

# Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Forty-Four

21 October 2021

## President Banks' Interview



In the Texas Aggie magazine, September-October 2021 issue, pages 26-31, our Fightin' Texas Aggie Boss, Dr. Katherine Banks was interviewed by Cait Shields '11. The first question is: "What, in your opinion, makes Texas A&M and Texas Aggies unique?" If you haven't read the article, and to give our readers who have not the incentive to do so, here is as a great sample – and her answer!

*"Aggies are leaders, not followers. We take pride in helping others. It is a loyalty to one another not found anywhere else. We share our success, give back and pay it forward. Texas A&M is my sixth university, so I speak from experience when I say Texas A&M is unique. Traditions are everywhere, but Aggies live their traditions. Our traditions represent values. They represent the best*

*in us. More than a slogan. More than a mascot. Texas A&M is more than a university. It's a network of core beliefs and loyalties. It's family, our Aggie family."*

Your owe it to yourself to read the entire interview and can find it at: [2021 Sep-Oct | Texas Aggie Magazine \(aggienetwork.com\)](https://aggienetwork.com/2021-Sep-Oct-Texas-Aggie-Magazine)

## The Fightin Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets – an update from the SRG Board of Directors

We, the Sul Ross Group (SRG), sometime receive credit for being the "keepers" of the Texas Aggie Spirit. While we like to think we contribute to that, we are not the keepers. We are elderly, (try to be) "stately," and perhaps provide a "conscience" to and for our beloved University. The Corps of Cadets is the keeper of the spirit as Dr. John A. Adams, Jr.'73 says in his book, Keepers of the Spirit, Texas A&M University Press, 2011. Oh, by the way if you have not read it, please do so. And check out the "Epilogue" at pages 292-294! Additionally, the following are phrases captured recently from the script of Chancellor John Sharp '72 in his television shows "Around Texas with John Sharp:"

- *"The Corps represents the combination of academic excellence and wonderful Aggie Spirit that demonstrates the strength of America for service for the greater good.*
- *The Corps represents the Spirit and Traditions that make Texas A&M like no other and is the most visible part of Texas A&M's rich history and traditions.*
- *The Spirit and Traditions that make Texas A&M like no other are deeply rooted in the Corps of Cadets."*

As we have repeatedly stated, the strategic purpose of the SRG BoDs, is to perpetuate Texas A&M University's "transcendence," initiated by L. Sullivan Ross undeniably 140 years ago, and is based on honor and a noble call to duty. It still exists today as our graduates go forth with pride, become leaders of character with success, and give back to their alma mater! This is the basis of "It", our core values, culture, spirit and traditions which others covet. It's also the basis for our incredible reputation of selfless service and accomplishment. Now that our student body is the largest in America and very diverse, we Aggies possess (to varying degrees) this transcendence as we seek our places in life. "We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we!"

The Corps is less than 4% of our student body total now. But we believe there is little



doubt that without it, we'd fast become just another fine academic institution. One can debate this to a fare thee well, as it has been done over the decades. But the truth is the truth. There have been past movements to eliminate the Corps,

especially from different eras of Aggie academicians. In fairness, one reason has been poor Corps academic performance which is a valid point and to which most SRG classes can attest. But recently, we've had Commandants attack this issue with vigor and success! In our Tier 1, AAU University - which is challenging academically and for admission to say the least - the Corps of Cadets scores a higher GPR average (over a B average) than the total Texas Aggie student body. This is most remarkable since the total student body includes just over 50% women (who make better grades than men). The Corps of Cadets has 18% women.

How can that be, you ask? This "historical dragon has been slain" by leadership! Obviously, the focus and priorities have been changed with an improved culture. And the Academic Leadership Centers in the Quad, with their tutors provided by the Commandant, have contributed substantially. We couldn't begin to recognize the contributing leaders who got that done, but wish to salute BG Ramirez '79, LG Joe Weber '72, Chancellor John Sharp '72 and many others. There is another leader who played a big part in this success who just happened to be, at the time, the Dean of the largest (and best) engineering college on the planet (TAMU's). That would be Dr. K. Banks - now our Texas Aggie President. As we understand it, she partnered and supported General Ramirez and his associates in this initiative and accomplishment. In our opinion, then, we must ask ourselves what remains to be done regarding our Corps of Cadets as a defining, quintessential, key institution of TAMU? In review, the Quad has been modernized; Academic Leadership Centers have been added with tutoring programs resulting in academic emphasis and excellence. So what else?

This leads us to Corps growth and sustainment and the enabler of successful recruiting and retention! TAMU officials stated publicly a year and half ago that the TAMU policy is to “grow the Corps to 3000 and sustain it.” In fact, a new dorm has been approved in the TAMU System’s fiscal plan for future construction in the Quad. It will provide an additional 500 dorm bed space capacity for the build to 3000. However, that cannot happen without improved Corps of Cadets recruiting results.



