


## MEMORANDUM

July 17, 2022

TO: José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean  
College of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Hart Blanton, Department Head  
Department of Communication



SUBJECT: **Recruitment of Kathleen McElroy**

I am writing to propose that we pursue the recruitment of [Dr. Kathleen McElroy](#) as a one-year, full-time Visiting Professor and Interim Director of Journalism in the Department of Communication & Journalism. The proposal I am advancing here was *not* considered by Working Group #11 (WG11) during their deliberations on the future of journalism at TAMU. They did not consider hiring Dr. McElroy because the possibility of doing so was not known to them (or me) at that time. I only realized this possibility through my own discussions with her, which originally focused on planning our new journalism degree. However, it is my strong view from these conversations that successful recruitment of Dr. McElroy as an interim director of journalism is possible and will speed the realization of WG11's recommendations and CMJR's pursuit of national excellence in journalism.

Dr. McElroy has 30 years of experience working at the highest level in the journalism industry, and she is currently G.B. Dealey Regents Professor and Director of Journalism at the Moody School of Communication at UT Austin. She is also an Aggie. Dr. McElroy received her B.A. in Broadcast Journalism from TAMU in 1981, going on in 2013 to become our first inductee into the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Hall of Fame. She earned her M.A. in Individualized Study from NYU in 2010 and her Ph.D. from University of Texas at Austin in 2014. Prior to joining the doctoral program at UT, she worked as an editor for a number of Texas news organizations (e.g., *The Eagle*, *Austin American-Statesman*) and national news organizations (e.g., *The National Sports Daily*, *Newsday on Long Island*). Most notably, she worked for 20 years (1991 – 2011) at the *New York Times*, including as associate managing editor, dining editor, deputy sports editor, and deputy website editor. After defending her doctoral dissertation in 2014, she became Assistant Professor of Journalism in the School of Media & Strategic Communications at Oklahoma State University. She then joined UT Austin and has served as Director of Journalism since June 2018.

The arguments in favor of recruiting Dr. McElroy as Interim Director of the journalism program are wide-ranging:

1. Dr. McElroy is arguably the most successful graduate of the very journalism program we are seeking to rebuild, and she is likely the most informed and influential journalism educator in Texas. We cannot recruit another person more able than she is of assisting us in the launch of a nationally recognized journalism program; one that capitalizes on the many unique opportunities available to students at Texas A&M University.
2. The endorsement implied by Dr. McElroy's decision to join our program – even for a year – provides instant legitimacy to TAMU's bid to become a national leader in journalism.

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<http://communication.tamu.edu>

3. A one-year visiting position presents TAMU with an opportunity to recruit Dr. McElroy as a Professor of Journalism and as the first permanent director of the CMJR Journalism program. I believe that such recruitment is possible and that our best strategy is to involve her in the creation of the new program, as its interim director.
4. We should not expect a national search for a director to locate any other educator more capable than Dr. McElroy of recruiting award-winning journalists or of launching a nationally ranked journalism degree and program in Texas.
5. Even if Dr. McElroy returns to UT after a year, TAMU journalism will make greater progress towards the realization of WG11 recommendations than it can in her absence.

I have spoken to Dr. McElroy about the possibility of her joining us in fall 2022 and she has stated a willingness to do so, but we need to move quickly. I believe the university should be prepared to offer the following (with specifics determined after negotiations with Dr. McElroy):

1. Coverage of Dr. McElroy's current UT Salary, including her Director's stipend, with the option of two months of salary for summer 2023.
2. A living expense for her to relocate to BCS for a year (a move she has indicated she will make if she joins us as the journalism interim director).
3. A bursary to assist with travel and JOUR recruitment activities.
4. A one-year working budget to fund journalism activities, including but not limited to our spring [Extend the Reach of Journalism](#) conference, an annual recruitment activity designed to increase diversity in the newsroom (and in the TAMU journalism major).

We can request a range of deliverables from Dr. McElroy but my overall recommendation is that we orient our requests toward having her help us launch a journalism program that she would be willing to direct, starting in AY24. Among the responsibilities I would propose are that she:

1. Serve as primary advisor to the department, college, and university, in the strategic growth of journalism at TAMU; and as the interim director.
2. Serve on the search committee for new T/TT research faculty, including active participation in recruitment of applicants around a strategic hiring plan. [*Arrangements for avoiding COI in the search for a director can be determined at a future date.*]
3. Assist in the development of the 3-year budget for strategic growth of journalism. [*A budget will be included in the new JOUR degree submission, but that document will be focused on the narrow question of funding the proposed degree; not the strategic growth of the journalism program.*]
4. Assist with curriculum development. [*A new JOUR degree will be under review before Dr. McElroy joins our department, but she brings considerable expertise on how to improve on this start in the first year.*]

If we follow these recommendations, I believe we can achieve the goal of recruiting Dr. McElroy to become the interim director of journalism at TAMU and possibly our first permanent director. In my conversations with Dr. McElroy, she demonstrated familiarity with WG11's recommendations and expressed a wish to assist us in our efforts to implement them, in part out of gratitude for the career afforded to her by her own A&M journalism degree.

**From:** [NK Anand](#)  
**To:** [Scott, Timothy P](#); [Pettibon II, Joseph P](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Journalism: Implementation Memo and Dr Kathleen McElroy  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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I have no concerns.

NK

N. K. Anand

Vice President | Faculty Affairs

Regents Professor

James J. Cain '51 Professor III

J. Mike Walker '66 Department of Mechanical Engineering

Suite 100, Jack K. Williams Administration Building

1246 TAMU | College Station, Texas 77843-1246

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E-mail: [nkanand@tamu.edu](mailto:nkanand@tamu.edu)

Faculty Affairs Logo



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**From:** Scott, Timothy P <[t-scott@tamu.edu](mailto:t-scott@tamu.edu)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 19, 2022 3:23 PM

**To:** Pettibon II, Joseph P <[jpp2@tamu.edu](mailto:jpp2@tamu.edu)>; Anand, Nagamangala <[nkanand@tamu.edu](mailto:nkanand@tamu.edu)>

**Subject:** Fwd: Journalism: Implementation Memo and Dr Kathleen McElroy

Do you have any concerns?

Tim

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**From:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 19, 2022 1:01 PM

**To:** Scott, Timothy P <[t-scott@tamu.edu](mailto:t-scott@tamu.edu)>; Powers, Timothy C <[tim\\_powers@tamu.edu](mailto:tim_powers@tamu.edu)>

**Subject:** Journalism: Implementation Memo and Dr Kathleen McElroy

Dear Tim,

Following up on conversations yesterday about Journalism. Thanks for sharing the implementation memo and inviting comments. I consulted Dr Blanton and he has some comments, but no suggested edits. To keep you in the loop I am attaching the memo he sent me about the possibility of recruiting Kathleen McElroy from UT (where she is Director of the School of Journalism), initially for a one-year appointment. I think that this is an exciting possibility. Do you have any thoughts?

All best,

José

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean

Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts

College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University

[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)

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artsci.tamu.edu

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Hart Blanton <[hblanton@tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@tamu.edu)>

**Subject: Implementation Memo**

**Date:** July 18, 2022 at 10:17:00 PM CDT

**To:** Jose Bermudez <[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)>

Evening, José.

I've reviewed the implementation memo in greater detail and I do not think we need to request any edits of it. It proposes a timeline for a Director search, but that in no way prevents TAMU from deciding it wants to hire an interim director earlier than this. I do not see any other recommendations stepping on any decision to hire (or not hire) McElroy. Thank you for considering and communicating my concern.

I've revised my memo proposing that we pursue McElroy as an interim director. I will send that next, in a separate email.

I just wanted to make a few brief comments on that implementation memo:

- It calls for support of an immersive internship program and curriculum. I agree. This also fits well with the new JOUR degree proposal we will be submitting. I have argued that current and possible internship partnerships are CMJR's primary advantages over competing programs. This angle has Alicia's .

- I am pleased that the recommendations are no more specific than calling for specialization in "various subject areas." I hope that language stays in the memo sent to President Banks. As I think you know, I think a primary "subject area" we should pursue is Science Communication & Journalism. McElroy agreed with this focus when we spoke. She thinks we should leverage our size and R1 status, as well as the new A&S college, as part of our unique JOUR brand. My conversations at the retreat also reinforced this angle and suggested some possibilities for interdisciplinary research.

- I agree with recommendations on *The Battalion*. Another plug: McElroy is ideally uniquely situated to move us all past the recent period of great uncomfortableness, as she is a trusted friend and also board member of *The Battalion*. I believe the specific recommendations outlined in the implementation memo were modeled in part after a similar arrangement set up at *The Daily Texan*, and so that's helpful.

Thanks again. I'll send the memo next.

Hart.

in no way contradicts the hiring of an interim director

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*Hart Blanton*

*Professor and Head*

*Department of Communication*

*Texas A&M University*

<https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/communication/profile/hart-blanton/>  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart\\_Blanton](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart_Blanton)

**From:** [Pettibon II, Joseph P](#)  
**To:** [Scott, Timothy P](#); [NK Anand](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Journalism: Implementation Memo and Dr Kathleen McElroy  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 19, 2022 3:33:27 PM

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**To:** Pettibon II, Joseph P <jpp2@tamu.edu>; Anand, Nagamangala <nkanand@tamu.edu>  
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*Hart Blanton*

*Professor and Head*

*Department of Communication*

*Texas A&M University*

<https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/communication/profile/hart-blanton/>

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart\\_Blanton](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart_Blanton)

April 6, 2023

**TO:** Dr. Kevin Barge and Selection Committee for Director of Journalism and Professor  
Department of Communication & Journalism, Texas A&M University  
**FROM:** Kathleen McElroy, Ph.D., Professor and Frank A. Bennack, Jr. Chair in Journalism  
School of Journalism and Media, University of Texas at Austin  
**RE:** Formal Application

Let's get the bad news out of the way.

Journalism has suffered mightily as an industry and cultural institution. Consumption is down, newsrooms are decimated. Disinformation, misinformation and self-inflicted wounds have crippled consumer trust.

