

Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Eleven

4 October 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 distribute it to their classmates. As you will see at the end of this, there is good news about the new distribution system we have started implementing with the help of The Association. As we have explained, there will be an “overlap” between the two during the transition period. Thank you and Gig ‘em!

SRG Zooming with the Commission

When the TAMU President’s Commission on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (and Representations) was formed, we wrote the two commissioners and advised them about our recommended issues that needed their attention. They stated then that they would have web sites for sharing information. To date, those have not materialized to our knowledge. Recently, The Commission invited interested individuals to join a Zoom meeting with the Committees and participate in discussions and share inputs. Several of our members did participate. The following is what one of them shared with us in his feedback:

“Number of participants reported was about one hundred. Group was divided into Rooms for discussion, and I was in Room 7. I shared the statements below. As best I could tell from comments, one person, probably the youngest one in Room 7, had thoughts and comments similar to mine. Most in Room 7 were middle-aged folks and several worked on campus, including the advisor to the LGBTQ organization. Leaders described the task as approaching the “fourth quarter” and said a final report is to be published on 31 Oct., with a report to Young by mid-Nov. Also, the leaders said that all sessions were being recorded, so they may eventually be available.

My statement to the participants was as follows:

I COMMEND TEXAS A&M FOR ACHIEVING AN EXCELLENT COLLEGE FACTUAL RATING (372ND OF 2,475 INSTITUTIONS) FOR MANAGING DIVERSITY.

I BELIEVE TO IMPROVE THE RATING AND SCORE TEXAS A&M MUST FOCUS MORE ON ADMITTING APPLICANTS WHO SINCERELY WANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE AGGIE FAMILY AND WHO CHOOSE TO ASSIMILATE AND INTEGRATE INTO THE AGGIE CORE VALUES (RELLIS), TRADITIONS, CULTURE AND CHARACTER, AS HAVE OVER 500,000 LIVING FORMER STUDENTS.

I THINK IF STUDENTS ARE TO WRITE ABOUT A TOPIC WHEN THEY SEEK ADMISSION INTO TEXAS A&M, IT SHOULD BE ABOUT WHY BECOMING AN AGGIE IS IMPORTANT TO THEM, NOT HOW DIVERSITY BENEFITS THEM.

I BELIEVE THAT A CONTRACTUAL COMMITMENT TO AGGIE CORE VALUES (RELLIS), TRADITIONS, CULTURE AND CHARACTER SHOULD BE REQUIRED OF ALL WHO MAKE PRESENTATIONS OF ANY KIND TO AGGIE STUDENTS, AND THAT ACQUIESCENCE SHOULD BE EVALUATED CONSTANTLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

Participant comments included:

A black girl got on a bus and those close to her moved away from her...

LGBTQ people are not accepted...

White privilege was mentioned...

A transfer girl was not accepted...

White students are not friendly...

Profs are not properly respected...

A&M is considered by some as a white university...

What does Sully mean to you personally...

Respect is not displayed to all...

Ole Ags are not current and A&M is different now...

A Fable - "In Search for a Welcoming Campus Atmosphere"

Long ago in a fabled place called Aggieland, legend has it that there may have existed an alien "custom" the Aggies called a "tradition" wherein the students actually spoke to each other! They said "howdy!" (pronounced "Hideeee!"). And then it may have been followed by asking about hometowns, and even what studies their colleagues were pursuing! It was actually a human discourse! And these Aggie people were known for their friendliness and welcoming campus atmosphere!

Now we have Diversity and Inclusion Commission Zoom session evidence in the Land of the Aggies (called "Aggieland") in which there are comments about non acceptance and unfriendliness (see above). How can this sad state of affairs be? It's even rumored that zombie like students traverse the campus with earphones on and never look up nor speak anymore! We even hear that there are some "ole Ags," called "The Howdy Patrol," that sometimes walk the campus "demonstrating" this storied and ancient custom in hopes it may rub off on a few students and "catch on" again. Who knows, it may be possible that a welcoming environment could return to Aggieland?

Perhaps the Traditions Council could take this up and promote it! Also, could it be that the Student Senate might consider issuing one of their support Proclamations about this? One just never knows. Maybe the "ole Ags" were "out of date," not up with the times, deranged, and "stuck in the past!" Or maybe they don't agree with something the current generation calls a tradition but doesn't practice. Actions speak louder than words as they used to say in the old days!

Postscript: When one of our SRG Board Members read this, he added: "A great statement that should not be in a fable - try being friendly and maybe someone will be friendly back to you!"