Last year, despite a good start, the recruiting results were adversely affected by the pandemic. To sustain a total of 3000 cadets, recognizing an attrition rate representative of an institution of volunteer young people. The initial input must be almost 1000 annually - not 740! A large host of elements go into any successful recruitment program. But in today’s society, with competitors like the service academies and other institutions who require excellent academic standing for admittance, convincing qualified, bright young people to voluntarily choose the Aggie Corps

of Cadets is a challenge. It’s true that they will become leaders of character and the most sought-after graduates - commissioned or not! Yes, they will receive a world class education. Yes, they will undergo a “leadership lab” second to none. Yes, they will be part of the famously supporting “Aggie Network” for life. However, they (and their parents) must pay the bills and cadets, must undergo a disciplined lifestyle.

So, this brings us to the key enablers of scholarship and other Corps recruiting support requirements! The Commandant, with the support from former students and the Texas A&M Foundation’s endowment management, has numerous scholarships available to bestow. When given, they were designated for Corps students. Although the number of scholarships almost equals the current cadet total, the annual monetary benefit falls significantly short of what is needed in terms of the scholarship numbers and their individual annual fiscal benefits with which to provide the incentive for growth that has been established!

We have interfaced with leaders of the Cadet Corps Association (CCA), and discussed this issue, Corps advocacy, and more. We agree that since the CCA’s missions and endowed programs fall under the umbrella of the Texas A&M Foundation management authority, that they are rightly the lead advocate for a five-year fiscal campaign, in partnership with The Foundation. The SRG will definitely stay engaged in this process. Besides Corps-designated scholarship values and numbers plus other support programs, the CCA, in support of the “deciding” TAMU leaders must determine what specifically a fiscal campaign’s objectives would be and for how much. It should be noted that 1. There has not in recent times been such a campaign specifically for the Corps, and 2. When established it will add another TAMU fiscal campaign “in competition” with all the other Aggie money raising campaigns (and their constituents). So based on who we are and what we believe is the gemstone (the Corps) of Texas Aggie transcendence, we should be determined to slay these last support “dragons”

which are Corps growth, sustainment, and requisite recruiting enabled by not only increased scholarships, but other support programs yet to be determined. We look forward to reviewing the CCA's draft proposal.

There is an important post-script when considering this initiative! Who really cares about the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets officially, and where and how is it codified and officially expressed? The existence and official support for the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets should not just be "implied" subject to the whims of different Texas A&M University Presidents, Chancellors and Regents. We are fortunate, currently, to have this Administration in place! For example, President Banks recently approved the award of increased funding for Corps support! And we have already quoted what the Chancellor has said about it.

Having initiated and worked with all the major stakeholders on this initiative, we believe we definitely, in principle, are in agreement and all headed together in the same direction of the establishment of a five-year capital campaign in support of the Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets – details to be determined. The VP of Student Affairs, BG Joe Ramirez '79, and the President and CEO of the Texas A&M Foundation, Tyson Voelkel '96, have indicated their support but want to ensure that this effort receives adequate thought and preparation prior to its rollout. As we remain engaged in this process, we shall keep our membership informed about the collective progress.

## **US Army and Its Bush Combat Development Command**



Chancellor  
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

*Howdy!*

*12 October 2021*

*The U.S. Army must like what it sees in Aggieland.*

*As The Texas A&M University System continues to build out the George H.W. Bush Combat Development Complex (BCDC) at the RELIS Campus, the Army has awarded the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) a new contract through 2026 for R&D projects worth up to \$96.2 million.*

*The new contract coincides with the completion of the Research Integration Center (RIC), which will serve as the intelligence center for BCDC research and testing of high-tech devices, systems and other components related to hypersonic velocity and autonomous combat.*

*The RIC was completed just two years after an initial agreement was signed between Army Futures Command, the Texas A&M System, TEES and the State of Texas to modernize the military.*

*The new contract adds two years to the partnership, and it could increase Army spending at the BCDC by more than \$50 million over the amount already spent under the original agreement.*

*John Sharp, Chancellor, Texas A&M System*



## Fightin' Texas Aggies BTHO (then #1) bama!



## Aggie Catholic Priests Bless Kyle Field before bama Game!

In an [Eagle](#) article by Travis L. Brown on 11 October 2021, it was reported that the initial trajectory of Texas A&M kicker Seth Small's last-second kick was sailing wide either to hit the upright post or to miss left. That was until something seemingly intervened.



In the mind of TAMU System Chancellor John Sharp, the mid-flight course correction that finalized the improbable victory - a 41-38 Aggie win over No. 1 Alabama - had to have been from the Divine. After all, Kyle Field had been the recipient of prayers and blessings from various clergy prior to the game, at Sharp's behest.