Yet I can't think of a better time to launch a revitalized journalism program, one built on foundational professional practices but attentive to students who get their news from TikTok or a platform to be named later. We could train Aggies to help make journalism a crucial part of *whatever* comes next. I would relish the opportunity to be a part of such an endeavor as your Director of Journalism, serving as a leader, instructor, facilitator, problem-solver and chief listener.

The next few years are crucial in designing a program that through its strategy and culture will be collaborative, innovative and globally prominent. Being housed in a top-notch communication department already known for its high-impact research is the building block. Faculty, administrators and working groups have provided crucial momentum and planning. The growth of the already impressive faculty and staff would align with clearly stated goals and aspirations.

It's time to finish the blueprint and start building. Here are some rudimentary ideas. The newly named Department of Communication & Journalism would become even stronger by developing partnerships across campus and industries that give our majors access to such fields as data visualization, and departments as Latino/a & Mexican American Studies. We should be training sought-after data journalists *and* Spanish-language journalists. We should take advantage of A&M's international reputation in STEM by becoming the department where The Wall Street Journal annually recruits journalists who aren't scared of math, where students see themselves as entrepreneurs and innovators who rethink news and newsrooms. Our students should be trained to report expertly and ethically from Houston's Vietnamese neighborhoods and the Rio Grande Valley as well as from AT&T Stadium and Madison Square Garden.

Such existing assets as KAMU could serve as a springboard for journalistic communication across physical and digital spaces, supporting cutting-edge skills training, experiential learning and community building beyond Brazos Valley. The largest university in Texas needs a stabilized and revitalized Battalion, the backbone of A&M journalism for more than a century. Tough questions about The Battalion deserve informed answers. We can find them.



The Battalion's basement newsroom shaped me as a journalist and a person. I graduated from A&M with a B.A. in Broadcast Journalism (discovering in the process I didn't want to go into TV). After a professional career that took me from The Eagle in Bryan-College Station to The New York Times, I entered academia and was accepted into your doctoral program. I chose not to attend because the University of Texas at Austin offered me more funding and I hoped that I would have a better chance of becoming faculty at A&M if I got my Ph.D. elsewhere.

For the past seven years, I've been at UT-Austin, first as a non-tenured associate director and professional-track faculty then as director of the School of Journalism and Media and a full professor for a four-year term. During COVID, I grew our faculty and strengthened industry relationships. I maintained ties with A&M by serving as an external reviewer of its Journalism Studies Concentration and being a founding member of the Friends of [T]he Battalion.

I stepped down as UT-Austin's journalism director at the start of 2022-23 academic year because the time seemed right. I had been in discussions last summer about joining your program, but I had a few more things I wanted to accomplish in Austin. I didn't know it last summer, but I had been hobbling on a torn Achilles that would require months in a cast.

After a year of restoration (and physical therapy), I'm ready to be on your team. I'm flexing my research muscles again by submitting a paper to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). I hold leadership roles in ACEJMC (the accreditation organizing body) and ASCJMC (the communication education administrators' group). I have served on dissertation and thesis committees. I have organized freelance gigs for students at professional tennis tournaments. I truly believe my experience as a journalist at small and large publications, a college administrator and a communication scholar would benefit the Department of Communication & Journalism as it cuts its own new path.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my keen interest in this position. I appreciate your patience in this process and the energy you have already spent in making Texas A&M the next great J-School.



Kathleen McElroy, Ph.D.  
Professor and Frank A. Bennack, Jr. Chair in Journalism  
University of Texas at Austin  
[Kathleen.mcelroy@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:Kathleen.mcelroy@austin.utexas.edu)

Cell:

From: **Hart Blanton** <[hblanton@tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@tamu.edu)>  
Date: Fri, Apr 28, 2023 at 9:21 PM  
Subject: Kathleen McElroy  
To: Jose Bermudez <[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)>

Hi, José.

I am attaching two documents. The first is a memo that contains my recommendation that we extend an offer to Kathleen McElroy. In it, I describe the search process and provide a detailed description of the vision she outlined in her talk and our meetings. I believe that her vision was in its earlier stages when she met with you, as you were near the start of her schedule. A lot came together over the course of her campus visits by the time she delivered her presentation.

Assuming you agree that we extend an offer, the next memo outlines my recommendations for the parameters of an offer. As with Holton, I focus primarily on the personal offer we will need to make to convince her that this will be a good move for her. We'll then need to pivot to putting together a statement on program commitments. I am now far enough along on this with Kathleen that my second memo outlines the basics of what I expect Kathleen to request. I'm sure she has thought of some possibilities I have not and my predictions may be off in places. But, I think this gives a good sense of the next phase. One important detail to file away: Kathleen tells me that Susan Ballabina told Kathleen to let her know what she needs. Kathleen understands how this works and I don't expect for her to take Susan up on the offer, but I felt that is important information for me to share with you.

I hope these analyses are helpful and that after you've reviewed them, you tell me I can make a call to Kathleen. Kathleen has already checked in today. I think she is anxious to know that this will work out. As am I.

My Best,  
Hart.

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Hart Blanton | Professor and Head

Department of Communication and Journalism  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979.845.5500 | [hblanton@tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@tamu.edu)

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**MEMORANDUM**

April 28, 2023

TO: José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean  
College of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Hart Blanton, Department Head  
Department of Communication and Journalism

SUBJECT: McElroy Parameters

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hart Blanton'.

I am writing to propose parameters for the recruitment of Kathleen McElroy and to suggest next steps.

**Summary of Offer**

I recommend:

- A base salary of \$150K but consider \$160K.
- Two months of summer totaling \$33,333.
- A monthly stipend of \$3K.
- A research/travel bursary of \$30K.
- Two staff members; one as a personal assistant and one TBD (\$125K + Benefits).
- Enter into negotiations on university commitments to the journalism program.

**Analysis**

Kathleen's base salary is \$196K. When she was director, she had a stipend and summer months added to this base. She has indicated that she only expects for the TAMU Director's package to meet her current base, but I think it is important for the full package to exceed her current salary. She does realize that she will see a drop in pay below her current salary if she elects to step down as director and remain on faculty.

The package I propose exceeds her current base (salary + summer + stipend = \$216,333), and so we exceed her criterion for accepting a position. A base pay of \$150K is roughly equivalent to the second-highest earner in CMJR (Blanton, \$150,051). If we want to go in strong, then we might consider \$160K. This would put her roughly equivalent to the highest earner in CMJR (R. Street, \$159,677). Overshooting by this amount would signal to her that we mean business and could generate confidence that negotiations on program commitments will be successful.

The proposed travel/research bursary is roughly the same as the bursary she currently has through her endowed chair (\$28K). I think this commitment will be a solid investment for the program. One of Kathleen's strengths is her large network in both academics and industry. I expect her to use travel to build visibility and forge program connections.

Two staff positions were included in the budget generated from the working group report. Kathleen expects a personal assistant, and she will make good use of the support. This aspect of the offer is an improvement over the package for Holton, which relied on GAR/GANT support. I will discuss the best use of the second staff member with Kathleen. I suspect that this individual will assist with the development of the curriculum and other aspects of the undergraduate program. This position description can be developed to benefit JOUR in ways that also serve COMM (e.g., working on expansion of the internship program; assisting with high-impact learning activities).

## **Negotiations for Journalism Commitments**

Kathleen and I have reviewed the needs of the program in some detail, now over multiple conversations. We are well positioned to move quickly to submit a formal request for program commitments. Here I just alert you to the broad parameters I anticipate in her request. It will assist me in my negotiations if you have thoughts to share on how different items might land:

### 1. Hires

She of course will want to see a commitment to hiring faculty. Consistent with working group recommendations and the vision she outlined, I expect this to be a combination of (a) tenure stream hires, for upper division courses and to set the foundations for adding graduate degrees and gaining accreditation and (b) Professors of the Practice, to deliver courses that provide professional skills training. The rate of hiring will be tied to the rate of enrollment growth, following roughly the same formula integrated into the degree plan that is currently under review.

### 2. Space

I have mapped out the basic parameters of the footprint of journalism in Bolton and shared most parts with both Kathleen and department leadership. Fortunately, physical renovations will be light (avoiding EHS review as much as possible). Our plan will also be robust to construction/facilities delays. Most of it will involve moving offices around, expanding the department into the vacated Interdisciplinary Studies suite, expanding an existing media lab into an adjoining room that we already control, and creating dedicated space in the basement for podcast production. Our plan for securing the large-scale investments in the studios and laboratories that will be needed to support a large major is to build the relationships needed for us to get good seats at the table when the new the KAMU facilities are being planned.

### 3. Interim Graduate Support

We do not have any graduate degrees in journalism but, as was the case with Summer Harlow, I expect journalism research faculty to request access to graduate advisees from COMM until JOUR graduate degrees are launched. This will require a commitment to adding GAR support into start-up packages and creating additional GATs that are tied to growth in the tenure track. We can use these foundations to begin planning a JOUR graduate program that is supported by GATs linked to future journalism courses. I will ask for this plan to be in place in three years as one of the deliverables from Kathleen's term as Director. The next director can then work to launch JOUR graduate degrees. My hope is that they can launch in Year 5. This timeline also pairs with the timeline for accreditation (if the program decides to make that move).

#### 4. Software/Data Licenses

I submitted an estimate of \$50K for the media analytic needs of journalism researchers. These licenses will directly benefit research in Journalism and the other two divisions, particularly the Communication & Media Science Division. Kathleen expressed her view that my budget seemed light, but we need to go through it in a more systematic fashion. FWIW, Kathleen is more interested in securing and maintaining licenses for software and databases than updating computer hardware.

#### 5. Equipment

Included in the request for expansion of our current Media Lab will be a request for resources to build a Technology Access Library. Students and faculty will be able to use this resource to check out cameras, microphones, and other equipment needed for coursework and other projects. I am researching electronic lockers for this purpose, as this will help to reduce the need for staff. In the degree plan I submitted to the coordinating board, I estimated Year 1 equipment needs to be \$198K but this will need to be modified. My budget did not include lockers for a technology access library, nor equipment for a dedicated podcasting space. However, I prioritize upgrades to computer facilities that may now be less of a priority.

