

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Thirty-Seven

18 June 2021

In review – President Banks' Statement on 1 June and an SRG "Thank You"

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

1 June 2021

First and foremost, it is with immense pride and enthusiasm that I begin my service as president of this great institution today. It is truly an honor to be part of something so respected and admired around the world.

Over the next few months, I look forward to meeting with students, faculty, staff, former students and other valued stakeholders in small listening sessions. As a result of these conversations, together, we will develop a framework for the future. I am eager to hear about your experiences, thoughts, concerns and aspirations for Aggieland as we identify key priorities for our university. We all recognize that Texas A&M University has limitless potential. We also know that we need to work together to consistently achieve greatness. We have tremendous talent, support and spirit, which are anchored in unique and rich traditions. The candid input, feedback and discussion from these sessions will allow us to improve as a university family and as an institution.

In addition to these sessions, to meet our full collective potential, I believe we must ensure that our administrative structure is the right one to support a university of this size and stature for today and for many years to come. Therefore, I am conducting a comprehensive review of the university's operations with the goal of achieving a structure that is effective, efficient and flexible, while aligning our valuable resources to attain our mission: the success of our students, faculty and staff. Changes will be made where warranted and necessary as we continue to improve our operational performance in ways that provide the most value to our many stakeholders.

I would like to thank Professor John Junkins for his strong leadership as interim president during the transition. We owe him a debt of gratitude. In true Aggie spirit, he answered the call to serve during a period of unprecedented challenges facing the university and our nation.

In all that I do as your president, I am committed to this university and its success. I will uphold the Aggie core values and traditions, while ensuring a culture of respect for all. Together, we will take this university to new levels without compromising what makes us, uniquely, Texas A&M.

M. Katherine Banks, President

COMMENT: We are pleased to inform our membership that, true to her word, President Banks invited Joe Ashy '62, SRG President, to her office for a meeting on the 15th of June for one of her listening sessions. It was a privilege to have been invited, and the exchange was very much appreciated. Dr. Banks is an incredible lady and proven leader. We, the SRG Board of Directors, look forward to serving her, TAMU and The Association with her at the Texas Aggie helm, and we congratulate her again on her appointment as President. Also, we are pleased to report to our SRG members that Dr. Banks has graciously accepted our invitation to be our guest of honor and banquet speaker at our March 2022 reunion!

Dr. Frank Ashley Named to head TAMU's Diversity Effort

As reported on 18 June 2021, Dr. Frank Ashley III has been selected to oversee TAMU's diversity effort. He is the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. He came to the Bush School from the College Board, where he was Senior Vice President of Membership and Higher Education Engagement. As Senior Associate Dean, Dr. Ashley oversees graduate education and research activities as well as strategic planning, faculty affairs, student affairs, program development, diversity, assessment, communications and external relations, student services, and extended education programs in the Bush School. He also teaches the Managing Diversity in Public and Nonprofit Organizations course.



Dr. Ashley earned his bachelor's degree from Louisiana College and a master's and doctorate from the University of Alabama. He began his academic career as a science teacher and coach. His previous appointments include faculty positions and service as Dean of the College of Education and Interim Provost-Vice President for Academic Affairs at Texas A&M University-Commerce as well as Director of Admissions and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Teacher Education in Texas A&M University's College of Education.

From 2007 to 2010, Dr. Ashley served as Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for the Texas A&M University System, where he served as Chief Academic Officer for the System and represented the System at the state level on all academic issues. In 2010, he was named Vice Chancellor for Recruitment and Diversity and Chief of Staff. In this position, he collected and analyzed System data on diversity and assisted System universities and agencies in recruiting and retaining diverse students, faculty, and staff.

A former College Board trustee, Dr. Ashley also has served on boards and committees for numerous other organizations, including the Community Foundation of the Brazos Valley, CHI St. Joseph Health, the North American Society for Sport Management, the Commerce Independent School District, and the Development Education Subcommittee of the P-16 Education Council of the Texas Education Agency. He was also a member of the editorial board of both the Journal of Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics and the International Journal of Sports Management.

