

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin One Hundred Twelve (112)



May 20, 2026

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.

Howdy Ags,

Here is the Sul Ross Group's Bulletin 112. The SRG Board hopes you enjoy this bulletin and find it informative. We encourage you to distribute it to your classmates, Aggie buddies, and friends. Thank you.

Gig 'Em!

Sul Ross Group Board

The main theme of this edition of the Sul Ross Bulletin is Memorial Day, to remind our readers about the legacy of those who have served, and all those beloved Aggies who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we could live our lives as free Americans. It's about the leaders that A&M has produced in the past, and the ones that are being produced today.

THE CITIZEN SOLDIER

John A. Adams, Jr. '73

The bedrock of the heritage of Texas A&M has long been the role of and, when needed, call to active duty of the citizen soldier. And while the mandate of the Morrill Act of 1862 provided Texans with an introduction to "military tactics" – training, duty, and protocols – the foundation of the citizen soldier in our nation dates from over 250 years

ago. Thus, the observance of Memorial Day is a remembrance honoring citizen soldiers that made the supreme sacrifice.

There was an early traditional discussion on the scope and role of citizen obligation to the fledgling republic and the need to answer the call for the revolution and new nation's defense. This foundation for a response to duty and service was established by General George Washington who commanded the greatest and most impactful 'citizen soldier' army in history to that time. In his earliest references to the volunteers of the continental army and militia, he lead and rallied the raw recruits that formed the backbone of our liberty and independence.

With independence and freedom Washington expressed the need and ability of the citizens to answer any future call to duty. Speaking from experience he stressed the theme that the future prosperity and tranquility of the nascent United States was dependent in great measure upon the peace time military establishment under the civilian control of properly elected leadership.

The only insurance against insult, hostilities and calamities in defense of the nation, Washington noted "was to put the national militia of citizens in such a condition so that it always would appear truly a respectable force in the eyes of our friends and formidable to those who would otherwise become our enemies."

As the General took his leave to Mount Vernon, he closed his remarks with the following:

"Citizenship in a free government," he said, "implied an obligation to defend and protect freedom."

Therefore in one broad stroke we are faced with the dual challenge of protecting our freedom and the preservation of the Republic.... and thus, to stand ready as citizen soldiers.

Per Unitatem Vis

THE TEXAS A&M LEGACY OF SERVICE TO THIS NATION

Texas A&M University commissions officers into all the six branches of the services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard), and commissions more officers than any other institution, outside of the service academies.

Aggies have served in every conflict since the Spanish American War.

World War I: By 1918, **49% of all Texas A&M graduates** were in military service—the highest percentage of any college or university in the nation. The entire senior class was mustered into service in 1917, causing graduation ceremonies to be canceled.

World War II: Texas A&M produced **20,229 service members**, including **14,123 officers**. This was **more officers than any other institution**, including the combined total of the United States Military Academy (West Point) and the United States Naval Academy (Annapolis).



Commissioning, May 8, 2026. 149 Second Lieutenants and Ensigns for the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Space Force.

The Class of 1942 was the first to graduate after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Following the U.S. entry into the war, the college accelerated its curriculum. The Class of '42 graduated in May and almost the entire class immediately entered active duty. They are often remembered for the famous **1942 Muster on Corregidor**, where 24 Aggies (including members of this class) held Muster while under siege in the Philippines.

The Class of 1943 experienced the most drastic disruption. In early 1943, the U.S. Army activated the **Enlisted Reserve Corps**. As a result, the majority of the junior and senior classes were called to active duty mid-semester. The "mass" departure was so significant that campus enrollment plummeted from roughly 7,000 students to just over 1,600 by 1944.

The Classes of 1944 and 1945 essentially "disappeared" from campus. Most were already in uniform before their scheduled graduation dates, eventually returning after the war to finish their degrees under the G.I. Bill, which led to a massive enrollment spike in 1946

1,281 Aggies have made the ultimate sacrifice:

World War I	70
World War II	953
Korea	64
Viet Nam	161
Gulf War	3
War on Terror	30

9 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS REMEMBERED FOR BRAVERY AND EXEMPLIFYING AGGIE CORE VALUES

March 25, 2026 By *Hank Hargrave, Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications*



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Aggies who were awarded the highest United States Armed Forces honor displayed integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect and selfless service when it mattered most.

Texas A&M University counts nine of its former students among the distinguished recipients of the [Medal of Honor](#) — the United States' highest recognition for valor in combat awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

These outstanding individuals epitomize the **Aggie Core Values of Excellence, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Respect and Selfless Service**, and the **Cadet Values of Honor, Discipline and Courage**.