#### 6. Operating Budget

The working group estimated an operating budget of \$75K but it lacked details on how this number was derived. I believe that budget was added to the report, as much as anything, to draw attention to the fact that journalism actually needs an operating budget. In that respect, it was effective. I expect Kathleen to request an operating budget that assists with visibility and high-impact learning events (e.g., an annual conference that likely builds off current initiatives; a juried award for high school and/or professional journalists), community outreach, faculty research and travel bursaries, maintenance of equipment and licenses, alumni engagement, and it might include a request for funding to support high-level online courses from visiting professors/adjuncts (e.g., *Times* reporters and editors). Beyond this, Kathleen is savvy enough to know that the heights this program will reach will depend in part on the resources that she helps to secure in her term as director.

#### **Final Comment**

My team is already working on press releases, and we have reporters from the *Batt* and *Eagle* on standby. We plan to make a huge splash with two stories the day Kathleen's acceptance of the offer goes public. If you would like to talk to reporters as well, we can schedule the timing of the public announcement to allow for that.

**MEMORANDUM**

April 28, 2023

TO: José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean  
College of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Hart Blanton, Department Head  
Department of Communication and Journalism

SUBJECT: McElroy Recommendation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hart Blanton'.

The Department of Communication and Journalism has completed its review of Dr. Kathleen McElroy. Following her on-campus visit, the Search Committee met and voted in favor of hiring her as Professor and Director of Journalism. They then reported their recommendations at a meeting of the faculty on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. Two members of the committee further described the content of three positive recommendations from Dr. McElroy's professional references. In the discussion that followed, faculty voiced strong support for recruiting Dr. McElroy. They cited her extensive knowledge of the profession, high energy level, and the considerable value of her extensive professional network (including from her work as a juror for this year's Pulitzers). Faculty members also agreed that successful recruitment would lend credibility to the program, right at the launch of our degrees. This will help us to begin recruiting top professionals in the discipline. The only reservation registered in the discussion came from one of Dr. McElroy's three references. This person stated that that Dr. McElroy would be more effective with greater delegation and sharing of duties. Following this meeting, the faculty voted strongly in favor of hiring Dr. McElroy as Professor and Director of Journalism.

*Head's Summary*

I agree with the recommendations of the search committee and opinions voiced at the faculty meeting. I believe that the successful recruitment of Dr. McElroy would be a major achievement for this department. Added to recruitment of Summer Harlow, it will provide us with a strong foundation from which to launch our pursuit of national recognition in journalism research and education.

In my opinion, Dr. McElroy also outlined the most detailed and compelling vision for our new degrees of any of the candidates to date. She argued that we should work to build the BA degree to have two major concentrations, Government & Policy Reporting and Bilingual Journalism. She proposed growth of the first concentration through collaborations with the Bush School, including coordination of our internship programs to set the stage for the proposed DC Bureau. The focus on Bilingual journalism can be achieved through hires that build off this year's successful recruitment of Summer Harlow, in part by targeting a list of journalists she has prepared. She argued for the BS degree to build concentrations in Data/Data Visualization (partnering with TAMIDS and PVFA), Sports Communication (partnering with 12MP), and STEM/Health (Health Sciences). The focus on STEM/Health might also be paired as a 3+2 to a Master's degree in Science and Technology Journalism, which is currently housed in Vet Med. This is an ambitious plan, but it maximizes partnerships, benefits from current department strengths, and it can be integrated smoothly into CMJR's broader strategic hiring plan.

Dr. McElroy also argued for developing the two new degrees with an eye toward community engagement and public service. She wants our journalism program to play a consequential role in countering the societal impacts of misinformation. She noted that at a time when misinformation is driving public opinion and discourse, and with trust in institutions down – including trust in institutions of higher education – trust in TAMU remains strong in many communities across Texas. Moreover, trust is strong among Texans that often lack access to reliable reporting and/or may be distrustful of available sources. In the course of describing a plan to counter these challenges, Dr. McElroy presented what I thought was the clearest vision of any candidate for a future KAMU. She argued that a revamped digital KAMU could become a regional news source, reaching such places as Amarillo and Midland, presenting journalistic content that is produced by our majors. In time it could grow to become a trusted source of news and information that reaches more corners of Texas than she thinks UT’s KUT can ever achieve. To this end, she also proposed the goal of producing Spanish-language content and programming. She further proposed that journalism partner with the new Department of Global Languages and Cultures to explore other possibilities. When she and I met the day after her talk, she reported to me that she had already pitched a KAMU innovation to Dr. Susan Ballabina; one that she felt generated support. This pitch involved transitioning KAMU from a \*.edu to \*.org and realigning its mission statement to begin setting this plan in motion.

One area where Dr. McElroy’s was not the strongest (or weakest) of the top three candidates was in her description of the innovations our program should pursue in order to prepare students for rapidly changing social and technological realities. We need to build a journalism program that can adapt quickly to ever changing information landscapes. With TAMU’s size and given its strengths in engineering and other technology disciplines, we are uniquely positioned to do so. This concern was not a focal consideration in Dr. McElroy’s presentation. However, she openly stated that it this is a question that deserves greater attention than she had given it by the time of her presentation, and she proposed a plan of working with consultants to help better leverage TAMU’s advantages. Knowing that this was the topic area where Avery Holton most impressed the department, she also proposed consideration of him as one of these consultants. Regardless, with Dr. McElroy’s stated goal of directing the program for just three years, I am confident that when she steps down, she will hand over a program that is poised to move to a second phase of innovative growth under its next director.

### *Search Committee Summary*

Below is a summary of the search committee’s assessment of Dr. McElroy as a candidate for this position, applying criteria from the rubric they developed to assess all candidates:

Criteria	Kathleen McElroy
Research Profile	Her research profile is acceptable in light of her career path as an administrator. The committee observes she was tapped early on for administrative positions after completing the doctorate. The combination of the recency of her doctorate and her heavy administrative load, make her research profile not as robust as a faculty member whose main responsibility was weighted toward research. However, her experience as the Director of the School of Journalism at the University of Texas demonstrates that she is well versed in hiring, developing, supporting, and promoting research faculty.
Leadership and Administrative Experience	Excellent leadership and administrative experience as the Director and Associate Director of the School of Journalism at the University of Texas. When combined with being an Editor at the New York Times, she has



	<p>demonstrated leadership in both academic and professional journalism contexts. Her experience suggests she has the ability to serve as a senior-level administrator and manage complex settings. Excellent listening and consensus-building skills.</p>
<p>Professional Experience and Knowledge</p>	<p>Demonstrates exemplary judgment and knowledge about the possibilities for A&amp;M journalism given that she is a former student as well as possessing high level of professional experience and knowledge. She served as a reporter and editor for the New York time for 20 years. Her professional experience has been recognized in several ways including her recent service as a member of a Pulitzer Prize panel and as a member of the national accreditation board for AEJMC, the leading professional association for journalism. Her understanding of the history of Aggie journalism and her professional experience provides her a unique perspective regarding what is possible for the A&amp;M journalism program given the current state of the field.</p>
<p>Vision for Journalism Program</p>	<p>Very strong vision that emphasizes collaboration and developing partnerships with campus as well as external stakeholders. Vision includes the development of an international bureau and developing a focus on strengthening refugee journalists from Latin America as well as rural outreach in the state of Texas. Highlighted potential partners such as the A&amp;M viz lab, Texas A&amp;M Institute of Data Science, and Knight Center of Latin American Studies.</p>

Good news Inbox x



**Bermudez, Jose Luis** [jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu) via [tamucs.onmicrosoft.com](https://tamucs.onmicrosoft.com)  
to Hart ▾

Thu, May 11, 8:26 AM

Hart,

I talked yesterday evening to the President and to NK (in Qatar). The Journalism plan has been approved, so you should proceed with recruiting Dr McElroy. I have put the plan in the form of a memo, which NK will sign off on when he gets back to town.

José

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean  
Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
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-----  
[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

-

(314) 800-6130 ▾



05/11, 6:47 PM

Hart - José here. I just talked to the president over dinner. We'd rather not have any publicity on Kathleen until after the session is over (June 1). More explanation later, but that's a firm ask.

Absolutely.

I'll alert the group. We may need to discuss what to say if called by reporters. They might choose to report on us not reporting if word leaks, but we have time to talk that out.

(I got your call but could not hear.)

05/11, 6:53 PM

Reporters shouldn't know anything. Just don't leak.

05/11, 7:26 PM

I just sent a text to Journalism faculty putting a freeze on all plans for communication. I can call a meeting during our non-compete tomorrow at 11:30, if you are able to tell me more that I can share with them. We should also discuss how we communicate this to Kathleen.

I just think we need to explain what we are able to explain.

I think I can anticipate the concerns and their reality. However, TAMU might want to game out crisis communication strategy. My faculty will not leak but I think there may be some possibility we make national news of the Nikole Hannah Jones variety if we ask

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I just think we need to explain what we are able to explain.

I think I can anticipate the concerns and their reality. However, TAMU might want to game out crisis communication strategy. My faculty will not leak but I think there may be some possibility we make national news of the Nikole Hannah Jones variety if we ask a famous Black journalist not to share her exciting decision with the world. We may also have to ask Summer not to tweet to her network. That could have consequences.

Thanks.

Thanks. We are talking first thing in the morning.

OK. She'll explain. Bottom line is the NYT connection is poor optics during this particular legislative session.

05/11, 10:07 PM

I get that. The alternative may be worse. I don't think we get a third option.

05/12, 11:09 AM

Susan agrees and will talk to the president. She won't be able to until 5:00 p.m. I've put a freeze on everything until we have better answers.

05/12, 1:05 PM

Good. I am glad you came to an agreement.

05/12, 5:19 PM

In any event, you can't go live with anything until we have a signed letter, approved by NK. So far I haven't even seen a draft. To be honest, by the time we have worked through the paperwork it may well be the end of the legislative session. . .

Yes. That's how I explained the need to slow down.

