

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Eighteen

1 December 2020

Dr. Junkins Sends Response to the SRG – Thanks to Him and Best Wishes

Our SRG President, Tom Reid, sent a congratulatory message to the newly appointed TAMU interim President, Dr. John Junkins. He graciously responded:

*Tom Reid '61
President, Sul Ross Group
November 21, 2020*

Thank you so much for reaching out, Tom.

I understand your concerns and will do my best to help navigate TAMU thru the COVID-19 rough seas. The infection numbers recently are ticking up again, both nationally and locally, but the vaccine on the spring horizon gives us a basis for optimism that things will be much better by summer. I have a mountain to climb with regard to my learning curve over the next month, but I am hard at it already. I have to hit the ground running in January.

I will do what I can to pull extreme voices toward the center, and for starters see if we can move toward a climate where freedom of speech and exchange of ideas can be done with a much lower temperature. Young adults learning to listen to those with whom they disagree is very important, but teaching these lessons in the midst of bull-horn assisted yelling and cell phone videos being made is a challenge. Needless to say, in the current world of social media, 24 hr news cycles and political polarization, we face difficult problems. Indeed, our local circumstances are fueled by a nationwide social unrest challenges; unfortunately, there is no vaccine of the horizon that will address this nationwide viral unrest outbreak. We all survived the 60s and early 70s; think what this period would have been like with the internet, social media, etc. We are in a similar era, with different foci, but with steroidal amplification by social media.

With almost 70,000 students, it is hard to see a future where there will not be some voices and behaviors that some of us will find offensive and of course, these will always get some media attention. I think I know where you are coming from and while having no magic bullet, I will do my very best to move us in a constructive direction. It will likely take a multi-year Bob Gates-class presidency to address your concerns more fully. I chaired the Gates presidential search. It is too much to hope for to see the second coming of Gates, however I am optimistic we will find a principled leader by June that will be here 5 years or more. Hopefully our next president will truly understand Texas A&M's traditional values the deep patriotic and virtues that are associated with this university. I am on the 20-something member search committee charged with finding finalists for our next President, I am doing what I can to help on that front and am committed to making a handoff to the next President.

Being a child of the Apollo program (I began working at NASA at age 19 in 1962), there is a mantra that is drilled into my rocket scientist head as well as a fundamental consideration drilled into all astronauts during their training: "You will never have a problem so bad that doing something stupid can't make it a lot worse!" This is something I will try to keep in mind!!

I will do my best to move us in good directions this spring on all fronts. Keep the faith while we all wrestle with these two nationwide viruses: COVID-19 and social unrest. We regrettably cannot become 100% immune to either. If you perceive that I am leading us in a bad direction, or if you have suggestions, I will take them under advisement. Send a note and I will listen. While my "interim status" will not allow me infinite freedom, I think you will see some progress in the near future.

Thanks again for reaching out to me and BTH outta LSU!

John Junkins

*John L. Junkins, Ph.D., NAE
Founding Director, Hagler Institute for Advanced Study at Texas A&M University
University Distinguished Professor of Aerospace Engineering
Royce E. Wisenbaker '39 Chair in Innovation*

Congratulations Again to Dr. Annie McGowan



Dr. Annie S. McGowan was named interim vice president and associate provost for diversity at Texas A&M University effective December 1. She brings to the Office for Diversity noteworthy leadership experience. Most recently, Dr. McGowan served as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at Mays Business School, where she holds the Bill and Gina Flores Professorship in Business. She also serves on the university's Diversity Operations Committee.

Prior to serving as Associate Dean, Dr. McGowan was Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion at Mays from 2016 to 2018. During that time, she created and provided strategic oversight for the Mays Office of Diversity and Inclusion and led initiatives to recruit and retain underrepresented students

in order to foster a climate of inclusivity and engagement. Her teaching interests are managerial/cost accounting and her current research centers on the implications of cost management system design and the determinants of academic success.

Education - PhD University of North Texas, 1994; MPA Jackson State University, 1985; BS Alcorn State University, 1984.

December 1, 2020

Dear Dr. McGowan,

On behalf of the Sul Ross Group (SRG) and our Board of Directors, congratulations on your appointment as the interim TAMU VP and Associate Provost for Diversity!

You obviously are not new to this challenge and certainly not new to our beloved University. Several of our colleagues associated with the Mays School have said some complimentary things to us about you. We look forward to your leadership because this job is important to what sets us apart as an institution.