Some Elderly Advice About Change

There has been a lot said, by a lot of people, about a lot of things since the 10th of June. What has been said depends on one's perspective. The above comment about "ole Ags are not current and A&M is different now" is an example of a perspective from a young student. As elders, we were young once also. However, we can look backward over 75 plus years via the journey through "the school of experience and responsibility" that young folks cannot, so your perspectives do not provide you that vantage point - yet!

It is fact that change is inevitable and constant - some change is good and principled, and there is a lot of it which is not! Elders have a perspective shaped by events and experiences as described above! We have been where you are going. So, it may not be that we elders are so "out of date" or unaware as perceived. It may also be that you have not come into date yet!

We believe it to be true that Texas Aggie former students and elders provide a perspective of wisdom about understanding the huge change that has taken place in TAMU. We are clearly passionate and determined about leveraging that change which is manifested in our size and diversity. That would be through **PRESERVING** what enabled us to be set apart as a special University. We absolutely embrace the resultant, diverse change. But with that comes the imperative to assimilate and integrate into our core values system, a culture of selfless service, and our traditions and history. If one cannot do that, particularly in light of the advantages it provides later in life as a former student and Texas Aggie, then one should strongly consider a transfer to another institution of higher learning!

It is a precious freedom that we, as Americans, have the right to express ourselves. And fightin' Texas Aggies have defended that right up to and including giving their lives for over 130 years. So everyone gets a "say" which we elders surely respect. But one cannot earn a "vote" unless you graduate as a Texas Aggie and go forth, work hard, prosper, and then give something back to this great institution.

So back to perspectives and conclusions - one should take the foregoing into consideration before offering "a say." And someday perhaps, you too will have also earned a "vote."

And Speaking of "Who Says and Who Votes" - Where are the Former Students in this Process??

You shall see here that search firm sessions are scheduled with students, faculty, and staff – to talk about "the organization!" Why would over 400,000 former students and their Association be excluded? After all, they are all donors of untold service and funding gifts for and to their beloved University. They believe passionately that they get a "say" and a "vote" on affairs such as selection qualifications for a new TAMU President! You can check it out here:

“From: Office of the Provost <provost@tamu.edu>

Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 9:32 AM

Subject: Texas A&M University Presidential Search Open Forums

Sent on behalf of James Hallmark, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Texas A&M University System

To Texas A&M University faculty, staff, and students:

As the search for Texas A&M University’s next president gets underway, we are most eager to hear from all of Texas A&M University’s constituents. Throughout September and October, John Isaacson, David Bellshaw, and Lindsey Gold of the search firm Isaacson & Miller are meeting with senior administrative staff and others to learn as much as they can about the organization. The university will also be hosting open forums for faculty, staff, and students. The forums will be recorded and made available on the search [website](#). The faculty session will be on Oct. 6 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. via [Zoom](#) (passcode 1876). The staff session will be on Oct. 8 from 11 a.m. to noon via [Zoom](#) (passcode 1876). The student session will be on Oct. 9 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. via [Zoom](#) (passcode 1876). We encourage all to attend and share your thoughts on the challenges ahead for Texas A&M and what you think we should be looking for in our next president, both in terms of professional experience and personal qualities. This will help inform the work of the search committee as well as the writing of the position profile, which will be posted to the search [website](#) once completed.

If you’re unable to attend and would like to share your thoughts we’re collecting those through this [survey](#).

Thank you for your help. **We look forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions.”**

To the Isaacson Miller Search Firm: Instead of “Organization,” Read and Understand This (reference SRG Bulletin Eight, 14 September)

Now that a Search Firm (**see above**) has been hired, it’s time now again to re-submit our comments on the vital piece about which the foregoing quip is associated – the narrative of what and why we are importantly different. The new person selected needs to know and understand it as a qualification and condition of employment! In our opinion, the new President must not only have academic credentials, research knowledge, understand the importance of the athletics “front porch” concept, and have PROVEN LEADERSHIP experience, but it is also IMPERATIVE that he or she understands the “unexplainable” reasons which make TAMU great. The passion in which most SRG former students believe this cannot be overstated is evidenced by their many expressions of concern over the past three months – and thus it needs to be set right this time around.

The new leader must be committed to it and be able to explain it, promote it (often), support it, defend it, culture it, respect it, live it, and insist that his staff and faculty (agree or not) also understand it, and at the least do not discredit it. A “void” has existed

on this for the past five years here at Aggieland. It has caused issues which have been observed and exposed over the past three months. This should thus be given the foremost attention, priority and focus of the search committee so-as-to get this rectified by the new selectee.

We, the Texas Aggies, have something “transcendent” that nobody else has, and yes, one cannot understand “it” if you are not a Texas Aggie - having gone through the experience so it can be imparted to you as a student. Outsiders observe it, ask for it, envy it, cannot understand it, cannot create it, they still covet it, they are jealous about it. Sul Ross’ vision initiated it (duty and honor), and great leaders have preserved and added to it (Gilchrist, Cushing, Rudder, Williams and others) as AMC and TAMU have trekked from the traditional to modernity. Now we must preserve “it”!