Susan and I talked about the risk of deliberately slow walking the paperwork because we're not dealing with dummies here. I've also been receiving emails of congratulations from across the campus because Kathleen met the heads of lots of units and there is a lot of excitement. Word is getting out.

But, we've got time.

05/12, 5:37 PM

But, we've got time.

05/12, 5:37 PM

Hart - it may not have been wise to poke the bear. Dr Banks has just asked me to hold on any discussion of offers until she has talked to NK.

I have no interest in doing that And I appreciate the size of the

I have no interest in doing that. And, I appreciate the size of the bear.

I feel an obligation to communicate my concerns while there is a line of communication open. But I'll shut up after that. I can't jeopardize all we've just accomplished.

At the moment everything is on hold, not just the communication strategy.

Understood.

05/12, 5:59 PM

You have to manage the internal communications. You should not be receiving messages of congratulations because nothing has been settled. She has been here. We liked her. We are discussing options. It's complicated and there are many moving parts. That's the narrative.

05/12, 6:17 PM

Our ship is tight. We do not have control here.

I can't tell Kathleen not to tell people she plans to accept. She's also told UT she intends to leave. They have contacted me to congratulate. (No. I did not confirm. I ignored.) Summer and Avery know because they talk. The Journalism field will know in short order. TX Journalism is a large knitting circle.

We will not succeed at keeping this a secret.

Fortunately I don't knit. I'll do my best, though.

05/12, 6:28 PM

It's mostly about the cider anyway.

05/30, 11:42 AM

Hi. Susan asked me to inquire if you've heard anything about the timeline on getting documents to KM to sign.

Aggies Hire NY Times 'Diversity' Advocate To Head Journalism Program - Texas Scorecard  
<https://texasscorecard.com/state/aggies-hire-ny-times-diversity-advocate-to-head-journalism-program/>

06/16, 5:37 PM

Where did that quote in the middle come from?

That was from U. MarComm. I agreed to have it attributed to me. I thought College marcomm was in the conversation.

OK. Is this one of our Journalism students?

06/16, 5:43 PM

? Not following.

From Kelly Brown:

These types of things go through 15 people and they're changed 16 different ways but here's where we sit right now. Waiting on the system to approve. Susan suggested that we attribute this quote to you since you would be her direct supervisor. What are your thoughts on that?

Texas A&M kicks off its expanded journalism program in the fall. We hired Dr. Kathleen, McElroy, an Aggie who is a veteran journalist, as well as a proven professor and leader. She has worked newsrooms for 30 years, and his led a journalism program a Tier 1 research institution. Her track record of building a successful curriculum, coupled with her deep understanding of the media landscape, position her uniquely to lead the new program.



That was a text yesterday evening.

06/16, 5:49 PM

No. The author of that stupid article

It's a pretend news site. I don't know. Like Campus Reform.

06/16, 5:57 PM

I'm asking. Hang on.

06/16, 6:16 PM

Yes. Student. This website was unknown, prior to this. I am finding out what I can.

Hi, José. I just got off the phone with Kathleen. She welcomes a conversation. She was unphased by the article and does not seem concerned about a storm to come. I'm not clear if that's because of her resolve or because she underestimates the storm.

She is driving to Bryan at 5pm for a house inspection tomorrow AM. I will be meeting her in Bolton for another space tour.

Call if you'd like. I'm sending her contact info next.

06/19, 3:37 PM

One less worry. We can forego tenure.

Is everyone happy with that?

06/19, 3:45 PM

Yes.

We probably need to issue a revised letter then. Did you talk about title? Seems natural as Prof of Practice. We can write multi-year appointments now.

06/19, 3:52 PM

Yes. Professor is the practice makes sense to her as well.

If it's okay with you, I'd like to skip the signing ceremony on this one.

This also takes care of another problem, internally. We don't have in place the document that guides us on Counting journalism scholarship. Kathleen will be helping us draft that, so we can have it in place before we hire a journalism professional into the tenure stream.

Summer does not need that document.

Yes. Nothing has changed except some scaffolding behind the

SMS

Yes. Nothing has changed except some scaffolding behind the scenes. The important thing is that the university has committed to the positions requested. I think that this is good. It will let her do her job and not give others a way of taking shots at her.

06/19, 3:58 PM

Me, too. I thought she would probably go that route, but needed for it to be of her initiative.

Yes - she can focus her energies on the program.

06/19, 4:05 PM

How would you both like to proceed? We don't need to make any noise about this, but should probably get the paperwork sorted out.

I agree. I suggest we get a new appointment letter to her. There's no need to make any announcement until the fall when we convene a meeting of the promotion and tenure committee to process Summer's case.

I think Kathleen is comfortable discussing it to any comment as it comes up. She does not want anything drawing attention away from the program.

OK. Can you draft the letter please? Let me take a look.

I've been working under the assumption someone would FOIA the search. But, I understand. I'll over-think something else. Enjoy your evening.

Nobody who is going to do that would complain about the move that has taken place.

06/19, 5:08 PM

True, that.

Why did you talk to Kathleen before me? That did not help matters. We'll see what happens, but I'm not too optimistic at this point.

06/22, 7:44 PM

Jennifer had informed me of the process for the new appointment and I had to call and explain it and ask her if we were to proceed.

No, the process of having to reapply was not well received.

You can write it for 3 years as P of P.

I think that will be OK with her, right?

06/19, 4:12 PM

Yes. I have a few questions but I can get the answers I need from Jennifer Holle.

This might be a question for faculty affairs but I am rethinking.

Given the shenanigans we know to anticipate, it might make more sense to follow through with the appointment as it is. That way, we have followed all of the guidelines and procedures we follow with every search. The appointment matches the search process and search documents.

Then, in August, I submit a reclassification request at her behest. That would be before the first meeting of the P&T committee.

06/19, 4:57 PM

I think you are over-thinking. Let's just get the new letter done. We'll submit it to NK saying that she decided she would prefer a professor of the practice title. He'll approve and we are all done. The potential shenanigans here are not about search process.

06/22, 1:00 PM

She doesn't need to reapply. she needs to upload a CV to a website to satisfy Texas workforce requirements. You also talked to her about the board. Anyway. It is what it is. I don't think she'll go through with it. But that's where we are.

06/22, 8:20 PM

She understands the workforce rule, as do I. Others can apply but Jennifer and I worked to get it to VPFA today in hopes the call will be up tomorrow and down on Monday. Kathleen knows it is a formality but it still felt how it felt.

You texted when we were talking and she told me of this. That is the only reason you came up. I informed her of the reason at that point. (I had asked you if I could when you and I talked.)

Im sorry. The issues we are facing are that the position is starting to feel lower status to her. Also the reality that she has a target on her back, and what could be communicated by her decision, intended or no.

It's just a difficult situation. She called again an hour ago to check in and say she was in a better place and at this point does want to proceed.

You need to tell her that this is not low status. The stakes are extremely high. Somebody like Avery comes here and nobody cares. The board will be about as interested as they are in the synchronized swimming team. Kathleen comes here and everybody takes note. That makes things volatile and high stress. But think what she can achieve if we find a way through - it will be transformational if she can get the board behind her vision. Susan and I think she can do that. But we need to be careful and intentional.

06/22, 8:34 PM

That's what I tried to explain to her but obviously not very well.

06/22, 8:40 PM

I am, José. Truly. She knows we believe in her and what we will achieve together. That's ultimately why I expect her to get past this. She still views this as the opportunity of a lifetime. This was a bad day.

<https://www.statesman.com/story/opinion/columns/your-voice/2020/06/21/opinion-gazing-right-back-at-the-eyes-of-texas-and-its-origins/42496955/>

07/08, 7:31 AM

Hart - this may be in the background. I came across it by chance.

07/08, 9:04 AM

Yes. She should probably anticipate that everything she's ever said about race might be read back to her at the Board meeting.

07/08, 10:14 AM

One way to frame things. The Sul Ross Association and Rudder Association are gunning for her. They have no power of course. But people who do have power listen to them. There needs to be a counter narrative. The board meeting is the best shot.

I communicated this in so many words. She just called to say that she is breaking off contact and will not be talking while she sorts things out. I'm not optimistic.

07/08, 10:48 AM

Thanks for heads up

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bermudez, Jose Luis** <jbermudez@tamu.edu>

Date: Sun, Jul 9, 2023 at 9:59 AM

Subject: Letters

To: Kathleen McElroy <komcelroy7285@gmail.com>

Cc: Blanton, Hart C <hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu>

Dear Kathleen,

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me and Hart last Friday. I am sending you drafts of the letters that have been approved by Texas A&M University – one for your appointment as Professor of the Practice and one as Director of Journalism. Please let me know if you have any questions and/or would like to revisit some aspects of the offer. When we are in agreement, I will have final versions signed.

Thank you,

José

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean

Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University

[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)



07/10, 1:35 PM

I just got an email from the Texas Tribune. Wanting me to comment on Kathleen's decision not to come in. Direct the journalism program. I just went on to Zillow and her house is back on the market.

Please direct all queries to Kelly.

07/10, 1:48 PM

Will do.

You have not heard from Kathleen. Correct?

07/10, 5:29 PM

Correct.

I've heard from a reporter and see her house back on the market.

6:44

5G 98%



**Kate McGee** 6:30 PM

to me ▾



6:44

5G 98%



Kate McGee 6:30 PM

to me



**This Message Is From an External Sender**

This message came from outside your organization.

Hart,

I understand your position, but I ask you to please reconsider. Can we at least talk off the record so I can explain the situation and what I'm trying to confirm? We are publishing a story tomorrow at some point, and I just want to make sure it is accurate and do not want to rely on a single source.

Again, cell is 908 370 5750.

Thank you,  
Kate

[Hide quoted text](#)

On Mon, Jul 10, 2023 at 5:54 PM Hart Blanton  
<[hblanton@tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@tamu.edu)> wrote:

Hi, Kate. I'm sorry but I cannot discuss personnel matters. I suggest you reach out to Kelly Brown. I believe you have her contact information but to be sure, it is:  
[kelly.brown@tamu.edu](mailto:kelly.brown@tamu.edu).

