

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Twenty-Six

3 February 2021

In Review

Howdy, Ags! As communicated in SRG Bulletin 25, The Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) presented their report to the TAMU System Board of Regents on Monday, 25 January 2021. Following, Dr. John Junkins presented his recommended plan for improvements which were codified in eight action areas. The Regents approved this plan for implementation unanimously (and is recorded in the Regents Statement on DEI). We, the Sul Ross Group (SRG) Board of Directors, expressed our total support for Dr. Junkins' plan and have since had the honor to meet with him, hear his rationale, and accept his request for our support during implementation actions on the eight initiatives.

There has been plenty written about the decisions the Regents made that are reflected in their Statement of 25 January. The eight actions (recommended by President Junkins) which The Regents approved are:

1. Expand the student pipeline for underrepresented groups by 2026
2. Increase the Regents Scholar Program by more than 10%
3. Increase National Recognition Scholarships
4. Establish Pathways to Doctorate Fellowships
5. Grow the ACES Fellows Faculty Program
6. Recognize more Aggies Leading by Example
7. Establish a Task Force to fully tell the Texas A&M history through displays and iconography (in addition to that of the LSR Statue which will remain in place)
8. Document and communicate the success of our many former students of color

Note: one can access the statement here:

[01-25-2021 BOR Statement on Diversity.pdf \(tamus.edu\)](#) These actions are intended to help TAMU “better recruit, welcome and serve more members of under-represented groups in fulfillment of our land grant mission.”

The DEI Commission Report

As stated above, there has been much written and said about the DEI Commission Report. One can read about it in: The Eagle article, 31 January – https://theeagle.com/news/local/texas-a-m-diversity-commission-leaders-reflect-on-report-look-ahead-at-coming-changes/article_85aef830-637f-11eb-bee0-9317af5d6602.html#tracking-source=home-top-story, and; Texas Tribune article, 27 January - https://www.texastribune.org/2021/01/27/texas-am-sul-ross-statue/?utm_campaign=trib-social&utm_content=1611938496&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter

We, the SRG Board do not support the DEI Commission Report. It is biased, unbalanced, did not define key terms, ignored historical context, and used selected data and referenced conversations to support agenda driven conclusions. One can access the report here: [Texas A&M System Regents Approve Plans to Improve Diversity - The Texas A&M University System \(tamus.edu\)](https://www.tamugov.edu/regents/2020/06/23/texas-amu-system-regents-approve-plans-to-improve-diversity/)

The “bottom line” which frequently gets overlooked is that “we” now all have an authoritative decision on two major issues which have been at the fore at Aggieland since June 2020: The first is the Ross statue (which will remain where it is, with additional historical representations added in the redesigned Plaza). The second is that Dr. Junkins and his task forces will implement actions (see the Regents Statement) to improve the African American student percentage in the TAMU student body from an “underrepresented” 3% **to more than double that amount!** To provide some context to how Dr. Junkins’ plan and result will “stack up” to other University cohorts, the comparative “norm” for the other land grant universities is 4.3%. This result will also exceed most AAU (63) Universities, and it will be better than the sips in Austin. **This is a great start on an improvement path.**

As a reminder about authoritative decisions, the TAMU System Regents were nominated by the Texas Governor and confirmed by the Texas Senate as the oversight body for the Chancellor’s TAMU System. They possess the authority to make decisions on issues put before them under their purview - such as the findings of the DEI Commission Report, and the TAMU President’s action plan. On 25 January, they “decided” in a unanimous, now binding vote on both of the two major issues addressed in the previous paragraph. And before they did, they received and thus considered the reports of both the Commissioners and the President. This all seems to fall on deaf ears to some, particularly in the press.

Moving on and Making Progress

As stated, we have been through the review, recommendation and “deciding” processes that began last summer on some important and controversial issues. Now it is time that we all move out as Texas Aggies together and make some progress. That should be the focus, and we in the SRG plan to do just that in full support.