TAMU is a values-based University, with a rich history of selfless service and culture, along with accompanying traditions and Core Values that are imparted in the student experience to graduates. Those graduates then go forth with a sense of responsibility to answer calls of duty to State and Nation in all sectors, with “a spirit that can ne’r be told.” They work hard, are successful with their ethic, they are leaders of character, and because of their spirit and love for their beloved institution, they give back generously in every way possible! THAT is “it” into which students must understand they must integrate and assimilate. The choice is making the sum of parts greater than the whole (our strength), or, being divided in the name of JUST diversity, with the sum equal to divided, individual parts!

Back to the Search Firm – Isaacson Miller

We checked their website, and on the first page, they have this statement posted:

“We stand up for Black lives. Black Lives Matter”

Ahmaud Arbery. Breonna Taylor. Nina Pop. Dreasjon Reed. George Floyd. Tony McDade. David McAtee. Eric Garner. Sandra Bland.

These are just a few of the many individuals who have been killed because of the color of their skin. We still have not made the progress we need to make as a society and this country has a long way to go to ensure the promise of liberty and justice for all. We share the grief and frustration that many are feeling right now.

We stand with our colleagues and communities who are outraged, disgusted, suffering, and taking action, whether through peaceful protesting, donating, raising awareness, or educating ourselves on anti-racism. We acknowledge that being anti-racist is not just a statement, but a way of life, and a way of doing business.

We stand up for Black lives. We stand against systemic racism, inequality, injustice, and oppression. We are listening. We are learning. We know many of us have more to learn.

We stand with you. And we call upon our political representatives at the local, state, and federal

levels to review and revise the rules and laws that perpetuate these types of tragedies. We all must say no more. We stand up for Black lives. Black Lives Matter.”

We suggest that you check it out for yourselves, and you can find it here: <https://www.imsearch.com/>

Some Truth about the Aggie Football Team “Opt-outs”

We presume that you have been following the Texas Aggie football team “opt-out” saga and particularly how it is being reported in the sports news and “become more of a topic” with the news cycle getting a “two for one” story on Monday, September the 28th. Coach Fisher announced Chattman as opting out, and then informing us that Blades (previously having opted out) is declaring to enter the NFL draft. Billy Liucci, the co-owner and senior editor of TexAgs.Com, summarized it this way:

“It's the timing (just before and a week into the season) and the simple fact that the media has glommed onto the whole 'opt out' plague that draws them to it. It's become completely sensationalized. Ausbon, the team's leading receiver? I get it. Hines? I get that one, too. However, what these guys are doing is entering the draft extremely late (Ausbon and Blades...and neither is likely to get picked) or they're transferring (Hines and Chattman). It's also not surprising (not surprising as in I told everyone to expect more of this as the season got underway) that you're seeing it more and more from guys who have either recently become aware that they've fallen down the depth chart (and in some instances looking up and realizing that they are juniors or seniors on the scout team) or have lost a starting job. It's going on all over the country, but folks don't realize it yet. Guys who aren't playing as much as they want to are going to hide behind the 'opt out' fad rather than take advantage of a free year of eligibility because they're pissed about playing time and don't want to remain on the team and practice all season to either serve on the scout team or run down on kickoffs and punts. Instead, they're using this fall to regroup, finish school if they have to and then have everything lined up in terms of a school to transfer to and start up in January.”

Billy also pointed out that this is something the NCAA is going to have to address, because of the affect it’s going to have on players who want to and do transfer afterwards! The coaching staffs are thus going to have to figure out how many scholarships they need to hold back for potential transfers into their programs. Interesting world we live in - stay ready!

SRG Liaison with the Rudder Association

We have gotten feedback that some of our SRG members have joined the newly founded Rudder Association. They invited us to meet with them and discuss areas where we have common interests and objectives - the goal being to work together in mutual support. We definitely have a common vital interest - to preserve and perpetuate what sets TAMU apart from everybody else. We plan to stay in close touch and collaboration to this end. We thank Keith Hazelwood '74 and Joe Bourgeois '89 for reaching out to us!

Note! As you know, we are in an “overlap period” as we switch from an SRG Bulletin distribution method via the SRG Class Agents, to utilizing the new system The

Association made available to us. It is for ALL who want to receive it including Ags and non Ags, SRG Ags and Ags that are not (yet). Here it is – just go to it, write in your name and email address and click on “Submit.”

<https://www.aggienetwork.com/theassociation/sulrossgroup.aspx>

You can reach us at: SRGpresident@aggienetwork.com