We of the SRG take pride in our responsibility, as the “elder statesmen,” to be constructive, helpful and “mentoring” as we conduct our supportive business. We are passionate about preserving what made us Aggies special, and we fully understand that change is inevitable and constant – something we embrace! We assure you that we do not believe that we are Ole Ags “stuck in the past.” We remember the days when we were not diverse nor large – and we can observe the days now when we are, for sure, incredibly largest in the Nation and most diverse in both categories! But at our age, we believe we have the experience and wisdom to understand the importance of the common threads of our core value system, history of service before self, and resultant culture that manifest themselves in our traditions. We can and should have it both ways because of these threads – during our trek from the traditional to today’s modernity.

As you step into your new position, we want you to know you can count on our full support to help you and your folks in any way you need us. Frankly, we have identified some concerns about issues you will find in “your inbox.” And it seems that transparency and responsiveness regarding questions we have raised about them has not exactly been forthright. So perhaps we can work with you on some of these in a helpful, “stately” way this winter and spring.

Again, please accept our congratulations as you step forward in service – taking on another important task in a line of others you have already shouldered. Very best wishes.

Sincerely,

Tom Reid .61
President
Sul Ross Group

TAMU Provost Fierke Moving On

November 30, 2020

Dear faculty, staff and students, [and former students]

As you may have seen, Brandeis University announced today that Provost Carol A. Fierke will join its university as Provost and Executive Vice President, where she also received her Ph.D. in biochemistry. She will remain at Texas A&M through Dec. 31.

While Provost Fierke, in her usual manner, would prefer no fanfare, I cannot let the moment pass without thanking her profusely for her tremendous leadership and success since her arrival three years ago, culminating in this year’s outstanding response to COVID-19 that helped our university continue to forge ahead with in-person classes as well as remote learning and extensive safety protocols.

Some additional achievements under her leadership include:

- *Launched the Student Success Initiative to increase student retention and graduation rates at Texas A&M. Since her arrival, the retention rate for first-time, first-year students has risen by 2.7 percent to 94.4 percent, and the four-year graduation rate has risen by 5.6 percent to 60.6 percent.*
- *Served the needs of the growing population in the state, with enrollment of more than 71,000 students in the fall of 2020, while retaining high standards of academic excellence.*
- *Hired more than 350 new tenure and tenure-track faculty during her tenure to help accommodate growth in student population.*
- *Fostered a commitment to diversity and inclusion, as evidenced in more than 400 applicants this fall for the Accountability, Climate, Equity, and Scholarship (ACES) faculty pipeline program. Texas A&M has received the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award and was recognized twice by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine as a “Diversity Champion;” and*
- *Established, in concert with findings from a cross-university task force, a Graduate and Professional School to attract, support and graduate world-class students across a host of disciplines, departments, and colleges.*

I thank Provost Fierke for her continual display of the Aggie core values of respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity and selfless service. An interim provost will soon be announced.

Michael Young, President, TAMU

Congrats - Dr. Mark Weichold Named as Interim TAMU Provost by Dr. John Junkins

November 30, 2020,

Following President Young's announcement earlier today, I am pleased to announce that Mark Weichold has been appointed interim provost, effective Jan. 1. Dr. Weichold '78 is a highly respected leader at Texas A&M who will undoubtedly work well with faculty, staff and students in his new capacity.

Dr. Weichold is a three-time Texas A&M graduate who currently serves as the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the College of Engineering, as well as the Executive Director of the Halliburton Engineering Global Program. He is also the Halliburton Engineering Global Program Professor, a Regents Professor, and Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering. Dr. Weichold graduated from Texas A&M in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering, and went on to complete a master's degree in 1980 and Ph.D. in 1983 in the same discipline.

Prior to his current role, Dr. Weichold served as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs with the College of Engineering from 2016-2017. Prior to that, he was Dean and CEO of Texas A&M University's branch campus in Doha, Qatar from 2007-2015. Previous leadership roles include Dean of Undergraduate Programs and Associate Provost for Academic Services from 2003-2006, and prior to that, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Academic Services from 1998-2003.

Dr. Weichold's career has embodied selfless service. At Texas A&M, he has served in no less than nine roles to date on the Faculty Senate, including Speaker. He has chaired 19 university

initiatives, including the Hurricane Katrina Displaced Students Committee, Minority Recruitment and Leadership Team, and Academic Oversight and Operations Committees.

