

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Seven

4 September 2020

To our SRG Class Agents and their Classmate SRG Members,

SRG email Bulletins, as the needs arise, are supplements to our Newsletters so that we can keep you informed in a more timely manner on topics as they unfold; and so you can then lend support and share it as you see fit. We kindly request that the class agents do not call The Association and ask them to distribute it for you. If you wish to comment, below are some addresses for you to voice your opinions:

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TAMU President Young to Step Aside

September 2, 2020

Dear Aggies,

As we continue to navigate the start of the academic year toward what I am hopeful will be a great semester followed by a beautiful springtime in Aggieland, I wanted to let you know that I have notified Chancellor Sharp that I plan to retire as president, effective May 31, 2021. Marti and I have been discussing this for more than a year. We concluded that, after almost a quarter century of serving in senior academic leadership roles and an increasing desire to turn back to topics that occupied much of my previous career, this would be our last year.

In the meantime, I will continue to focus on the priorities at hand, preserving our core educational missions and ensuring that we are well situated to continue our extraordinary progress as a world-class educational institution.

In this academic year we face unusual challenges. Yet we will continue to provide transformational learning opportunities for all our students, as well as produce remarkable discoveries that improve the lives of the people of Texas and our country.

My charge upon arrival in 2015 was to help create a trajectory that would give Texas A&M an international reputation while remembering our core mission as a land grant institution. I am

pleased with the significant rise in rankings, the noteworthy expansion of research, our remarkable success in the ambitious \$4 billion Lead by Example fundraising campaign, and most of all, the privilege of working every day with our exceptional students and our dauntless faculty and staff.

I remember meeting students on my first visit to Texas A&M before accepting the position. While the students were not aware of the nature of my visit, their core values of respect, leadership, excellence, loyalty, integrity and selfless service shined through. I knew what a wonderful opportunity it would be to serve them. I look forward to joining the faculty of the Bush School of Government and Public Service and the Texas A&M School of Law for that same reason.

Sincerely, Mike Young

About the “Burn Book”

If you recall what we reported about “One Party Campuses” in the 9 July SRG Bulletin One, this will ring a bell for you at TAMU. It concerns the “Burn Book” list of “called out” (or “doxed”) conservative students who are trolled on social media and then identified by their posts as being such. This is but an example of what Distinguished Professor Dr. John Ellis talked about in his book, The Breakdown of Higher Education! If you got a copy, or read a summation if it, what has happened on American campuses is that the radical liberal students and faculty shout down and intimidate conservative students, faculty and visiting speakers to the point that there is no balance in the narratives and debates, and thus no “free speech” environment as he explains it. And this threatens our national security and freedom.

The article is from Campus Reform in a piece by Lacey Kestecher: “*In 2019, Campus Reform reported on the doxing of conservative students at the University of Texas, before they ever stepped foot on campus. The leftist group threatened any students seeking to join conservative campus groups as freshmen with doxing, the public release of their personal information, such as phone numbers and addresses.*”

You can read about it here: <https://www.campusreform.org/?ID=14977>

The Athletic Department is part of TAMU – Right?

On 25 August 20, The Texas A&M Athletics Department published and announced The Aggie Commitment initiative to further prioritize its standards and practices in support of Diversity and Inclusion.

Led by Deputy Athletics Director and Chief Diversity Officer Kristen Brown, as well as Associate Diversity Officer Mikado Hinson, this initiative will aim to make significant progress toward providing new opportunities for personal and professional growth and development for student-athletes and staff. It will celebrate and honor Black History at Texas A&M and continue to provide student-athletes with an unparalleled experience, all while being a change agent in the fight against injustice.

“The purpose of The Aggie Commitment is to further our efforts and ensure that we are intentionally creating a diverse and inclusive atmosphere for Texas A&M Athletics every single

day,” said Director of Athletics Ross Bjork. “Combating racism, making everyone feel welcome and understanding differences is a never-ending journey and we must dedicate the right resources to hold ourselves accountable and showcase leadership within our university, our community and college athletics. The Aggie Commitment is also another step to make certain that we follow through on the pledge that we made as an athletics department in June of this year, when we asked everyone to do their part to make our society a better place.”