The Medal of Honor is awarded for personal acts of valor “above and beyond the call of duty” in combat. A service member's act is first recognized by someone witnessing or learning about it — usually an officer of the same military branch — who then makes a formal recommendation. The recommendation passes through the prospective recipient's chain of command for review and endorsement.

From there, the recommendation moves to service branch headquarters (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard) for approval, then to the branch secretary (e.g., secretary of the Army, secretary of the Navy). Upon approval, the recommendation is reviewed by the secretary of war and, if authorized, goes to the president of the United States, who is the final authority and must personally approve Medal of Honor awards.

These nine Aggie heroes proved their valor on the battlefield, prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect people back home. Seven of the Aggie recipients served during World War II — all former members of and immortalized by the [Texas A&M Corps of Cadets](#). Of the two most recent Aggie recipients, one served during the Vietnam War, and one served during the global war on terror in Afghanistan. Each demonstrated what honor and sacrifice mean, helping shape a brighter, safer world as they served alongside fellow Aggies and military service members.

The Men Behind the Medals

(Click on names for more information)

Meet the men behind the medals — the Aggies who fought for their country and, in some cases, made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. (Listed in Class order)

George Keathley '37 enrolled at Texas A&M in 1933 to pursue a degree in agriculture. He withdrew from the university for financial reasons and worked for the Soil Conservation Service before joining the U.S. Army in 1942. He was promoted to staff sergeant in 1943, and his unit went into action in Italy in April 1944.

During fierce fighting near Mount Altuzzo, Italy, on Sept. 14, 1944, Keathley was wounded while leading two decimated platoons that had lost all commissioned and noncommissioned officers. Exposing himself to deadly mortar and small arms fire, Keathley crawled from position to position, administered first aid, collected unused

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ammunition and distributed it to the remaining members of the platoons. Although mortally wounded, he shouted orders and, standing up, continued to inspire his men for 15 minutes. The rally forced the enemy to withdraw, leaving behind many dead and wounded.

Keathley died a few minutes afterward. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on April 11, 1945.

Horace S. Carswell Jr. '38 studied agriculture at Texas A&M before transferring to Texas Christian University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in physical education with a minor in history. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1940, serving at bases in Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Virginia. Carswell served as a flight instructor, in bomb groups and in operations and group command assignments. He rose through the ranks and was eventually promoted to major.

In April 1944, Carswell was assigned to the 308th Bombardment Group, where he commanded a detachment of B-24 bombers in Liuchow, China. On Oct. 26, 1944, he was on a one-aircraft mission to attack a Japanese convoy over the South China Sea near Kowloon, China. Carswell encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire, but despite suffering heavy damage and losing two engines, the hydraulic system and a fuel tank, he skillfully managed to fly the crippled plane back toward friendly territory. Carswell's crew bailed out, but he remained with his aircraft in an effort to save his wounded co-pilot and another crew member whose parachute was damaged. All three were killed when the aircraft crashed into a mountain.

Carswell was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on Feb. 27, 1946.

Dr. Eli L. Whiteley '41 '59 received his bachelor's degree in agronomy and his doctorate in soil physics from Texas A&M. He earned a master's degree in agronomy from North Carolina State.

In 1942, six months into his master's studies, Whiteley joined the U.S. Army, where he served as a first lieutenant. On Dec. 27, 1944, he led his platoon in fierce house-to-house fighting in Sigolsheim, France, where he personally cleared multiple enemy positions, captured several prisoners and killed or wounded others, despite severe wounds to his arm and shoulder. Although badly injured, Whiteley continued to lead his men and press the attack until the mission was completed.

Whiteley was promoted to captain and received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman on Aug. 23, 1945.

Turney W. Leonard '42 received his bachelor's degree in agriculture from Texas A&M, graduating near the top of his class. He joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and rose through the ranks to lieutenant.

On Nov. 4, 1944, in the Battle of Hürtgen Forest near Kommerscheidt, Germany, Leonard's 100-man tank destroyer company, the 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, and

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over 1,000 infantrymen were trapped between two German divisions when he took command. Discovering that most of the officers had been killed, Leonard gathered the men together and, walking in front of his tank destroyers, directed fire at enemy positions. He was severely wounded and lost his arm but continued directing the assault. Several German snipers were killed, and six enemy tanks were destroyed.

Ordered to the first aid station for treatment, Leonard returned to the battle later because he believed his men needed him. He was killed in action. Leonard was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on Oct. 24, 1945.