Fightin' Texas Aggie Women's Track Team Finishes 2nd Nationally

In Eugene Oregon on Saturday, June 19th, the Aggie Women competing in the NCAA Track and Field National Championship Meet finished a resounding second overall just behind Southern Cal. The men had finished 6th overall the day before. Athing Mu set a college record in the women's 400 meters, and she anchored the Aggies' 4X400 relay

team to victory in that even. If you did not watch it on television, it was not even close! The Aggies' junior Tyra Gittens added another victory in the heptathlon to help the Aggies pile up 63 points (SC won with 74). Georgia was a distant 3rd with 37.5, followed by Alabama and North Carolina A&T with 31, then LSU with 28.5, and Florida and the sips with 28.



As reported on 12 June 2021 by Tyler Pounds, TAMU Athletics Communications, "**Athing Mu** dazzled track and field fans across the nation breaking her own 400m collegiate record by .11 seconds to win the national title with a time of 49.57. It was the first individual national title the freshman has claimed. Teammate **Charokee Young** finished fifth with a time of 51.13 as the Aggies tallied 14 team points in the event.

"Just over an hour later, Mu split 48.85 to anchor the Aggies to a 4x400m championship. The Aggie quartet of **Tierra Robinson-Jones**, **Charokee Young**, **Jaevin Reed** and Mu clocked an all-time collegiate record time of 3:22.34. Texas A&M completed the indoor and outdoor sweep of the 4x400m after claiming the indoor title in early March and defended the outdoor title from the last contested NCAA Championships in 2019.



"**Tyra Gittens** claimed the heptathlon national championship with a total of 6,285 points. The multi-eventer started day two with a long jump leap of 21-9.5 (6.64m) to bring her overall total to 4,887 points, a 416-point lead over Ida Eikeng of Washington. Gittens followed in the javelin with a personal best toss of 135-4 (41.24m), good enough for 691 points. With a 29-point lead heading into the final event, the 800m, Gittens clocked 2:28.88 in the 800m for 707 points to edge Michelle Atherley by 218 points for a title winning overall score of 6,285 points.

"She placed third with a clearance of 6-1.5 (1.87m). Including her second-place finish in the open long jump on Thursday, it was her third top three finish bringing her point total to 24. Fellow jumper, **Deborah Acquah** earned First Team All-American honors placing fourth in the triple jump with a mark of 45-9.25 (13.95m)"



Head Coach Pat Henry said, "We lined it up, this group of ladies did a tremendous job. We knew that we didn't have a lot of bullets, but we knew that we have an elite group of ladies that can score. Tyra [Gittens] to score 24 points in this competition is huge and she is still a junior on top of that. Athing [Mu] to run the fastest 400m race ever in collegiate history, she just continues to gain confidence in herself. Everyone thinks that she is going to run off and leave everybody, she

does but she still has some challenges. It's not just about winning, her challenges are running faster all the time and that's tough, but she continues to do it." Related to Mu and Gittens's aforementioned honors, both Aggie women were named on June 15th, by the US Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association (for NCAA Division I), **Athletes of the Year** – Mu for Women's track athlete and Gittens for field athlete!

Aggie Football Recruit's Statement During Campus Visit 11-13 June

In a post-visit interview by TexAgs, this is what the player said when asked about "what Texas A&M has to offer after football?"

"Yes, sir. They talked about the Aggie Network and all that different type of stuff. They talked about Texas A&M alumni, and where they are, and how many people there are, so if I wanted to focus on a major, they could put me with somebody from that major who could help me. And if I need something after, like help finding a job or somebody to help me get started, they could help with that after football, too."

