

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas State University System

SRSU Policy: History of Sul Ross

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Sul Ross State University, located in Alpine in Brewster County, was created by an act of the 35th Legislature in 1917 as a state normal college to train teachers. Named for Lawrence Sullivan Ross, Governor of Texas from 1887 to 1891 and President of Texas A&M College from 1891 to 1898, the institution was the successor to Alpine Summer Normal School. The bill creating the institution provided that the residents of the town would provide land, water, and utilities for the college and housing for the students. This condition was met, and following a delay occasioned by World War I, the Legislature in 1919 appropriated \$200,000 for buildings and equipment. Construction proceeded, and under the presidency of Thomas J. Fletcher, Sul Ross State Normal College began operations in the present Dolph Briscoe, Jr., Administration Building on June 14, 1920.

Seventy-seven students enrolled in the summer of 1920. They studied education and liberal arts subjects leading to teaching certificates and junior college diplomas. In 1923, the Legislature changed the name of the institution to Sul Ross State Teachers College, and advanced courses leading to baccalaureate degrees were added. The first baccalaureate degree was awarded in the summer of 1925. In 1930, course work at the graduate level was initiated, and the first master's degrees were awarded in 1933. By 1985, 10,925 bachelor's degrees and 4,862 masters' degrees had been conferred.

Under the leadership of President Horace W. Morelock from 1923 to 1945, the curriculum was expanded, additional academic buildings and dormitories were constructed, the college was admitted into membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and enrollment increased to approximately 500 students. A decline in enrollment during World War II threatened the continued operation of the college but was offset by the establishment of a successful U.S. Navy pilot training program and a Women's Army Corps Training School on campus, bringing more than 1,500 military trainees and officers to Sul Ross.

Following the war, the return of veterans increased the annual enrollments and prompted the expansion of the curriculum. Richard M. Hawkins became president in 1945, and the college was reorganized into divisions of Fine Arts, Language Arts, Science, Social Science, Teacher Education, and Vocations. Then in 1949, in recognition of the broadened mission of the institution to prepare students for a variety of careers and occupations, the name was changed to Sul Ross State College.

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The enrollment grew to more than 1,000 in 1960 and to over 2,000 in 1970. During the presidencies of Bryan Wildenthal and Norman L. McNeil between 1952 and 1974, the academic programs continued to be strengthened; new fine arts, physical education, science and range animal science buildings and a new library were constructed; and several new degree programs were begun. In 1969, the Legislature again changed the name of the institution, this time signifying full state university status by the name -- Sul Ross State University. The 1970s were years of stable or declining enrollments caused by the opening of several new colleges in West Texas. The general education requirements were revised; new degree programs were added in criminal justice, business administration, and geology; in 1973 an off-campus study center was established on the campus of Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde to provide opportunities for residents of the thirteen county Middle Rio Grande region. With campuses in Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass citizens of the area can pursue courses of study leading to one of eleven undergraduate or seven graduate degrees in education, liberal arts, or business administration. The Legislature appropriated more than \$10,000,000 to renovate and modernize the academic buildings; and personnel changes brought to the University a new generation of faculty, consisting, in 1985, of approximately 100 persons of whom 74% held the doctorate.

The Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College, an upper-level component of the University, offers junior, senior, and graduate work in selected programs in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde and is headquartered on the campus of Southwest Texas Junior College.

Early in its history, Sul Ross became the cultural and educational center for the mountainous, remote Big Bend region. The state-supported Museum of the Big Bend was established in the 1930s as a depository for materials which depict the multi-cultural society and history of the Big Bend region, and in 1976, the Archives of the Big Bend in the Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library was organized to provide a permanent depository and research facility for regional manuscript collections.

As it approaches its centennial, the University promotes scientific research in biology, geology, and range animal science, with particular emphasis on Chihuahuan Desert studies, and is involved in cooperative projects with the private non-profit Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute. Through the University's Center for Big Bend Studies, research and educational activities are conducted in the historical, cultural, and economic development of the Trans-Pecos region and adjacent areas in Mexico and New Mexico. The Outdoor Summer Theatre of the Big Bend performs for hundreds of visitors each year, and musical productions and athletic events are popular attractions. The University was a founding member of the non-scholarship American Southwest Conference and was the birthplace of the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association.

All of these activities complement the educational programs of the University, which in 2005, included 32 undergraduate major fields and 20 graduate fields, involving

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approximately 2,000 students on campus and 1,100 in the Rio Grande College. The governing body of the University is the Board of Regents, Texas State University System.

Ten men have served as President of Sul Ross: Thomas Fletcher, Robert L. Marquis, Horace W. Morelock, Richard M. Hawkins, Bryan Wildenthal, Norman L. McNeil, Hugh E. Meredith, C. R. "Bob" Richardson, Jack W. Humphries, R. Vic Morgan, and Ricardo Maestas, who assumed the office in November of 2009.