During a ceremony at Texas A&M in November 2000, Leonard's Aggie Ring was returned to his family by German Army Capt. Obit Volker Lossner, whose father-in-law found it on the battlefield more than 60 years prior. It and Leonard's Medal of Honor are on permanent display in the Sam Houston Sanders Corps of Cadets Center.

William G. Harrell '43 studied animal husbandry at Texas A&M. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in July 1942. After being promoted to corporal, Harrell was shipped overseas in February 1943. On Feb. 1, 1945, he was promoted to sergeant, and on Feb. 19, 1945, his division landed on Iwo Jima.

Early on March 3, 1945, Harrell and Pfc. Andrew Carter were in a foxhole on a ridge, about 20 yards forward from the company command post, when Japanese troops infiltrated the lines. During the battle, Carter's gun jammed, and he left the foxhole to retrieve another weapon. The last of his squad left behind and suffering from devastating injuries, Harrell continued to fight off repeated enemy assaults. He used his pistol and grenades to repel attackers at close range, killing or wounding many despite losing both hands and injuring his thighs during the battle. By dawn, the enemy had withdrawn, and there were 12 dead around Harrell's position, prompting his commander to call the foxhole the "two-man Alamo."

Harrell was presented with the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman on Oct. 5, 1945, and promoted to staff sergeant upon his Marine Corps discharge in 1946.

Lloyd H. Hughes '43 studied petroleum engineering at Texas A&M. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in January 1942 as an aviation cadet and earned his pilot's wings later that year. Commissioned as a second lieutenant, Hughes was originally sent to Africa and began his participation in five combat missions in the Italy-Romania area. On Aug. 1, 1943, during Operation Tidal Wave, 178 B-24 Liberator heavy bombers took off on an 18-hour, 2,400-mile round-trip mission to destroy Nazi-held oil refineries in Ploiesti, Romania. Hughes' aircraft was severely damaged by antiaircraft fire and leaking fuel, creating a high risk of explosion. Despite these conditions, Hughes continued traveling through enemy defenses and flaming oil fields. He successfully released his bombs with precision, flying through a wall of fire 30 feet above the ground en route. After Hughes completed the bomb run, his aircraft cartwheeled into the ground, killing him and six other members of the 10-member crew. One survivor later died from his wounds, and the other two became prisoners of war. Hughes was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on April 18, 1944.

Thomas W. Fowler '43 earned a Bachelor of Science in animal husbandry from Texas A&M and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army a short time later, after completing Armor Officer Candidate School in Fort Knox, Kentucky.

On May 23, 1944, near Carano, Italy, Fowler — while serving with an armored unit — led his platoon across mined ground under heavy enemy artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire. He personally assisted in removing mines one by one with his bare hands, then returned to his squad and led them through the cleared path before scouting out a route for them to continue their advance. Fowler crossed the minefield again to lead the tanks through and directed them to positions to support the infantry. He then went ahead of the infantry to scout, capturing several German soldiers.

After Fowler led the infantry and tanks into position, the enemy counterattacked with tanks, setting one of his tanks on fire. He tended to the wounded tank crew under intense enemy fire for 30 minutes. After being forced to withdraw from the tank, Fowler gave first aid to nine soldiers while still under fire.

Just 11 days later, Fowler was killed near Rome by an enemy sniper. For his actions on May 23, 1944, Fowler received the Medal of Honor, which was presented posthumously on Oct. 31, 1944 — the day that would've been his 23rd birthday.

Clarence E. Sasser '73 was drafted into the U.S. Army after giving up his college deferment at the University of Houston. Following his combat tour in Vietnam, where he served heroically as an Army medic, Sasser was offered a scholarship to Texas A&M by Gen. Earl Rudder '32, then university president. He studied chemistry and, following his honorable discharge, worked briefly at an oil refinery before a lengthy career in service to veterans with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

On Jan. 10, 1968, near the Mekong Delta, Sasser's unit was making an air assault when it came under heavy small arms, recoilless rifle, machine-gun and rocket fire from well-fortified enemy positions on three sides of the landing zone. During the first few minutes, the unit sustained over 30 casualties. Without hesitation, Sasser ran across an open rice paddy through a hail of gunfire to assist the wounded. After helping one man to safety, Sasser was wounded in the left shoulder by mortar fragments. He refused medical attention, then ran through rocket and automatic weapons fire to aid others wounded in the initial attack, dragging them to safety. Despite sustaining two additional wounds that immobilized his legs, Sasser dragged himself through the mud to another wounded soldier 100 meters away. He then encouraged another group of soldiers to crawl 200 meters to relative safety and attended to their wounds for five hours until they were evacuated.