Thanks, Best,

99+

07/10, 6:47 PM

I am aware. Kelly is in contact with McGee.

07/10, 7:13 PM

I would appreciate your help communicating to our faculty after the news drops tomorrow. A brief paragraph could assist. Thanks.

07/10, 7:38 PM

I don't think it will drop tomorrow. But I'll do what I can.

Thanks.

07/10, 7:46 PM

Let me know if you have a suggested message.

07/11, 1:16 PM

Swing by a little early today

07/11, 1:29 PM

Okay

07/11, 1:49 PM

I'm here.

SMS

05/11, 9:49 PM

Sorry for the rush. For context, I am worried about us making national news with a Nikole Hannah Jones story. To follow the President's direction, I will need to begin communicating tomorrow to journalism faculty and both of our two new hires. I do not think we control what happens next.

Hart. Just seeing this. Let me give you a call first thing in the morning!

Sure thing. My first meeting is 9AM and so any time prior. I can move it back if needed.

05/11, 10:02 PM

(I don't sleep either and so early is fine.)

05/12, 10:31 AM

Hi, Susan. I know you're busy and may need time but it would be good on this end if it is possible to talk before 11:30. Thanks.

05/12, 10:37 AM

Call my cell any time before 11

05/12, 1:49 PM

Just a heads up that I think the train has left the station

05/12, 1:43 PM

Just a heads up that I think the train has left the station.

I've been congratulated by Student Life and people at 12th Man. The students are preparing articles at the Battalion. Lots of smiles over there.

Student Life has also expressed a desire to join in any communication. They want to promote the coordinated hiring of a new Student Media Director. Also big smiles for him at the batt.

Good luck today. Call if I can be of any help.

05/12, 6:41 PM

Ok. She's pretty clear on not having any kind of announcements until the deal is final and everyone has signed so keep that in mind. She is under the impression that everything is in the negotiation phase right now.

I've already received congratulations from their dean.

Got it. I'm trying to help her understand where the process is. Your text is very helpful

05/12, 6:54 PM

Got it. I understand.

05/12, 7:03 PM

Thanks. I appreciate that you're in a less than fun position.

Hi.

I will talk to Kathleen Wednesday evening. I ask that you and I talk, prior.

Thanks. My Best, Hart.

05/14, 6:26 PM

Ok. I can call you tomorrow anytime between 11 and 1?

05/14, 7:01 PM

Thanks. How about 11:30?

05/14, 8:50 PM

Perfect. I will call you then.

05/14, 8:56 PM

Great. Thank you.

05/15, 4:28 PM

No need to reply.

05/15, 4:28 PM

No need to reply.

I thought of a possible compromise that might work. What if we move the paperwork forward but I talk to Kathleen before sending it. I tell her (and journalism faculty) that TAMU "respectively requests" no Public Announcement until June 1st - or a coast-is-clear signal? If I can say this is part of a larger attempt to stay off radar between graduation and end of session, all the better.

I think there is some risk but this would signal that there is strong support for her. We are moving forward despite knowledge of blowback in certain circles that she likely anticipates as well.

Journalism wants to make a splash and so they can use the time to get their ducks in a row.

To the department. I will just say to sit tight for a formal announcement, with no further explanation.

05/19, 9:13 AM

Hi Susan. I'm just checking in and hoping there might be

05/19, 9:13 AM

Hi, Susan. I'm just checking in and hoping there might be something more of an update today. I'm about to have a meeting with Kathleen. She has reviewed our faculty Affairs documents and realizes we need to be working on her tenure review now to stay on schedule. The delay is moving into awkward territory with both her and faculty.

Thanks. I'll be on the phone for the 90 minutes with her and then another job candidate and so might be slow to reply. Thanks.

05/19, 9:40 AM

Hart. I think everything is fine and understand the awkward territory. I will try to catch you sometime today in between meetings. I think the message to Kathleen is that everyone is excited. Just give us a little time to go through the bureaucracy. Will try to chat with you today.

05/19, 10:39 AM

Thank you. I just ended a very long phone conversation with her and can share some of that when we chat. I'm going to call the other job candidate now and hope that takes closer to 30 minutes. I look forward to talking to you later and appreciate that very much.

05/26, 8:49 AM



05/26, 8:49 AM

Hi, Susan. I will be talking to Karhleen at 4CST to review her tenure materials. If there is anything to report, I can share it then. I think she anticipates this will resume after memorial day. Thanks.

Hi. A number of pots are coming to a boil. I think I can keep them from boiling over until Thursday but any ability to communicate sooner would help tremendously. Thanks.

Ok. Ask Jose if he has heard anything about timeline, etc. I have a mtg with the president tomorrow and will put this on my agenda.

05/30, 11:38 AM

Great. Thanks.

05/30, 12:08 PM

He has heard nothing.

I don't know if these details will help or not. I'll just let you know. I returned today to many very direct questions if this is what it looks like. Multiple faculty have asked and also oeperped my

SMS

I don't know if these details will help or not. I'll just let you know. I returned today to many very direct questions if this is what it looks like. Multiple faculty have asked and also oeperred my associate head. Members of the working group also are writing me and asking me when I will provide my promised update on the director search, including one reporter. Given the nature of the interview - and gossip - it's well known across campus who we are making the offer to.

Kathleen has expressed frustration and said that this is becoming embarrassing to her. She is under the impression that this must be HR.

No need to reply. Just a weather update. Thanks again.

05/30, 12:13 PM

Very very helpful.

05/31, 6:29 PM

Sorry to reach out after hours but if you have anything you can report, I would appreciate it. Thanks.

Hart, just got your email. Happy to talk tomorrow morning. I can give you a call around 8 in the morning. I don't have much to report because my meeting with the president got cancelled today. But session is over. So my recommendation is to go to Jose tomorrow and see if he can find out if you are good to go now on finalizing the deal. But we can talk more about it in the morning.

SMS

Thanks. I think we are at Defcon 4. Kathleen has asked me to talk at 1:00 p.m. and wants an answer on what is going on. She arrives at the Texas Press Association at 4:00 p.m. Representatives from all the major J programs in Texas and newspapers will be there.

Ok. Hopefully we can have a good answer for her at 1!

05/31, 10:17 PM

Yes, or I might need to retire. I'd really rather not. Thanks again.

(That was a joke. Although I did just power wash my house in VA ...)

Ha! We will work this out!

05/31, 10:22 PM

This could not be in better hands. Thanks and goodnight.

Thank you for your work on this. Crisis averted. I called Kathleen and she is fine. She understood the concern and will continue to wait.

On to the next crisis!

06/01, 11:45 AM

06/01, 11:45 AM

I think we will have this done by next week!

Today was a win! Thank you for all of your help along the way.

Yay!!!!

That succinctly summarizes my day, actually. Yay!!!!

06/13, 5:13 PM

And...finally!!!

Hi, Susan. Will you call when you have a free moment?

Yes. Will call in about 30 minutes

07/15, 1:09 PM

Thanks.



**Bermudez, Jose Luis** [jbermudez@tam.u.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tam.u.edu) via [tamucs.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:tamucs.onmicrosoft.com)  
to Hart ▾

Thu, May 11, 8:26 AM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hart,

I talked yesterday evening to the President and to NK (in Qatar). The Journalism plan has been approved, so you should proceed with recruiting Dr McElroy. I have put the plan in the form of a memo, which NK will sign off on when he gets back to town.

José

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean  
Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
[jbermudez@tam.u.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tam.u.edu)

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[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

-

**Green light** Inbox x



**Bermudez, Jose Luis** [jbermudez@tam.u.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tam.u.edu) via [tamucs.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:tamucs.onmicrosoft.com)  
to Hart ▾

Tue, Jun 6, 7:33 AM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Hart,

I spoke to NK this morning. You have the **green light** to proceed with making an offer to Kathleen. Verbal for the moment. I will resend the memo for his signature. Please route the offer letter from his approval if you have not already done so.

Thanks for your patience,

José

Sent from my iPad



**Hart Blanton** <[hblanton@tam.u.edu](mailto:hblanton@tam.u.edu)>  
to Jose, Hart ▾

Tue, Jun 6, 9:01 AM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Fantastic. Thank you. I will reconfirm with Kathleen the verbal terms of our offer and then forward that letter. Best, Hart.

--



**Hart Blanton** <hblanton@tam.u.edu>  
to Jose, Jennifer ▾

Tue, Jun 6, 5:03 PM ★ ↩ ⋮

Hi. I called and made the verbal offer to Kathleen McElroy and walked her through the contents of the attached offer letter.

She has reaffirmed that she will accept.

I am attaching the draft letter (which you and Jennifer have both reviewed). I updated the address and dated this for tomorrow, with a request that she sign it within a week. I made no other edits (other than fixing a comma).

I hope that's all that is needed to get this going, but let me know if there is anything else.

*Thank you!*

--

Hart Blanton | Professor and Head  
Department of Communication and Journalism  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979.845.5500 | [hblanton@tam.u.edu](mailto:hblanton@tam.u.edu)

-----  
[artsci.tam.u.edu](http://artsci.tam.u.edu)

<https://liberalarts.tam.u.edu/communication/profile/hart-blanton/>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Hart Blanton** <hblanton@tam.u.edu>

Date: Thu, May 11, 2023 at 12:05 PM

Subject: Word

To: James Barge <kbarga@tam.u.edu>, Angelique Gammon <agammon@tam.u.edu>, Dale Rice <dalerice@tam.u.edu>, Tom Burton <twburton@tam.u.edu>  
Cc: Kristan Poirot <poirot@tam.u.edu>, Marisa Winking <mkwinking@tam.u.edu>

This morning I received word that the budget and commitment requests I submitted were approved by President Banks. NK will sign a memo that José has prepared outlining these. Thank you, WG11 Members, for the specificity of your recommendations. This set expectations and provided the foundation for my (now approved) request for staff support (two to join us in or before fall 2023), space renovations (expansion of the multimedia lab, a technology access library, and combination podcast studio and hybrid meeting room), and a significant budget for operations and technology access (slightly in excess of recommendations).