You can read it in its entirety here: <https://247sports.com/college/texas-am/Article/Texas-AM-announces-The-Aggie-Commitment-150682392/>. With the emphasis on the Black student athlete, it presents the details of component including - hiring, retention and representation; celebrating Black history and excellence; student athlete experience; and continuing education. Mikado Hinson - Director of Football Player Development and Associate Diversity Officer said; *“I love the fact that there is real substance to The Aggie Commitment. We have a feasible plan moving forward in celebrating Black excellence at Texas A&M, enhancing the student-athlete experience and emphasizing the importance of continued education for our staff and student-athletes. We have a plan in place to recognize and celebrate former Texas A&M black student-athletes inside and outside the arena of competition. We have a phenomenal history that needs to and will be honored and celebrated”*

Some questions: Over the past three months, it appears that the Athletic Department operates with a good degree of autonomy, and this raises some questions about its role in providing an integrated, united voice and effort with the rest of the University. In their key part as the “front porch of TAMU” (as Coach and the AD call themselves) the Athletic Department and the University must have unity of effort with a single voice. For example - we suppose they (or should) know that the TAMU president announced his “Ten Steps” on 15 June which overlap this program. And that he also announced the formation of a Commission on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, with one of your players appointed to it, with tasking to report findings and recommendations to the Regents in November. Can we assume that the Athletic Department’s Diversity Officers are aware and integrated into the Commission’s process? They refer to their 600 athletes as “student athletes” – so how does the “Commitment” program integrate and relate to the overall TAMU “Commission” effort? Are the athletes at TAMU set apart and special from the student body? Are “We are the Aggies, the Aggies, are we?” What about the concept of the 12th Man as a part of the Team?

“Now let me Get this straight!”

From one of our ole Ags – “No Aggie Band, no National Anthem, 25% in the stands, no recognition of old AGS, nothing but a bunch of spoiled “athletes” who mostly appear to hate everything about our school and especially “old white donors” - and yesterday they skip practice to go to a black lives matter rally !!? I think I am going dove, turkey, hog or deer hunting on Saturdays this year! And I will keep my checkbook in the drawer!”

Your Actions are Speaking Louder Than Your Words!

The Texas A&M football team canceled practice Friday, August 28th at about 7:30 PM so players, Coach Fisher and others could participate in a multi-team march through campus as a demonstration against racial injustices that have occurred in the United States. It wound up in Academic Plaza to “pause and reflect,” and was also joined by student athletes from A&M’s volleyball, basketball, soccer and track and field teams who joined the football players. They walked from the Bright Football Complex to the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue a few blocks away. During the meeting, player Ausbon said “Friday’s march was more than a demonstration but a safe space to talk.” Several other athletes took to the center of the circle to speak during the approximately 20-minute gathering including Coach Fisher.

As reported by The Eagle on 29 August 2020, you can read it in its entirety here: https://theeagle.com/sports/college/aggiesports/texas-a-m-football-cancels-friday-practice-to-participate-in-march-through-campus/article_2c4e71d0-e99a-11ea-a080-5ff9716b6d5b.html#tracking-source=home-top-story-1

Again, some questions: Reference TAMU Procedures, Policies and Practices regarding “Expressive Activity” which you can access here: <https://provost.tamu.edu/Provost/media/Assets/pdfs-essentials/Access-Expressive-Activity-0618.pdf> - Since you are STUDENT athletes, and you had time to invite players from other Aggie sports, did you consider other student groups such as the Student Senate? The Traditions Council? Corps of Cadets, Fraternities and Sororities? Others? If not, do you feel that you are special and not a part of the other STUDENTS in the student body? Did any of you attend fish camp? Do you feel integral to the 12th Man? Do you care? If not, why not?

Since we value the precious right in our US Constitution to assemble and express ourselves freely (see the referenced TAMU Policies), did you consider (since you were seeking a “safe space to talk”) stopping off (since you had to have walked around it enroute) to reflect on and choose Simpson Field as that “space” - a memorial to all the Texas Aggies who gave their lives in WWI to defend and preserve your rights? Did you know that 16 Texas Aggies who were among them were recipients of the Navy Cross or the Distinguished Service Cross? Do you have a clue about what that recognizes – some posthumously? Did you remember them and perhaps pay tribute to them in your protest discussions as free Americans and Aggies? Who among you have ever been to a Muster? Silver Taps? A military burial service for an American much less a Texas Aggie killed in combat?