Sasser was presented with the Medal of Honor on March 7, 1969, by President Richard M. Nixon.

Matthew O. Williams '25 earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Angelo State University, then enlisted in the U.S. Army in September 2005. He eventually achieved the rank of command sergeant major. In 2016, he earned an Advanced International Affairs Certificate from Texas A&M. Williams retired from the Army in 2025 and earned a Master of Business Administration from Texas A&M that same year.

On April 6, 2008, in Afghanistan's Nuristan province, Williams was part of a team supporting Afghan commandos. His unit was ambushed by a larger, well-entrenched enemy force. Despite intense enemy fire and difficult terrain, he led a counterattack and reached a pinned-down unit on a mountainside. Williams restored the team's satellite radio communications, provided lifesaving aid and repeatedly carried critically wounded soldiers to safety down steep, exposed terrain. Williams' disregard for his own safety ensured the survival of critically wounded soldiers and prevented the unit from being overrun by the enemy.

Williams was presented with the Medal of Honor by President Donald Trump on Oct. 30, 2019.

Remembering Their Valor

These nine brave Aggies are worthy of the gratitude all Americans owe them and well deserving of the honor and recognition bestowed upon them.

Texas A&M continues to acknowledge their remarkable courage. The Memorial Student Center's Hall of Honor [memorializes the Aggies](#) who received the Medal of Honor for their distinguished acts of valor.

In addition, the seven Aggie Medal of Honor recipients from World War II were immortalized in the book "Texas Aggie Medals of Honor: Seven Heroes of World War II" by Col. James Woodall '50, a former commandant of the Corps of Cadets and a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War. [The book is available through Texas A&M University Press.](#)

To read the complete article, visit the link below.

<https://stories.tamu.edu/stories/9-medal-of-honor-recipients-remembered-for-bravery-and-exemplifying-aggie-core-values/>

ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE PASSING OF FORMER COMMANDANT MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS G. DARLING '54

Lieutenant General James W. Bierman, Commandant, Corps of Cadets

To the Aggie family,

I am deeply saddened to share that Major General Thomas G. Darling '54, has passed away.

Following a distinguished, 33-year long career in the Air Force, General Darling served as the Commandant of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets from 1987 to 1996.

During his tenure as Commandant, General Darling exhibited an unwavering devotion to Texas A&M's mission and traditions. He was passionately dedicated to the development of each of his cadets and spared no effort on their behalf. General Darling is fondly remembered and respected by all, but particularly by those who made their way through the Corps during his nine-year tenure as Commandant.

General Darling's legacy can still be seen and felt. He is credited as a driving force behind the funding and establishment of the Sanders Corps of Cadets Center. His efforts to make Corps recruiting more systematic and effective had a lasting impact; the Darling Corps Recruiting Company is named after him.

General Tom Darling lived the life of a selfless Aggie; he is an American hero. His impact on the Corps, university and nation still resonates. We remain deeply appreciative of his leadership, vision and selfless commitment to developing well-educated leaders of character.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Kit and the entire Darling family. Details regarding General Darling's memorial service will be shared as they become available.

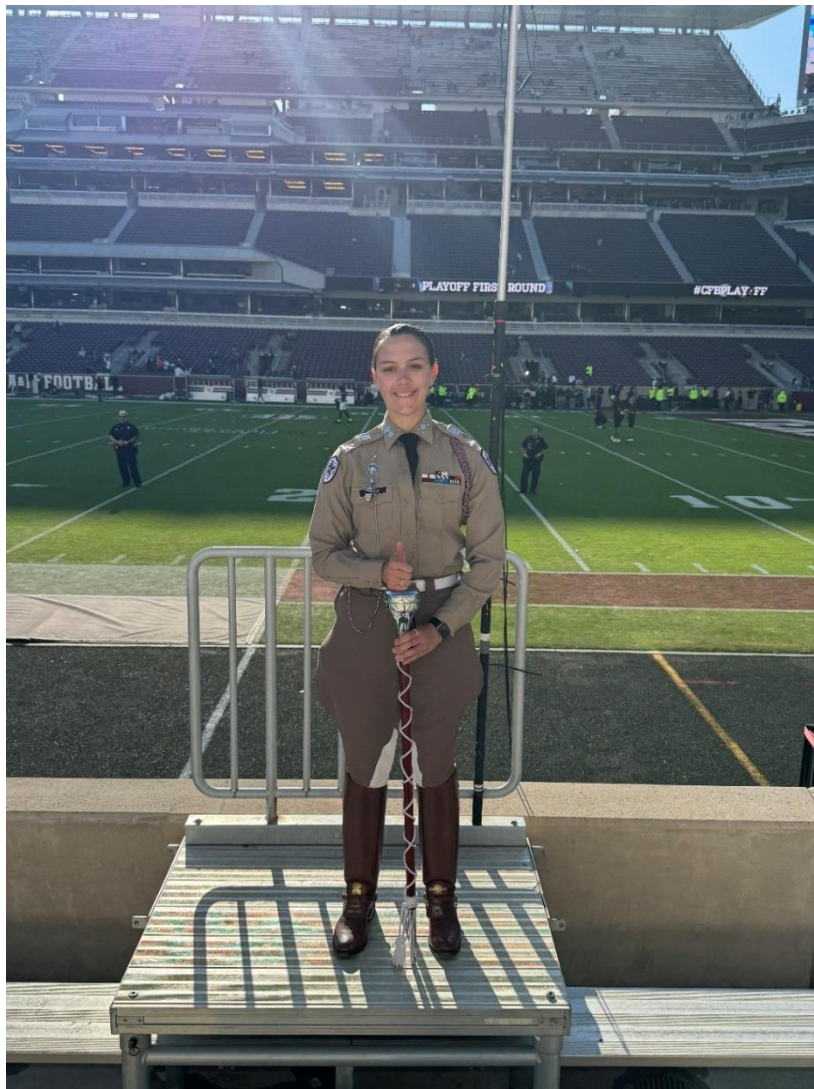
NATALIE HOLDER '26 – FIRST FEMALE HEAD DRUM MAJOR

