

**Sul Ross Bulletin (SRG) Bulletin Fourteen
27 October 2020**

In Review – Political Expressions at Texas Aggie Athletic Competitions

In review, this is what we said in Bulletin Seven on 4 September:

“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.”

The picture of the volleyball team and Coach Kuhn, during the National Anthem on October the 17th, shows seven players kneeling with their right hand over their heart. Coach Kuhn is in the foreground, hands behind her back, wearing a black shirt with lettering which read, “Block Out Racism.”

Mr. Bjork and Coaches - “We cannot hear you because your actions are so loud, they are drowning you out!” If you keep this up and continue not to listen to the thousands of former student voices of those who generously fund the programs supporting our 600 Aggie athletes, you’ll be back in the studio making a video begging for fiscal support. C’mon man!

Back to the Future – About the “Mystery Diversity Question” Inserted into the State “APPYTEXAS” Application Form to Attend TAMU

On the 28th of August (Bulletin Six), we reported the following about this mystery:

“It was recently reported to us several times from our members that their grandchildren were being required to answer a question on “diversity” when applying. For a while, we could not verify this even after logging on and checking out the Texas college admission application. But persistence prevailed and this is what we found out: It was added “recently,” and it is a TAMU added requirement and not from the State of Texas. It’s not an “essay” per se but a question (we were told unspecified length, but “College Matchpoint” says 250-300 words). The reason that we could not find it on the website in which one locates the form is that “the website has not been updated yet.” The Question goes like this: “TAMU believes that diversity [no definition provided] is a key part of academic excellence and our Core Values. Describe the benefits for you personally and for the campus community.”

We have been on this topic for a while now, and you can review exactly what we said: the SRG April 20 Newsletter, “Diversity. Inclusion and Integration Imperative;” 9 July SRG Bulletin One, “It’s More about Diversity at TAMU;” and 14 August SRG Bulletin Four, “The Commission has First Meeting.” In Bulletin Four we included our 6 August letter which the SRG Board of Directors wrote to the two Commissioners, conveying our inputs on several topics including diversity. It is interesting when one reads the body of literature that “diversity” is the measurement for data on a cohort’s characteristics regarding three categories – ethnicity, origin, and sex. These are required by Federal and State laws. It is used for comparisons of a cohort with the population make up of other cohorts. As the TAMUS Chancellor Sharp said recently, “We want our System University schools to look like Texas.” So, one cannot get at this question without “diversity” data. You can look up TAMU’s diversity definition on the TAMU website and make up your own mind about it. And, as we have already recommended, you can look up what TAMU’s current diversity objectives are in The [TAMU Diversity Council’s] Plan.

Seems in this whole narrative that we have the “cart before the horse!” We believe, as we have been saying consistently and repeatedly, that there is no question that “diversity” is America and TAMU! It is key because it is us! But, in itself, it is divisive! TAMU is great because we are transcendentally “one” via our culture, history of service and the call to duty, our Core value system, all manifested in our Traditions. If we do not start with this part, which IS DEPENDENT on assimilation and integration into “us” in a welcoming manner, then our whole will be equal to one part - and THAT IS NOT what we want! We want the sum to be greater than the combination of all the diverse parts!! So, if we are not welcoming in that process, then let’s work that and fix it. But start with preserving who we are and recognize “diversity” is a supporting part of that – NOT the supported basis of it! And the question/essay on why you want to be a Fightin’ Texas Aggie (in a large diverse student body with a famous common spirit and record) should be the subject of the question! OBTW, we need to change the Diversity Plan to say this and include the integration piece. And if one doesn’t want to be an integrated part of that, with a fulfilled, prosperous and successful life afterwards - because you experienced it - then there are plenty of other places one can choose!

Back to the requirement to answer the admissions question in the application to attend TAMU – we have some questions (re Bulletin Four again) about this. Why was the TAMU definition not included in the question? What was the objective concerning selection? When? By whom? And how is it used in the selection process for a 16-year-old applying? We remain on this, as we have been for some time, and will stay on it.”

And, in Bulletin 10, on 29 September, we provided the following update

“Also, the TAMUS Regents and Chancellor allocated \$100M on 15 June to assist underprivileged Black and Hispanic kids with their application processes for admission to TAMUS schools. And as reported in our SRG Bulletin Six on 28 August, a new fall semester requirement was “added” by TAMU, within the State of Texas application form, for prospective applicants to answer a question about their views on diversity (with no definition provided to them about the term). The task was “To describe the benefits of diversity and inclusion for you personally, and for the Texas A&M campus community.”