NK is in Qatar and will sign José's memo "when he returns" -- I checked and he lands stateside again Friday. I therefore think we can reasonably expect a signed commitment from NK by Monday and so we can coordinate around that date as we had originally planned. Oh, but there's one last little thing:

I contacted Kathleen to share this good news and she said *she will sign*. She'll come in Sunday night and stay over Monday for Monday activities. On these? I yield to you all for assistance on mapping out that day. Marisa and I will start preparing the formal offer letter for Monday as well. I will next be contacting Summer to let her know the good news.

One thing: Beyond this group and giving advance notice to selected journalists, let's keep this under wraps. We are "optimistic" about her signing on Monday and no more.

*And, scene!* This feels like the end of a long journey. Thank you all for all of the hard work you've done and wise counsel you've provided along the way. Let's enjoy the weekend. Monday is the start of a long journey.

My Best,

Hart.

--

Hart Blanton | Professor and Head

Department of Communication and Journalism

College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University

Office: 979.845.5500 | [hblanton@tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@tamu.edu)

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[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

<https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/communication/profile/hart-blanton/>

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart\\_Blanton](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart_Blanton)

From: **Holle, Jennifer D** <[jholle@science.tamu.edu](mailto:jholle@science.tamu.edu)>  
Date: Tue, Jun 6, 2023 at 5:52 PM  
Subject: RE: McElroy Letter  
To: Blanton, Hart C <[hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu)>, Bermudez, Jose Luis <[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)>

Hi Dr. Blanton,

Signed offer attached.

Thanks!

Jennifer

Jennifer Holle | Director of Faculty Affairs  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979-845-8817 | [j-holle@tamu.edu](mailto:j-holle@tamu.edu)

-----  
[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

**From:** Hart Blanton <[hblanton@tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@tamu.edu)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 6, 2023 5:04 PM  
**To:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)>  
**Cc:** Holle, Jennifer D <[jholle@science.tamu.edu](mailto:jholle@science.tamu.edu)>  
**Subject:** McElroy Letter

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[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart\\_Blanton](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hart_Blanton)

**COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM



June 7, 2023

Kathleen McElroy

Dear Kathleen,

The purpose of this correspondence is to extend to you a formal offer of employment as Professor with tenure upon arrival in the Department of Communication and Journalism, at Texas A&M University (TAMU). Note, however, that the offer of tenure is contingent on the approval by the University and System Administration and the Board of Regents. Your employment will commence on August 1, 2023. Prior to the start of classes, there will be required training and other professional development opportunities to assist with your integration as a faculty member at Texas A&M University.

The offer of Professor is at a 9-month salary of \$155,007 (\$17,223/month). Your annual full-time, 100% FTE, nine-month appointment for FY 2024 will commence on September 1, 2023. You will receive one month of summer salary in August 2023 to prepare for classes and familiarize yourself with department procedures. You are required to be in residence during this time. Upon acceptance of this offer, your employment will require further and final administrative approval.

Upon hire, you will assume an administrative role as Director of Journalism. The director will work in collaboration with me and department leadership to develop and implement plans for strategic growth. These plans will target: (1) curricular development, (2) infrastructure development, (3) expansion of an immersive internship program, and (4) hiring of faculty and to support both its research and teaching missions. This appointment, is renewable based on performance and mutual agreement.

While serving as Director, you will receive an administrative stipend of \$3,000 per month, two months of summer salary as well as an annual professional bursary of \$30,000. Unused bursary funds may be carried over for one year following the end of your term.

Employment in your administrative position will be "at-will," which means that either you or the university can terminate your appointment at any time for any reason or without cause. The administrative stipend, summer salary, bursary, and course reduction will be removed once you no longer hold the administrative position. This position is not eligible for overtime under the provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This offer is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time by either party.

You will receive a one-time payment of \$25,000 to cover moving expenses and other considerations with your relocation. The relocation allocation is payable once you have arrived on campus and fully processed as a new employee after your official start date. The payment will be regarded by the U.S. government as taxable income. Please consult with a tax expert if you have questions or concerns.

Your responsibilities for the Department of Communication and Journalism will include publishing your scholarship in prestigious public and academic forums, teaching courses in journalism, and contributing service to the department and the discipline. You are expected to contribute to teaching in the Department of Communication and Journalism. The standard teaching load for faculty in the tenure stream is 2-2. However, with your administrative role as Director, you will be responsible for a 0-1 teaching load.

Employees who work at least 50% effort for 4.5 months or longer are eligible for a benefits package and participation in a retirement program.

This position participates in a mandatory retirement program, effective on your date of hire, and is eligible for an additional benefits package. You may choose one of the following options:

1. Immediately enroll in a Texas A&M University System sponsored insurance plan on your hire date; or
2. Defer enrollment until the first of the month following your hire date; or
3. Defer enrollment until the first of the month following a 60-day waiting period.

You must notify your Benefits Specialist at [benefits@tamu.edu](mailto:benefits@tamu.edu) and complete all onboarding tasks in Workday within 5 days of your hire date to request one of the first two enrollment options.

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An annual performance review is conducted for all faculty. You will be evaluated annually on your performance in the areas of research, teaching, and service. According to our post-tenure review policy, tenured associate professors are evaluated every six years by the Tenure and Promotion Committee.

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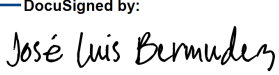
We are delighted at the prospect of your joining the faculty at Texas A&M University.

If you accept this appointment as described herein, please indicate by signing below by June 14, 2023.

Sincerely,



Hart Blanton, Professor & Head

DocuSigned by:  
  
C9FA28D2785048F...

José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean

I accept the terms and conditions of this agreement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathleen McElroy      Date

**COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION & JOURNALISM



June 7, 2023

Kathleen McElroy

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Sincerely,



Hart Blanton, Professor & Head

DocuSigned by:  
  
C9FA28D2785048F...

José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean

I accept the terms and conditions of this agreement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathleen McElroy      Date

**COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

FA 06-043/NP  
Received 6/6/23




OFFICE OF THE DEAN

José Luis Bermúdez  
Interim Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

DS May 11, 2023

NP

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: <sup>DS</sup>  N.K. Anand, Vice President for Faculty Affairs

FROM: José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

SUBJECT: Director of Journalism

DocuSigned by:  
*N.K. Anand*  
D7759EA64AB64E8...

6/7/2023 | 12:14:14 CDT

*José Luis Bermúdez*

We are getting close to recruiting a director for the Journalism program. Dr Kathleen McElroy (Professor, UT Austin) is a graduate of our program and has served as an editor for the New York Times (20 years) and as director of the Moody School of Journalism and Media at UT (2018-2022). She has also just finished serving on the jury for the Pulitzer prize.

I think we are in agreement on her personal situation (salary etc.), but I wanted to consult on the institutional commitment to the revitalized Journalism program, which is the major commitment. I am attaching a narrative "ask" together with a summary.

The major items are faculty lines. Here is a table summarizing the ask.

Year	Faculty Searches	Size of JOUR Program		
	TT	APT	TT	APT
<i>Current: 2022 - 2023</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>
Year 1: 2023 - 2024	2	2	2	3
Year 2: 2024 - 2025	1	1	4	5
Year 3: 2025 - 2026	1	1	5	6
Year 4 Total			6	7

The first two hires are her + Summer Harlow, whom we recently recruited from UH as part of the Transformational Hiring program (she specializes in bilingual journalism). So the total ask is for **4 TT lines and 4 Professors of the Practice to be hired over 3 years**. With current faculty that would yield a program size by FY26 of 13 (= 6 TT + 7 APT).

In addition, we are looking at **one-time costs of \$245K**; an **annual operating budget of \$200K (about half on technology licenses)**; and **two staff members = \$125K**.

I have looked back at the report from WG11. What Dr McElroy is proposing is broadly in line with what is proposed there. They suggested a director + 7 faculty + 2 staff + \$100K operating. Realistically, this is what it is going to take.

I believe that she will sign on quickly if A&M makes this commitment and we will have an instant and spectacular splash. My recommendation would be to commit to the FY24 requests without qualification, so that she can hit the ground running. You have already committed to three lines, so with McElroy that's a wash. Then you might consider making the FY25 and FY26 hires conditional upon the following enrollment targets, which I have discussed with Dr Blanton:

End of FY24 (based on internal recruiting) = 100 majors

End of FY25 (based on internal and external recruiting) = 250 majors

End of FY26 (based on internal and external recruiting) = 400 majors

These enrollment targets are based on a faculty-student ratio of 1:30, which is as high as we can go given plans for accreditation by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

cc: M. Katherine Banks  
Hart Blanton  
Michelle Mitchell

June 7, 2023

Kathleen McElroy

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102 Bolton Hall

4254 University Blvd  
College Station, TX 77843  
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Sincerely,



Hart Blanton, Professor & Head

DocuSigned by:  
José Luis Bermúdez  
C9FA28D27B5048F...

José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean

I accept the terms and conditions of this agreement:

 6-13-23  
Kathleen McElroy Date

Mon, Jun 19 at 2:05 PM

Kathy - I talked to our new hire. She is going in eyes wide open and knows Texas well. One interesting thing. She is not wedded to being tenured and would be happy not to go down that road. She is only pursuing it because that's what the job ad said.

If she doesn't want to do the tenure, we would need another offer letter.

Let's talk by phone.

I'm open this afternoon

Ok

I need to talk with sharp in detail about this. He and I meet tomorrow morning. I'll call tomorrow after I talk to him.

But that option may be interesting. Please sit on this confidentially.

OK. Bottom line is that this is the final act of her career. She wants to come back to A&M to reboot journalism. She is comfortable with her professional standing and credentials and doesn't feel she needs tenure to do a good job. I agree. I also think that she may be looking at a 3-5 year window to get it done. So we could rewrite the letter as professor of practice or instructional with a 3 year appointment. Her view is that she will take whatever path lets her build the program.

Wow, so she would take a 3 year appointment as a professor of practice?

Very interesting. Give me a little time.

She is impressive and very determined.