Bill Younkin '69

When most of us entered A&M most were in the Corps. We learned that who or what we were before did not matter now. We were all the same, even had the same first name, "fish". What we quickly learned is we were going to be judged on only two criteria, our ability and the content of our character.

This all occurred before women in the Corps. Then along came Cadet Natalie Holder. Natalie is a fourth generation Aggie. Her great grandfather Leonard Don Holder, Class of '42. Her grandfather, Leonard Donald Holder, Jr., Class of '66. Her father, Douglas Holder, Class of '91 and mother, Stacey Holder, Class of '93. Natalie is the Class of '26.

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When Natalie entered A&M, she decided not only to join the Corps of Cadets, she also joined the Fighting Texas Aggie Band. If that was not enough involvement, she decided to try out for the Fish Drill Team. She was chosen to be part of the Fish Drill Team, and the team also won the drill team national championship.

Natalie had learned what ever fish in the corps must learn, don't let the sophomores yelling at you affect you. You learn to deal with it, just sift through it all to determine what was important and what was not.

After Natalie's successful time as a fish on the Fish Drill Team, she wanted to be an advisor and train the next class. She was one of eight sophomores chosen. The Fish Drill Team won another national championship.

At the end of Natalie's sophomore year, she was chosen as the Artillery Band Sergeant Major. Yet there was one goal that Natalie had. According to Natalie, "There was one goal I had from my fish year in the Aggie Band. I wanted to be a Drum Major

of the Aggie Band. When a message on our band website came announcing auditions for Drum Majors of the Aggie Band, I immediately applied as did twenty-one other cadets. Academics were also a factor. People started to drop out. There were now fourteen remaining in the audition. Then there were seven finalist and I was one.”



“Part of the process was to drill the band outside on the drill field. The decision as to the three chosen was to occur behind closed doors. The band director and his assistants, as well as the three current drum majors. We were assembled the next day with the full band in attendance. Each drum major called out the names of who would take their place. That left the current Head Drum Major, Fernando Trevino. He called my name.”

“Last summer I had to do a lot of endurance work as the mace I would now hold was heavy, really heavy. It wasn't long before August 10 came back and time to prepare for the fall and what I would need to do, train the new fish to perform drills. That first game I was super excited, nervous, and with the added pressure of being the first female Head Drum Major. Our on-field performance was successful and when we ran off the field, I was so happy and felt all that weight lift.”

[Click on image below to view her final halftime performance at Kyle Field](#)



“I will say that everyone has been supportive especially my classmates. I also want to say that my grandfather, a former commander of the Second Brigade his senior year, was super supportive of all my decisions and all I attempted to do.”

So, what does the future hold for Natalie? She will graduate this spring. She is a biology major and carries a perfect 4.0 GPA. Her opportunities are limitless. It is good to know that today in the Corps of Cadets, people are still being judged on their ability and the content of their character.



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

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.

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If you wish to comment to those who decide:

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Commandant LTG J.W. Bierman: commandant@corps.tamu.edu

SRG Board of Directors' Resolutions for: 2026 – 2027

- 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 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.