Seems to us that this is one of many reaffirmations that the 12th Man has team members everywhere being integral to the Texas Aggie team concept! They are in the workplace, in leadership positions, while giving back to the University. They donate athletic scholarships, facilities, courts and stadiums (otherwise they would not exist). They support, as equals, Aggie athletes on those courts and playing fields while they are engaged in contests against our foes. All of us are "one team," mutually supporting as only Fightin Texas Aggies can and do! And this process continues on for generations in the Texas Aggie Spirit.

fish Camp (fC) – and a Pop Quiz

The Sul Ross Group's Constitution's "Purposes" include not only serving TAMU and The Association, but also to help keep our SRG membership informed on pertinent topics of interest. One of these topics on which we have been focused for over two years is fish Camp (fC). The reason is that the mission tasks of fC are vital to our preserving what makes Aggieland and Texas Aggies special and preserving that. If incoming fish are not taught and integrated into the student body with knowledge about 1. How to successfully navigate the academic rigors of attending a Tier One AAU University, and 2. The history and culture of TAMU embodied in our traditions and value system, then we shall wind up being just another good academic institution instead of the one many covet.



The SRG Board of Directors has planned a visit to fC for over two years since we hear a lot about it from our members and others. This past year, our plan was hijacked by the pandemic. But now, thanks to the VP of Student Affairs, we have a plan in place for six of our members to attend Session "F" in August 2021 (Ashy '62, Smith '62, Blume '63, Oliver '63, Nelson '64 and Stanton '64). We are going to observe and learn in order to gain a solid understanding so that we can converse about it with factual, first-hand knowledge.

To that end, we have been working with Dr. Vicky Dobiyanski '03, the Deputy VP of Student Affairs who will attend with us. And we have accomplished some pre-trip studying and

preparation about the program. In doing so, we have had the privilege to meet the Head fish Camp Director Eric Munoz '21 and several of his staff members and Advisors. We appreciate the time and effort they have spent with us to date.

We shall have plenty to report to our membership in the future about our experiences and observations. However, we thought you'd like to have a short "**pop quiz**" about this vital program to perhaps stir your interest:

1. fish Camp (fC) is a _____ run enterprise and program under the auspices of _____.
2. There are other new Aggie student orientation programs besides fC, and they are _____ and _____.
3. fC is conducted at the venue Lakeview just south of _____ Texas.
4. In all the new Aggie student orientation camps conducted annually, about _____ of all new students typically attend one of them.
5. In a typical Fall season, there are _____ "Sessions" for fC and each Session has _____ "Camps."
6. Each fC has two student _____ leaders with student _____ helpers.
7. About _____ new Aggie fish are assigned each "Camp"
8. Each "Camp" in each Session has a senior _____ assigned who is chosen through an established nomination and selection process prescribed on the fC website (and SRG members have proven great in this role).
9. The annual Sessions typically run from _____ to _____, and they assemble at and return to _____ on the TAMU campus.
10. It costs \$250 for each student to attend fC; and for those students who need financial help, "\$250 Scholarships" can be donated to this cause; or an endowment for that matter (see the fC website).
11. (Bonus question) – Is there an orientation program for new incoming Aggie athletes and if so, who conducts it?

Veterans Resource and Support Center (VRSC) Dedicated at MSC



As reported on 14 June 2021 by several news outlets including The Bryan Eagle (Megan Rodriguez), the newly refurbished Don and Ellie Knauss Veterans Resource and Support Center became a reality and was dedicated on the 14th of June in the Texas Aggie Memorial Student Center. It was made possible by the generous gifts of Don and Ellie Knauss. The Knauss' initial connection to Aggieland is their eldest son and his wife, who both graduated from Texas

A&M in 2010. However, they said, it is their belief in the power of education, paired with Don's former military career in the U.S. Marines as an artillery officer, where he earned the rank of captain, that make their relationship with Texas A&M and the VRSC a natural fit.

