

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Rudder Association Commends the Office of General Counsel of the Texas A&M University System for Its Thorough and Transparent Review

Accountability to Stakeholders Should Characterize Response and Future Strategic Decisions of the University.

COLLEGE STATION, Texas, August 6th, 2023 - The Rudder Association (TRA), a group of dedicated Aggies committed to preserving and perpetuating the core values and unique spirit of Texas A&M, today addresses the published review from the Texas A&M University System Office of General Counsel.

The published review confirms that the ill-considered decision to appoint Dr Kathleen McElroy as director for our new journalism program was the root cause of the events culminating in the regrettable settlement. After an internal review of some of the selectee's published statements and writings, TRA did express concerns to the Office of the President about the apparent misalignment of the candidate to the role. But as a minor correction to the timeline, the email was sent June 14th—one day after the unprecedented signing ceremony.

TRA commends the Aggie student-journalist who brought to wider attention the important and highly pertinent views of the selectee in her article published on June 15th. Ms Valerie Muñoz had every expectation that Dr McElroy would be her much-celebrated program director when she authored her investigative report. Her courageous reporting accurately documented Dr McElroy's advocacy for viewpoint discrimination in journalism and other ideologies inconsistent with the sentiments of the people of the state of Texas as recently expressed through their representatives.

To be clear, TRA became aware of Ms Muñoz only when her article was published. Ms Muñoz appears to have acted as an independent-minded journalist taking the initiative to pursue the facts of an important story.

While few within the Aggie family gave credence to the accusations that racial bias was a factor in the opposition to the attempted hiring, it is helpful that the thorough review confirms that such allegations were without merit. Regardless of the accuracy of the statements attributed to him by Dr McElroy, former Interim Dean Jose Bermudez failed to either rebut or retract them leading to significant reputational damage to Texas A&M.

While false claims of racism are not uncommon and by no means unique to our campus, the prepared statement from Department Head Hart Blanton regarding "acknowledged" racial bias served to further advance the false narratives promulgated by some in the media about Texas A&M. These unfounded, derogatory claims may have been significant factors in the costly settlement. TRA calls on Drs Bermudez and Blanton to apologize to the Aggie family for their false and injurious statements and violation of our core values.

"TRA believes that major strategic initiatives compel administrators to consider the input of all university stakeholders as well as the needs and desires of all the citizens of Texas. It is for this reason that the Texas Education Code invests the organization, control, and management of the

state's university system in a Board of Regents appointed by the highest statewide officeholder," said Matt Poling '90, TRA President. "The Rudder Association respectfully asks that Interim President Mark Welsh III ensure further accountability from university employees in this recent matter and that integrity and transparent processes involving broad stakeholder consideration characterize future significant strategic decisions."

About The Rudder Association

The Rudder Association, Inc. was established in the summer of 2020 by a group of dedicated Aggies with a mission to preserve, defend, and perpetuate the core values and unique culture of Texas A&M University. As an independent entity, The Rudder Association, Inc. maintains the objectivity to observe and respond when the core values and culture of Texas A&M are ignored or threatened. The Association is committed to steering a better course for education in Texas and ensuring that the traditions that make Texas A&M unique and special continue to produce patriotic leaders of character for our society. To learn more, participate, and support the preservation, protection, and perpetuation of the Texas Aggie culture, the Spirit of Aggieland and its core values and traditions, visit TheRudderAssociation.org