Dr. Weichold is a life fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). He also received the Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah International Energy Award for Lifetime Achievement for the Advancement of Education in recognition of his scholarship and service.

These are but a few highlights in a distinguished career in teaching, research, leadership and selfless service that make Mark Weichold ideal for this role in leading as interim provost.

The months ahead will involve continued service to our core educational mission, navigating COVID-19 recovery and operations, make-up commencement ceremonies this spring for May and August 2020 missed commencements, as well as the May 2021 commencement.

Dr. Weichold will continue a relentless focus upon student success in working with deans and team members in the Office of the Provost to build upon the great work in this regard led by Provost Fierke.

I look forward to serving with Mark in his new capacity as I am in mine, as recently announced.

Gig 'em,

John Junkins

About Dr. Mark Weichold



Professor, Electrical & Computer Engineering; Regents Professor; Executive Director for Halliburton Global Engineering Program; Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Educational Background: Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D., Texas A&M University

Research Interests: Solid State Device Physics and Fabrication

Awards & Honors: International Excellence Award, TAMU International Programs Office, College Station, 1997; TAMU GSC

Kunze Award for Outstanding Graduate Advising, TAMU Graduate Student Council, College Station, 1997.

A Kill is a Kill!

We Ole Ags have too many recollections over the past 55 or so years about our confrontations on the football field (and otherwise) with the gang from Red Stick to bitch about a win like this on Kyle Field in the wet conditions! As Billy Liucci of TexAgs said, *"I remember watching way too many A&M-LSU games where the Aggies fought like hell to punch*

in a 'let's make it more respectable' TD in the final minute!" And for you young Ags, you do not want to know what it was like in the 50s!



We in the SRG have a lifetime “of perspective” with which to measure different things. So, when one stacks all the attributes beside those of TAMU against lsu, it’s not anywhere close in the overall comparison. Football – a little maybe, but in that category, we are building something superb, which draws the envious attention of the swamp kitties and their t-shirt fans.

It was painful listening to the “eSipn” announcers (Bob Wischusen and Dan Orlovsky) hammering away about a “convincing” win to stay in the CFP conversation, and that on top of Herbstreit and gang. In fairness, they did say some complimentary things about our Institution, Kyle Field and what Coach Fisher is building. The game – well, not perfect. But a fact-stat which one has to love is the possession history of the swamp kitties:

- 1 – Stopped on 4th down
- 2 – punt
- 3 – punt
- 4 – punt
- 5 – punt
- 6 – interception
- 7 – missed FG
- 8 – punt
- 9 – punt
- 10 – punt
- 11 – punt
- 12 – fumble
- 13 – interception
- 14 – punt
- 15 – punt
- 16 – punt
- 17 – touchdown

Another telling indicator is that the swamp kitties rushed for a total of 36 yards! Here is how an Ag blog poster summed it up very well: *“Mond was bad tonight, yes. [So was the OL!] WRs dropped some balls tonight, yes. Weather was bad tonight, yes. We were rusty after two weeks off, yes. They did a phenomenal job bracketing and taking Wydermyer out of the game, yes. Ag defense played a helluva game and our D-line makes a mediocre secondary look good when we constantly apply QB pressure only rushing 3-4, yes. We could and should have won by 35, yes. “eSipn” commentators don’t like A&M, sure. Enough of the BAS - lots of football left to be played. Here’s to being 6-1. Let’s roll the next three and see how it plays out! Gigs!”* BTHO auburn!

You can reach us at: SRGpresident@aggienetwork.com

Reminder: Anyone (Ags and non Ags, SRG Ags and all other Ags too) can “opt in” by going to <https://www.aggienetwork.com/theassociation/sulrossgroup.aspx> and simply putting in your name and email address, and then clicking on “submit.” You will then automatically receive all the SRG Bulletins.

If you wish comment to Those who decide:

Chancellor Sharp: chancellor@tamus.edu

The Board of Regents: vickie@tamus.edu or jbell@tamus.edu

Interim President Junkins: junkins@tamu.edu

Interim Provost Weichold: m-weichold@tamu.edu

Athletic Director Bjork: rrabun@athletics.tamu.edu

VP for Student Affairs (VPSA) Pugh: djpughsr@vpsa.tamu.edu