The 10,000 square foot Center is on the second floor of the MSC and was unveiled to hundreds of university leaders. President Banks, Chancellor Sharp '72 and many other distinguished participants spoke. It was divulged that just after WWII, 75% of Texas Aggie students were veterans! Now, there are 1200 veterans (or their immediate family) enrolled at TAMU.

More than 30 employees moved into the new facility, leaving behind their 5,000 square foot space in the MSC's basement. What was once a few hotel suites is now home to a library, a lounge, a study and event space and offices. Marine Colonel (Ret) Jerry Smith '82, the Director, said that the project was completed on time and under budget. **Very Good Bull!**

Texas Aggie PITCH Competition

As reported on the McFerrin Center's website, TAMU Mays Business School, *"Aggie PITCH is the only university-wide business plan pitch competition at Texas A&M. This high-energy contest serves as a platform to display the exceptional startups currently being developed by Texas A&M current and Former students. Ventures that compete at Aggie PITCH receive excellent exposure to possible investors, mentors, partners, and more. In addition, Aggie PITCH serves as a networking event that allows Aggie entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, current students, and former students to gather together to make connections and support one another as entrepreneurs. Startups from all industries are invited to compete at Aggie PITCH! Whether you're launching a fintech venture or have invented an exciting new consumer product, if you're a startup founder then don't miss your chance to compete at Aggie PITCH."*

Each year, Aggie PITCH awards thousands of dollars in prize money to competition winners. In addition, ventures that compete at Aggie PITCH are automatically admitted into an exclusive group of startup founders who are eligible to represent Texas A&M University at national and global entrepreneurial competitions.

New in 2021, Aggie PITCH will feature three competition options – Full Pitches for current students, Full Pitches for Former students and Elevator Pitches. All current and Former Texas A&M students (including branch campus & A&M System schools) are encouraged to create and submit their business concept/plan via online application.

Aggie PITCH is open to the public (at the MSC on Sunday the 13th of June) and we invite you to join us on competition day to watch the pitches, build your network by connecting with members of the Aggie entrepreneurial ecosystem, and enjoy the environment and energy that is always present at such an exciting event."



The Winners

Current Student Full Pitch:

1st Place Winner | Phage Biosciences | Lila Ross '21

2nd Place Winner | Al-Ris | Uthej Vattipalli '22

3rd Place Winner | Olera, Inc. | Logan DuBose

Former Student Full Pitch:

1st Place Winner | Datalogz | Logan Havern '19

2nd Place Winner | HelioWave Technologies LLC | Adrian Guzman '08, '12, '19

3rd Place Winner | Divergene | Paola Correa, PhD '15

Elevator Pitch:

1st Place Winner | Real Rejuvenations LLC | R'riel Smith '20

2nd Place Winner | Lazarus | Benjamin Omonira

3rd Place Winner | Exosphere Fitness | Connor Pogue '16, '18

2020-2021 State of the Corps Report



"Greetings from Aggieland! The 2020-2021 school year proved to be a successful year for the Corps of Cadets, despite the many challenges our cadets faced throughout the year. Texas A&M faced many obstacles this year due primarily to COVID-19, but throughout

the entire year we all stayed focused on maintaining a sense of normalcy despite the many restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 concerns. Some doubted the ability of the Corps of Cadets to function effectively and consistently in a COVID-19 environment and believed that the Corps would have to shut down elements of the Corps or even the entire Corps itself due to COVID-19.

*Thanks to the planning, preparation, and concerted efforts by our staff and our cadets, the Corps of Cadets successfully completed the entire year, with many highs and lows, finishing out the school year on the morning of April 30th in Kyle Field with Final Review – an event we could not conduct last year due to COVID-19! We are very proud of our cadets and the way they overcame the challenges they faced and represented our Corps and our university throughout the school year. The cadets reinforce every year that we are achieving the mission of the Corps of Cadets by continuing to **"develop well-educated leaders of character who are prepared for the global leadership challenges of the future."***

Keeping Former Students and the Aggie Network up to date about the accomplishments of our Corps is very important to me. We want to share with you how the Corps of Cadets continues to make a big difference in the lives of the young men and women who will become the future leaders of our communities, our state, and our nation. We hope you enjoy the following recap of the 2020-2021 school year for the Corps of Cadets. I think you'll see that our Corps continues to be an organization of which you can be proud. Our credentials—our cadets—are making a big difference for Texas A&M, the state of Texas, our great nation, and the world!"