Three priests from St. Mary's Catholic Center, located a block north of A&M's campus, blessed Kyle Field using a liturgy from the Catholic Book of Blessings. It was a request Sharp had previously made of the church after the renovated Kyle Field was dedicated before the 2015 season. The request made sense to the Rev. Chris Smith, associate pastor at St. Mary's and a 2010 graduate of A&M. While, theologically, God may not have a stake in the outcome of the game, several of the Aggie football players are parishioners of the church, as well as three yell leaders and a large swath of the student body.

*"Our intention of going out there, was just to ask God's blessing to protect and to sanctify the stadium for the sake of the players,"* Smith said. With a hearty laugh, Sharp said his intercessory desires were a little more to the point. *"Father will tell you, 'we're just praying for the health and safety of everybody,' but my intent wasn't that kind. I just wanted to flat-out win,"* he said.

The Rev. Will Straten, Class of 2000, led the "Order for the Blessing of a Gymnasium or a Field for Athletics" out of the Catholic Book of Blessings, alongside Smith and the

Rev. Andrew Dinh. The blessing was read at midfield and was continued in a lap around the field, while holy water was sprinkled.

At any rate, “*We’re pretty sure that when that field goal was veering to the left, the good Lord kind of blew a little puff on it and blew it back to the right,*” Sharp said with a chuckle. One can find the entire article to enjoy at: [https://theeagle.com/catholic-priests-blessed-kyle-field-before-alabama-game/image\\_aa42f9cc-2ad9-11ec-bbae-9b92ed70c4f1.html?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_campaign=user-share](https://theeagle.com/catholic-priests-blessed-kyle-field-before-alabama-game/image_aa42f9cc-2ad9-11ec-bbae-9b92ed70c4f1.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share)

## Chancellor’s Update



19 October 2021

*The Texas A&M University System scored big in the special legislative session that just ended.*

*Our share of the \$3.35 billion in new capital projects for higher education is \$727.4 million – 22 percent of the total.*

*That includes \$56 million for a new clinical teaching and research complex for the veterinary college in College Station; \$34 million for A&M-Galveston’s engineering building; a \$43 million building for the RELLIS Campus in Bryan; and \$70 million for our portion of TMC3, a planned biomedical research campus in Houston.*

*Other funding for capital projects include:*

- *Prairie View A&M: \$45 million*
- *Tarleton State-Stephenville: \$65 million*
- *Tarleton State- Ft. Worth: \$25 million*
- *A&M Central Texas: \$45 million*
- *A&M Corpus Christi: \$45 million*
- *A&M Kingsville: \$45 million*
- *A&M San Antonio: \$45 million*
- *A&M International: \$45 million*
- *West Texas A&M: \$45 million*
- *A&M Commerce: \$45 million*
- *A&M Texarkana: \$45 million*
- *A&M HSC-McAllen: \$30 million*

*The Legislature also provided \$20 million to support our regional universities that educate a large portion of the state’s at-risk students.*

*Separate legislation appropriated \$300 million for a badly needed State Operations Center in Austin, which is run by our newest state agency, the Texas Division of Emergency Management. The current facility, built in the 1950s, is outdated and badly needed because Texas has more federal disaster declarations than any other state.*

*Sincerely,*

*John Sharp, Chancellor*

## NOTES

---

### **REMINDER - SRG March '22 Reunion Information!!**

March 2-4, 2022

College Station, TX

<https://www.aggienetwork.com/events/2022/sulross.aspx>.

**SRG Bulletin Sign-Up Reminder:** Anyone (Ags and non Ags, SRG Ags and all other Ags too) can “opt in” and sign up 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](mailto:chancellor@tamus.edu)

The Board of Regents: [vickie@tamus.edu](mailto:vickie@tamus.edu) or [jbell@tamus.edu](mailto:jbell@tamus.edu)

President Banks: [president@tamu.edu](mailto:president@tamu.edu)

Interim Provost Scott: [t-scott@tamu.edu](mailto:t-scott@tamu.edu)

Athletic Director Bjork: [rabun@athletics.tamu.edu](mailto:rabun@athletics.tamu.edu)

**You can reach us at:** [SRGpresident@aggienetwork.com](mailto:SRGpresident@aggienetwork.com). The Sul Ross Group (SRG) Board of Directors (BoD) are responsible for producing and editing these SRG Bulletins, with transparency to and advice from The Association of Former Students, under whose auspices we operate. We do so in keeping with one of our four charged SRG Constitution’s Purposes, which is keeping our represented SRG Membership informed in a timely manner. To access information about us as the elected SRG Board of Directors, and our Constitution, please refer to our new “**SRG Tab**” (Under “**Programs**”) on The Association’s website, at: [aggienetwork.com](http://aggienetwork.com). One can access information about us, including the current 2021-2022 SRG Board of Directors, The SRG’s Constitution and By-Laws, and the SRG’s history and what we’re about.