Since one of our SRG members wrote us and asked us about this new requirement in the application form, we checked into it and found that, in fact, it had been added just before the Fall 2020 semester. However, nobody to whom we talked could tell us the source within the Administration who ordered it added and its rationale. Recently, one of our SRG members shared with us the status of his Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to TAMU in his effort to fix accountability for this addition to the application form. Following here is some of the information he provided us. And it starts with his reply to what they told him.....

*This “mystery” all begs a lot more questions in addition to the ones he and we previously have asked, the most important of which is: “Has the requirement (question) been **REMOVED** from the TAMU application?” We will continue to follow this and provide updates. We salute our SRG member for his effort on this.”*

So – We now have another update! In response to the official Texas Public Information Act request, the Texas A&M Division of Enrollment & Academic Services has acknowledged that a major change was made to Texas A&M University’s admission policy. This new policy requires that students applying for admission to Texas A&M University must write an essay in response to the following Texas A&M University’s

mandated essay prompt: "Texas A&M University believes that diversity is an important part of academic excellence and that it is essential to living our core values. Describe the benefits of diversity and inclusion for you personally, and for the Texas A&M campus community."

The diversity/inclusion essay prompt identified was developed by the Office of the Vice President and Provost for Diversity and approved by Dr. Robin Means Coleman and Dr. Jennifer M. Rayes. The prompt was staffed with the Division of Enrollment & Academic Services where it was reviewed and approved by both Dr. Lisa G Blazer, Associate Vice President, and Mr. Chris Reed, Executive Director of Admission. A formal decision was then made to alter the university's admission policy to include the diversity/inclusion prompt on the university's admission application. The approved diversity/inclusion prompt was then forwarded to "APPLYTEXAS" and THECOALITION for inclusion in the Texas A&M University admissions application.

In their written response to the official Texas Public Information Act request, both the Division for Enrollment & Academic Services and the Office of Vice President and Provost for Diversity have claimed that not one single document was exchanged between any of the persons involved with the writing, staffing and authorization of this major change to Texas A&M University's admission policy.

We are still on this because it prompts a lot of questions to the TAMU President. Mr. Young - did you approve all of this? And if you didn't, what do you say about it? And for the TAMUS Chancellor, we assume you were not coordinated with and therefore not asked to consider all of your other System Universities to have this question added to their applications too (the same State of Texas form). So why would TAMU be the only exception? And since "diversity" was not defined in the question, what is the agenda here? And if one exists, are there TAMU administration senior staff officers operating amuck? If so, what is the corrective action? And has the question been removed from the TAMU "APPLYTEXAS" admissions application form?

Aikman and Buck Booth Banter

Here's the "booth banter" between Aikman and Buck off mic while preparing to broadcast for the Cowboys-Cardinals game played on Sunday 18 October 20:

BUCK: "Welcome to Big Noon Saturday!"

AIKMAN: "That's a lot of jet fuel just to do a little flyover."

BUCK: "That's your hard-earned money and your tax dollars at work!"

AIKMAN: "That stuff ain't happening with [a] Kamala-Biden ticket. I'll tell you that right now, partner."

There are always "three sides to every story" (reference Aikman's "apology" afterwards about which you can google and read many versions). One can get the context and decide for one's self. This is Texas Aggie related because we include and employ flyovers during pergame National Anthems at Kyle Field, and they are usually flown by

Texas Aggie officers who are introduced later. There is more to the story than the comment about the associated costs.



Americans may have seemingly forgotten that in the 1970's, the US converted to an All Volunteer Military Force (AVF). It was America's decision – not the military's - because of cost effectiveness – fiscal, political and social. There were and still are pluses and minuses

between the AVF and a draft system. The point is that there was a major “promise” made since the cost of sustaining the All-Volunteer Force is still substantial (versus a subscription Force and draft). This is why we have the USAF Thunderbirds, the Navy's Blue Angels and the Army's Golden Knights Demonstration Teams, supported by Congressional funding, to support recruiting. Flyovers, like the ones at Kyle Field contribute to this since there is almost always related ancillary training (also please see the next paragraph).