COMMENT: Colonel Byron Stebbins '78, the Interim Corps of Cadets Commandant, joined the SRG Board of Directors meeting on 10 June. We had a good update discussion about most of the information included above. However, we asked him about the Corps recruiting outlook for the coming 2021-22 year. The answer was that they are not really sure yet. Last year, their efforts for a promising class were adversely affected by the pandemic. He will keep us updated and we'll pass it along to you.

He did confirm that their meetings with the TAMU Registrar had paid dividends regarding good students who check "want to join the Corps." These are the ones who qualify academically in the competitive process, but who didn't quite make the cut line, will now be given strong consideration. This is good! He also confirmed again that they are committed to building the Corps to 3000 cadets (including two new dorms to be built in the future).

We encourage our members to read the entire report at: tamu.corps.edu (then go to "State of the Corps 2020-2021, Texas A&M Corps of Cadets")

Aggie Park Construction Update



As reported by Scot Walker on 4 June 2021 in Aggie News, the development of Aggie Park in the heart of the Texas A&M campus is moving into its major construction phase this summer, which will affect access to the park and the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center. You can access the entire article here: <https://www.aggienetwork.com/news/156595/aggie-park-construction-to-commence-this-summer/>

Cadet to Medicine Program

As reported by Gracie Blackwell, Texas A&M University College of Medicine, 9 June 2021, the college's "Cadet to Medicine" program encourages members of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets to pursue careers as military physicians. This fall, TAMU's class of 2020 graduate Andrew Chapman will be the first student to enter the Texas A&M college of Medicine through the cadet to Medicine Early Assurance Program. The program currently has nine in the program as undergraduates.

The College of Medicine launched the Cadet to Medicine pipeline program in the spring of 2019 to encourage members of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets to pursue a career as a military physician as part of the college's commitment to producing the military physicians the United States needs. "What this program does is allow these students to have a direct early assurance into our medical school and then springboard them into one of the armed services to pursue a medical military career," said Fernando Vasquez, director of admissions and early assurance programs at the College of Medicine.

Members of the Corps of Cadets are eligible to apply to the program during their sophomore and junior years of their undergraduate studies. Once admitted, participants of the program undergo medical school preparations, such as enrolling in a free MCAT

prep course, shadowing in a private practice or hospital setting and participating in a semester-long seminar course.

“We want students to be able to function in the military environment and in the non-military environment and be just as flexible and open to treating everyone that comes through their door,” Vasquez said. “We’re providing a unique, dual platform for them that not many medical students are given. This program will allow them to fully engage themselves in the full delivery of medicine from every population that they’re going to come across.” One can access the entire article here:

<https://today.tamu.edu/2021/06/09/cadet-will-be-first-to-enter-college-of-medicine-through-pipeline-program-this-fall/>

NOTES

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

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

President Banks: president@tamu.edu

Interim Provost Weichold: m-weichold@tamu.edu

Athletic Director Bjork: rrabun@athletics.tamu.edu

You can reach us at: 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. 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.

Answers to Pop Quiz – 1. Student, TAMU VP Student Affairs 2. Transfer Camps and Venture Camps 3. Palestine, TX 4. 60% 5. seven and six 6. “chairpersons” and “counselors” 7. 80-100 8. “Namesake” 9. July-August 10. \$250 11. A “Traditions Night” conducted by the AD with support from the Head fish Camp Director