@tamus.edu** or **jbelle@tamus.edu**

President Mark Welsh: **president@tamus.edu**

Provost Alan Sams: **asams@tamus.edu**

Athletic Director Trev Alberts: **Ichamberlin@athletics.tamu.edu**

VPSA Joe Ramirez: **jramirez@vpsa.tamu.edu**

Commandant Chip Utterback: **lutterback@corps.tamu.edu**

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.**