I'll let you know very soon, maybe today but definitely tomorrow.

It is an easy defense. Why in the world should she spend her precious time gathering tenure documents when she should be focusing on developing the program.

Mutually agreed to.

I'll let you know.

Ok, it is a green light.

Can you contact her and convince her to be a professor of practice for 3 years?

Same job duties.

I can get a new letter from NK tomorrow.

Fingers crossed that you can get it done.

If you get this done, you get a bonus 😊

I'll do my best. How much can I say about support from the top of the university?

Absolutely nothing. Nothing, nothing. She is going to have a very rough road here.

I do support the creation of the journalism program.

This is a suggestion from you that would align her duties with her passion. It is the right move for her.

This is all confidential.

3 years, non tenure track, professor of practice.

Understood. No need to get NK to write a letter. I can get this done with Hart.

Understood. No need to get NK to write a letter. I can get this done with Hart.

Ok. Just let me know what the decision is.

Mon, Jun 19 at 4:15 PM

It's OK. We are working on a new letter. She is happy with professor of the practice. I explained to her that we have many distinguished folks from industry, government service, and the military in professor of the practice and executive professor titles. I think she's relieved - her nightmare would be getting into some train wreck like the one at UNC.

Did she ask for a three-year term or are we just going to do it traditionally once a year

Sent with Siri

I would prefer it be just the tradition of once a year, if we haven't offered anything else.

Sent with Siri

I offered 3 - sorry, per your message above. We are being encouraged to do this for some folks already here, so she won't be the only one.

Three years it is.

Sent with Siri

Good job! I/O you a bonus.

Sent with Siri

Mon, Jun 26 at 10:07 AM

You were correct. Mike Hall did Walt's evaluation last Friday. I am trying to work out how to unravel it.

Ugh

Tue, Jun 27 at 9:27 AM

How much is heep building renovation?

How much for a "touch up" of heldenfel's 4th floor for biology?

Estimate for Old Heep is \$5M per floor. There are 2 floors. Am finding out on Heldenfels - the info I have is for a full renovation, but yes a refresh makes more sense.

Total for Heldenfels a?

Working on it

Can you do a touch up for \$1M?

Yes, maybe not touch up all the labs but we can get the space functioning and students in there.

It's 20,000 square feet.

Tue, Jun 27 at 4:13 PM

I have draft letters for you to review. Text or email?

Text

OK. Let me figure that out.



McElroy Offer PoP 6-27-23.docx  
Word Document - 203 KB



## Academic Professional Track Agreement

**INSTRUCTIONS:** For faculty hires, upload the completed Academic Professional Track Agreement with faculty member's signature to the Faculty Affairs Portal. The department head, dean of the appropriate college, and vice president for faculty affairs will sign electronically in the portal. If the prospective faculty member declines the offer, promptly inform the Faculty Affairs office. For other types of employment actions that require an Academic Professional Track Agreement but are not processed in the portal, all signatures will need to be obtained outside of the portal.

Kathleen McElroy

Communication and Journalism

**Name of Faculty Member**

**Department**

Your appointment as Professor of the Practice **will not** be considered for tenure status under this agreement because Professor of the Practice (e.g., adjunct or visiting professor, lecturer, part-time faculty--less than 2/3 time employment by the TAMU System at College Station, other) status excludes you from eligibility.

To acknowledge receipt of and agreement with the terms of this appointment, please sign the original and return it with your letter of acceptance.

Kathleen McElroy

6.26.2023

Faculty Member Signature

Print Name

Date

Hart Blanton

6.26.2023

Department Signature

Print Name

Date

College Signature

Print Name

Date

Vice President for Faculty Affairs Signature Print Name

Date

**From:** [Holle, Jennifer D](#)  
**To:** [Bermudez, Jose Luis](#)  
**Cc:** [Hanks, Cheryl L](#)  
**Subject:** FW: McElroy documents  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 8:48:25 AM  
**Attachments:** [McElroy.Offer.PoP.docx](#)  
[McElroy\\_Director\\_Permission\\_2023.docx](#)  
[McElroy-Director-2023.docx](#)

---

Dear Dr. Bermudez,

For your approval.

Thank you  
Jennifer

Jennifer Holle | Director of Faculty Affairs  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979-845-8817 | [j-holle@tamu.edu](mailto:j-holle@tamu.edu)

-----  
[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

---

**From:** Holle, Jennifer D  
**Sent:** Monday, June 26, 2023 4:41 PM  
**To:** Blanton, Hart C <[hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu](mailto:hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu)>  
**Cc:** Marisa Winkling <[mkwinking@tamu.edu](mailto:mkwinking@tamu.edu)>  
**Subject:** McElroy documents

Hi Dr. Blanton,

Before sharing with Dr. Bermudez, please make any edits you like to the attached documents.

Thanks!  
Jennifer

Jennifer Holle | Director of Faculty Affairs  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
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[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

June 27, 2023

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** N.K. Anand  
Vice President for Faculty Affairs

**THROUGH:** José Luis Bermúdez  
Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

**FROM:** Hart Blanton  
Department Head, Communication and Journalism

**SUBJECT:** Request for New Administrative Appointment for Dr. Katherine McElroy (UIN TBD)

**1. Requested Actions and Occupant Information**

- Name, UIN: Katherine McElroy (UIN: TBD)
- Proposed New Title and College/Department/Unit: Director of Journalism, Communications and Journalism, Arts and Sciences
- Proposed Adjustment to base monthly salary: None
- Proposed Rate of Administrative stipend and account number supporting the stipend: \$3,000/month and \$30,000 annual bursary.
- Term of Administrative Appointment (e.g., 11 months): 11 months (9 + 2 summer months)
- Eligible for a 12<sup>th</sup> Month: Yes
- Proposed Annual Compensation (Base salary and administrative stipend): \$222,563
- Effective Date of Administrative Appointment: August 1, 2023
- End Date of Administrative Appointment (if applicable, can be identified as until further notice): August 31, 2026

**2. Justification**

Dr. McElroy will begin her role as Professor of Practice on August 1, 2023 in the Department of Communication and Journalism. Dr. McElroy has over 20 years of experience in journalism including management positions at the New York Times.

**3. Impact on Salary Structure**

None

June 26, 2023

Dr. Katherine McElroy  
Communication and Journalism  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

Dear Dr. McElroy,

This letter confirms your appointment as Director of the Journalism Program in the Department of Communication and Journalism, College of Arts and Sciences effective August 1, 2023. This appointment is through August 31, 2026, and may be renewed based upon performance, need, and mutual agreement.

The director will work in collaboration with me and department leadership to develop and implement plans for strategic growth. These plans will target: (1) curricular development, (2) infrastructure development, (3) expansion of an immersive internship program, and (4) hiring of faculty and to support both its research and teaching missions. This appointment, is renewable based on performance and mutual agreement.

While serving as Director, you will receive an administrative stipend of \$3,000 per month, two months of summer salary as well as an annual professional bursary of \$30,000. Unused bursary funds may be carried over for one year following the end of your term. Your teaching load while serving as director will be 0-1.

Employment in your administrative position will be “at-will,” which means that either you or the university can terminate your appointment at any time for any reason or without cause. The administrative stipend, summer salary, bursary, and course reduction will be removed once you no longer hold the administrative position. This position is not eligible for overtime under the provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This offer is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time by either party.

This is an 11-month appointment, therefore your leave during any fiscal year will be limited to 22 business days (i.e., one month per year) and you will not accrue vacation. Your sick leave and other benefits will be consistent with university policy and State law. Employment in your administrative position will be “at-will”, which means that either you or the university can terminate your appointment at any time for any reason or without cause. The administrative stipend, summer salary, and bursary, and teaching release will be removed once you no longer hold the administrative position. This position is not eligible for overtime under the provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This offer is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time by either party. Your appointment as a tenured faculty member is not “at-will”.

If the conditions described above are agreeable to you, please sign below.

Sincerely,

Jose Luis Bermudez  
Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

ACCEPTED:

---

Katherine McElroy

---

Date



June 27, 2023

Kathleen McElroy

Dear Kathleen,

The purpose of this correspondence is to extend to you a formal offer of employment as Professor of Practice. This is a three-year appointment ending August 31, 2026 and is a non-tenure accruing position. Your employment will commence on August 1, 2023. Prior to the start of classes, there will be required training and other professional development opportunities to assist with your integration as a faculty member at Texas A&M University.

The offer of Professor of Practice is at a 9-month salary of \$155,007 (\$17,223/month). Your annual full-time, 100% FTE, nine-month appointment for FY 2024 will commence on September 1, 2023. You will receive one month of summer salary in August 2023 to prepare for classes and familiarize yourself with department procedures. You are required to be in residence during this time. Upon acceptance of this offer, your employment will require further and final administrative approval.

Pending university approval, you will be appointed to an administrative role as Director of Journalism.

You will receive a one-time payment of \$25,000 to cover moving expenses and other considerations with your relocation. The relocation allocation is payable once you have arrived on campus and fully processed as a new employee after your official start date. The payment will be regarded by the U.S. government as taxable income. Please consult with a tax expert if you have questions or concerns.

Your responsibilities for the Department of Communication and Journalism will include teaching courses in journalism and contributing service to the department and the discipline. The standard teaching load for Professors of Practice is 2-2. However, with your administrative role as Director, you will be responsible for a 0-1 teaching load.

Employees who work at least 50% effort for 4.5 months or longer are eligible for a benefits package and participation in a retirement program.

This position participates in a mandatory retirement program, effective on your date of hire, and is eligible for an additional benefits package. You may choose one of the following options:

1. Immediately enroll in a Texas A&M University System sponsored insurance plan on your hire date; or
2. Defer enrollment until the first of the month following your hire date; or
3. Defer enrollment until the first of the month following a 60-day waiting period.

You must notify your Benefits Specialist at [benefits@tamu.edu](mailto:benefits@tamu.edu) and complete all onboarding tasks in Workday within 5 days of your hire date to request one of the first two enrollment options.