Dr. Junkins reached out to our SRG Board and met with us this past week. We had an open, constructive and productive two-way dialogue, and we were honored and privileged to have been afforded this courtesy. His leadership style is immediately impressive. There is no doubt that he accepts accountability for his huge responsibilities! He listens, questions, and importantly decides what his job demands of him to do as a leader. It was very clear what his “President’s intent” is about the eight action items! From the SRG Board’s perspective, this was a most welcomed part about this meeting! He definitely does not intend to throw some “actions over the transom” and let someone turn them into something that will be counter to his envisioned outcomes. He understands TAMU, its strengths and what it stands for. And there is no doubt that he has our interests and values at heart.

At the conclusion of the session, he asked us for our continued and full support – not only from the SRG Board but our entire membership. **In that regard, Dr. Junkins intends to continue the discourse as we proceed. We now are assuring him again that we are behind him 100% plus, particularly on the Sully statue and the “equity” improvement to the African American percentage of our student body and their inclusion in our Texas Aggie ranks.**

In that regard, we ask our SRG members to join in with us. We will strive to keep you well informed as we go forward, so that you can be the “spread the word legion” through your conversations and communications - including Letters to Editors and Op Ed pieces everywhere.

Dr. Matt Poling ‘90 and The Beagle

You owe it to yourself to read what he says, and one can access it at: www.collegestationbeagle.com. Here are some excerpts:

***Young's Commission Delivers Predictable Report** – “With apologies to those who participated earnestly, this was always going to be a show trial. If your blood pressure is controlled, you can read the Eagle article, which like the commission report it is based on, is mostly a work of fiction created in a progressive echo chamber informed by a tiny fraction of “stakeholders” and unsigned by even its supposed authors. It was a grand jury formed by a (now former) prosecutor, for the express purpose of indicting not just a statue but an entire university over a hoaxed racist note, in a political power play. Having read the 100+page report and the Regent's statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, I now share with you the good, the bad and the ugly.”*

***By contrast** – “The response from the A&M University System Board of Regents was reasoned and measured. An additional 25 million dollars will be directed towards expanding existing programs to first generation college students and minority scholarships. The ACES (racial faculty fellowships) program gets expanded, so it will be interesting to see what impact these scholars have on campus climate. The task force to “accurately and fully tell the story of Texas A&M's history through displays and iconography” conceals more than it reveals. But I am optimistic.*

Michael Young is gone as are several of his key appointments. Interim President John L. Junkins is a true scholar and capable leader. Bad apples (one tenured) in the faculty have been disciplined or discharged--without censoring their private speech. But this is a time to remain vigilant as we approach the most critical presidential hiring in decades. We will prevail. Unlike the campus progressives, we have nowhere else to go and couldn't leave a place that lives in our hearts anyway.”

Silver Taps – All Present...Again



Texas A&M University's [Silver Taps](#), one of the school's oldest traditions, was held Tuesday, Feb. 2 at 10:30 p.m. to honor three students who recently passed away.

Students honored were Ryan Harrison Boles, a freshman general studies major from Boerne who died Jan. 24; Jarrod Cooper Glenn, a senior electrical engineering major from Leander who died Dec. 11; and Brandon Reed Williams, a

sophomore wildlife and fisheries science major from Mineral Wells who died Oct. 29.

Texas A&M's Traditions Council has said that after switching to a virtual format for the fall, Silver Taps ceremonies can now be held in-person at the Academic Plaza. The decision was made by the TAMU authorities after a thorough review of COVID-19 data

Get ready - 2021 Texas A&M football schedule

Sep. 4 vs. Kent State in College Station
Sep. 11 vs. Colorado in Denver, CO
Sep. 18 vs. New Mexico in College Station
Sep. 25 vs. Arkansas in Arlington, TX
Oct. 2 vs. Mississippi State in College Station
Oct. 9 vs. Alabama in College Station
Oct. 16 at Missouri in Columbia, MO
Oct. 23 vs. South Carolina in College Station
Oct. 30 open
Nov. 6 vs. Auburn in College Station
Nov. 13 at Mississippi in Oxford, MS
Nov. 20 vs. Prairie View A&M in College Station
Nov. 27 at LSU in Baton Rouge, LA

You can reach us at: SRGpresident@aggienetwork.com

Opt-In 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:

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