You were recently quoted as saying something about “the culture you are creating.” Well, the culture of teamwork and selfless service in a combat unit is the Gold Star standard. So be careful about your lecture. Do you know what a “Gold Star Family” is? Coach – we’ll be honored to set you and team members up to attend one IF you could be so inclined to dignify the family and the sacrifice being honored in the proper and traditional manner. And when you enter the Memorial Student Center, do you think about why we do not have a student union here, but a Memorial - and who it memorializes?

Did you include talking about the sad loss of life and property destruction in recent demonstrations that degraded into riots? Did you identify how some of you follow and re-tweet material by those who say things like “white people are rooted in hatred, evil and fear – and barbaric savages similar to pigs and can go to hell?” And did you think about acknowledging in the bigger picture something special that we have in the Spirit of Aggieland? That you are thankful to be an Aggie, playing in the SEC West, in the best stadium, with the best student body backing you, in incredible facilities and on scholarships given by former students (who you have insulted), who are dedicated to making your life after TAMU and athletics successful and fulfilling because of “The Network?” And “they” MAY deserve something besides your bullhorn act with your football staff saying, concurrently on Twitter, “good job and leadership.”

Summary and Thoughts on the Way Ahead

For the past three months, there have been many things proclaimed, demanded, said, protested, written, declared, and rioted over in America. To some degree this summer, the TAMU campus has been a microcosm of this. We believe at this juncture that we have two different aspects overlapped in this episode at TAMU. One is a political element and the other is about who we are and what sets us apart from other universities and why. We assume that Texas Aggies, both past and present, believe that the latter, embodied in our Spirit, is great and worth being a part of or you would not have come here in the first place, or still make the Aggie claim. The problem is that these two aspects are not compatible when it comes to the issues presenting themselves over the past three months.

Indeed, in the SRG, we well understand our precious Constitutional rights and freedoms to assemble and express ourselves. This is basic to being American and Texas Aggies as demonstrated by our record of the call to duty and selfless service – even to defend these to the death as we have faithfully demonstrated. Agree or not, in a hotly contested debate (in a peaceful venue), this is basic - and certainly here at Aggieland - as spelled out in the Policy on “Expressive Activity” as referenced above makes clear.

TAMU is built on principled traditions. One is the 12th Man concept! We do not need to explain it other than to say and demonstrate that “We are the Aggies; the Aggies are we!” This emerges every day and everywhere, especially at athletic events wherein we ALL stand ready with our players to lend our support and loyalty to them as part of the team in a contest. These events, where Texas Aggie uniforms are worn on fields and in facilities given by Aggies signifies our team concept and includes those who stand ready as King Gill did. These are Texas Aggie athletic competitions between us and other opponents. Therefore, they are no place for the political element. So political protest messaging on uniforms, gestures and otherwise on the fields of competition are not appropriate and not acceptable.

Amongst these issues, with all their agenda working, we have before us two options. We can either get this worked out together, as Aggies with civility - or not. If it's the

latter, the outcome is going to be ugly. As we have written previously about the issues we have before us, there are those who have a “say” (and as acknowledged, everyone has a say thank Goodness!), those who have a “vote,” and then those who must and will “decide.” We believe that it is clear who the cohorts are in all these categories.

And speaking about one of these cohorts, it’s our Sul Ross Group (SRG) membership of some 16,000! After listening to them, reading their letters of opinion and concern, and learning the survey data about what they think over the past three months, we are most confident that they agree with their Board who has the honor to represent them. That confidence level is above the 95 percentile. They most definitely get a “vote” because they enable, through their Texas Aggie spirit and generosity - facilities, scholarships, athletic contests attendance, and incredible support.

So, if we have amongst us some who do not believe we have something special (always striving to make it better) at Aggieland, then perhaps it is time for them to relocate. But for the rest of us, we need to get together, work this out and move forward.

If You Would Like Another Reinforcing Opinion to Our Summary...

Read Imprimis, “American Sports are Letting Down America,” Jason Whitlock, Volume 49 July/August #7/8, which you can find here:

<https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/american-sports-letting-america/>

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