Patriot Missile Battery at Easterwood Field

Our Services possess combat capabilities with which to defend America and allies, but they must be maintained in high readiness to deploy in crises including their equipment and personnel. This means deploying to unfamiliar locations and excising in realistic scenarios relative to National deployment tasking.



Fort Hood, Texas sent a Patriot Air Defense Battery to Easterwood Field recently as reported by Tyler Rogoway on October 21st in The Warzone Magazine. It is part of the US Army's 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade (see photo).

The Patriot system can defend against airbreathing threats such as aircraft and cruise missiles, and against theater-range ballistic missile threats our forces face globally. No live missiles were deployed as part of this exercise.

Aggieland has a long proud history since the Spanish American War of being an integral part of supporting America's major training preparations for combat operations. For air combat, this has taken place at Simpson Field, Bryan AB (now RELLIS Campus), and

Easterwood Field as well as on campus classrooms and labs. This has been a continuing “call to duty” tradition of our Institution, and “the beat goes on!” Some of the cadets in TAMU’s Cadet Corps will take part in the drills as an element of their ROTC training. These are great opportunities for cadet orientations and is similar to the USAF’s F-35s who were here recently for the Florida gator game, and cadets got an orientation about the new 5th Generation fighter.

TAMU Athletics Fined \$100K by SEC for Pandemic Masks Violations

Texas A&M Athletic Director Ross Bjork on Saturday clarified that sideline face coverings were the reason A&M was fined \$100,000 by the Southeastern Conference.

Bjork was speaking to a group of reporters in the Davis Wade press box prior to kickoff of the Texas A&M-Mississippi State football game. He said multiple sideline personnel did not always adhere to the SEC rule requiring face coverings during last week’s Fightin’ Texas Aggie 41-38 victory over Florida.

Buzz and Ag Men’s Basketball Team is about to get Hands Slapped by NCAA

As reported by TexAgs on 21 October, the men’s basketball team will soon be issued a minor NCAA violation citation similar to the one the football team received recently. It’s allegedly because Coach Buzz Williams had a team workout at a church gym. The University’s compliance office evidently discovered the workout and self-reported it and imposed self-imposed sanctions. AD Bjork acknowledged the situation saying that the Department is dealing with it “internally and appropriately.”

Rudder Association Conclave

On Saturday, the SRG was invited to present a short briefing at the College Station Hilton on what makes Texas A&M special. The Rudder Associations’ President Elect Joe Bourgeois ’89 extended the invitation. Several members of the SRG Board of Directors joined 1st VP Joe Ashy ’62 who gave the remarks. This was a part of continuing cooperation between the two organizations who share a common interest in support of the University.

Here We Go Again

The Office of the TAMU System posted this notice on their site recently regarding the TAMU Presidential search input:

Presidential Search

A search has begun for the twenty-sixth president of Texas A&M University.

The Texas A&M University System has launched a nationwide search for the next president of Texas A&M University, the flagship institution of the A&M System.

To submit feedback and questions, or to nominate a potential candidate, please email presidentsearch@tamus.edu.

The Presidential Search Advisory Committee is established under TAMUS policy by Chancellor John Sharp and is chaired by the Texas A&M System Regents’ Chairman, Elaine Mendoza.

Open Forum Schedule

The university hosted open forums for faculty, staff, and students. The forums were recorded and will soon be made available on this webpage.

The faculty session was on Oct. 6, 2020 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. via Zoom.

The staff session was on Oct. 8, 2020 from 11 a.m. to noon via Zoom.

The student session was on Oct. 9, 2020 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. via Zoom.

We thank all who attended and shared their thoughts on the challenges ahead for Texas A&M and what we should be looking for in our next president, both in terms of professional experience and personal qualities. The feedback helps inform the work of the search committee as well as the writing of the position profile, which will be posted on the search webpage once completed.

The three cohorts addressed here for inputs, as you can see, are: staff, faculty and students. This seems to be an “engrained” practice for input solicitations about ongoing issues and begs a question about the most important group which is missing – again! The former students, who we believe have not only a “say” but a “vote” in this particular matter, deservedly earns that by their contributions to this University.

We have commented in previous SRG Bulletins about the importance of the required qualifications for the new President. We believe that based on the contributions to this Institution by the Texas Aggies we represent, the doners of time and fiscal support, gives them an important voice in this vital selection for sure. But here again, they are missing from the list! C’mon!

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.