102 Bolton Hall  
4234 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-4234

Tel. 979.845.5500 Fax 979.845.6594  
<https://artsci.tamu.edu/>



This position is eligible for Texas A&M University group insurance benefits, including employer contribution, to assist in payment for health insurance premiums. Employer contribution begins on the first day of the month following 60 days of employment. You may elect coverage to begin effective on your hire date (first day of employment) or on the first of the month following your hire date; however, you will be financially responsible for the full monthly premium until the employer contribution begins. Additional information regarding health plans, as well as optional coverages, can be reviewed online (<https://www.tamus.edu/benefits/>).

An annual performance review is conducted for all faculty. You will be evaluated annually on your performance in the areas of teaching and service.

This offer is contingent upon your ability to provide employment eligibility documentation to work in the United States as required by federal law. In addition, the approval of this offer is also contingent upon the successful completion of the degree verification and criminal background check processes, and your compliance with the Selective Service law if applicable to you. To help expedite the administrative approval, Marisa Winking in the Department of Communication and Journalism will email the Degree Verification form to you. Please complete, sign, and return this form to Ms. Winking upon acceptance of this offer. For all degree(s), please proceed with requesting the official transcript from the institution and request that they are mailed in a sealed envelope directly to Faculty Affairs, Texas A&M University, 1126 TAMU, College Station, Texas, 77843-1126. Instructions for the criminal background check are attached explaining how this process will be conducted. This offer will not become final and thereby vest until the degree verification and criminal background check have been successfully verified and cleared by Faculty Affairs.

As an employee of the State of Texas, it is your responsibility to maintain accurate contact information to include your primary work and residence addresses in your employee file located in Workday. State of Texas employees who are approved to work outside of the state of Texas, may be subject to state and local taxes of the locale in which the work is performed. Members of the Texas A&M University System must comply with those applicable state and local tax laws. In addition, the employee benefits offered with your position will be in accordance with and will not exceed those defined by Texas state law.

We are delighted at the prospect of your joining the faculty at Texas A&M University.

If you accept this appointment as described herein, please indicate by signing below.

Sincerely,



Hart Blanton, Professor & Head

José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean

I accept the terms and conditions of this agreement:

Katherine McElroy    Date

**From:** [Holle, Jennifer D](#)  
**To:** [Bermudez, Jose Luis](#)  
**Cc:** [Blanton, Hart C](#)  
**Subject:** FW: McElroy documents  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 9:52:23 AM  
**Attachments:** [McElroy\\_Director\\_Permission\\_2023.docx](#)  
[McElroy-Director-2023.docx](#)  
[McElroy.Offer.PoP.docx](#)

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Dear Dr. Bermudez,

Revised offer now attached with a three year term as professor of practice included.

Thank you  
Jennifer

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College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979-845-8817 | [j-holle@tamu.edu](mailto:j-holle@tamu.edu)

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[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

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**Sent:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 8:48 AM  
**To:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)>  
**Cc:** Hanks, Cheryl L <[chanks@tamu.edu](mailto:chanks@tamu.edu)>  
**Subject:** FW: McElroy documents

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For your approval.

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**Cc:** Marisa Winkling <[mkwinking@tamu.edu](mailto:mkwinking@tamu.edu)>

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June 27, 2023

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** N.K. Anand  
Vice President for Faculty Affairs

**THROUGH:** José Luis Bermúdez  
Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

**FROM:** Hart Blanton  
Department Head, Communication and Journalism

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**1. Requested Actions and Occupant Information**

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**3. Impact on Salary Structure**

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Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

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Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

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Katherine McElroy

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Date

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If you accept this appointment as described herein, please indicate by signing below.

Sincerely,



\_\_\_\_\_  
Hart Blanton, Professor & Head

\_\_\_\_\_  
José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean

I accept the terms and conditions of this agreement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katherine McElroy    Date

**From:** [Bermudez, Jose Luis](#)  
**To:** [Holle, Jennifer D](#)  
**Cc:** [Zoran, Mark J](#)  
**Subject:** Re: McElroy documents  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 11:08:41 AM

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These letters as written are inconsistent and not well written – look at the benefits language for example. I am rewriting them. I need all boilerplate language to be reviewed and a consistent template established. I do not want to have to edit every letter

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean  
Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)

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[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

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**From:** Holle, Jennifer D <jholle@science.tamu.edu>  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 9:52 AM  
**To:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <jbermudez@tamu.edu>  
**Cc:** Blanton, Hart C <hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu>  
**Subject:** FW: McElroy documents

Dear Dr. Bermudez,

Revised offer now attached with a three year term as professor of practice included.

Thank you  
Jennifer

Jennifer Holle | Director of Faculty Affairs  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979-845-8817 | [j-holle@tamu.edu](mailto:j-holle@tamu.edu)

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**To:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <jbermudez@tamu.edu>  
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**Subject:** McElroy documents

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-----  
[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

**From:** [Mireles, Esperanza \(Hope\)](#)  
**To:** [Banks, M. Katherine](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Sul Ross Group Bulleting Seventy  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 1:18:56 PM  
**Attachments:** [70 - Bulletin Seventy - June 27, 2023.pdf](#)

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**From:** srgbulletin@gmail.com <srgbulletin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 1:14 PM  
**To:** srgbulletin@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Sul Ross Group Bulleting Seventy

**This Message Is From an External Sender**

This message came from outside your organization.

***President's Message***

***Howdy Ags,***

***Here is the Sul Ross Group Bulleting Seventy. The SRG Board hopes you enjoy the information and find it informative. We encourage you to distribute it to your classmates and Aggie buddies. Thank you.***

***Gig 'Em!***  
***Sul Ross Group President***

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin Seventy (70)



June 27, 2023

The opinions expressed in this bulletin are those of the Board of Directors of the Sul Ross Group and do not represent the opinions of The Association of Former Students, its officers, or leadership. Our intention is in keeping with one of our four charged SRG Constitution's purposes, to keep the Sul Ross Group membership informed on pertinent topics and occurrences at TAMU in a timely manner and enlist their support when required.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Figure 1 - The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands ...

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator...

### DEI BAN AT COLLEGES SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOVERNOR ABBOTT



Figure 2 - The 88th Texas legislature in Session.

As reported by Megan Menchaca in the Austin American Statesman on Sunday, May 30, 2023, both houses of the 88th Texas Legislature passed SB 17 which bans DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs at Texas colleges and universities and sent the bill to Governor Abbott to sign it into law. This culminates, but does not end, a long effort by the SRG board to expose its effect on the culture, traditions, and character of Texas A&M University.

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin

The SRG board's effort to expose DEI commenced with Bulletin One that was initiated in response to the efforts by DEI proponents to remove the 103-year-old statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross over claims of racism and white supremacy. We have written sixty-nine bulletins arguing that DEI is an existential threat to the Aggie culture of meritocracy, duty, and selfless service. We have argued that DEI is not about true "diversity" of race, culture, and importantly free speech and political opinion. The DEI version of diversity is about affirmative action, quotas, and racial preferences, all of which have been ruled illegal by the U.S. Supreme Court. The term "Equity" is not about the American goal manifested since the sixties of equal opportunity. It is about forcing equal outcomes regardless of ability or effort. And finally, "Inclusion" misrepresents our Aggie heritage of "We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we". DEI has been exposed as a concept developed at Berkley, CA which weaponizes words to mean something completely different from the normally understood meaning of those words.

Texas becomes the second state to ban DEI programs at colleges after Florida. Once approved by the governor, the new law will prohibit the following activities:

Menchaca's article said "Both chambers of the Legislature approved the final version of Senate Bill 17, which would ban public higher education institutions from maintaining or establishing DEI offices. It also prohibits higher education institutions from requiring anyone to provide DEI statements or participate in DEI training."

"SB 17 defines a DEI office as one that provides different treatment to people based on race, sex, color or ethnicity through any policies, procedures, training, programs or activities. Under the bill, college students or employees could sue their university for 'injunctive or declaratory relief' if they are required to participate in any DEI training." This is a very important provision because it waives the State of Texas' sovereign immunity against lawsuits.

The bill stipulates that no state funds can be used to pay for "diversity" offices or employees. This bill's authors feared the DEI proponents will attempt work-arounds to continue to promote their practices in the colleges and universities so they included enforcement provisions with real teeth.

Menchaca's article elaborates, "The bill would also require the state auditor to conduct audits of public colleges and universities at least every four years to determine whether the schools have spent state money in violation of the ban. If institutions are found in violation, they would need to resolve the matter within 180 days or they would be ineligible to receive formula funding increases or funding for 'exceptional items' in the next biennium."

"SB 17's passage comes after lawmakers approved House Bill 1 — the state budget — with language prohibiting the use of state money for 'unconstitutional' diversity, equity and inclusion programs and practices at public higher education institutions, sending it to Abbott for signature."

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin

The bill's author, Sen. Brandon Creighton, R-Conroe, said in a statement, "The days of political oaths, compelled speech, and racial profiling in university hiring are behind us. Moving forward, Texas will prioritize the advancement of the most qualified individuals and endorse policies that promote diversity and equality for our great state."

A subsequent article by Marcela Rodrigues appearing first in The Dallas Morning News on June 16, 2023 reported that Governor Greg Abbott signed SB 17 into law on June 13, 2023.

To read more, go to the link below and read the June 2, 2023 issue.

Austin American-Statesman (newsmeory.com)

## TEXAS A&M SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVE FLAGSHIP PROPOSALS FOR TWO INSTITUTES, A NEW GOLFING ATTRACTION, AND MOVING UP THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW TRACK FACILITY

May 22, 2023 Bill Oliver



Figure 3 - Seal of The Texas A&M University System

### Telehealth Institute

The telehealth institute will be operated by the health science center and supported by the schools of medicine, education and human development, and nursing. There will also be collaboration with the schools of public health, dentistry, law, business, and architecture. The institute is supposed to improve health care by producing more students in health care professions...an area that A&M says Texas ranks next to last in the United States. The

institute will cost \$26 million dollars over the next three years. Funding will come from grants, contracts, and industry sponsorships.

### Semiconductor Institute

And a semiconductor institute will focus on advancing semiconductor manufacturing technology and promoting workforce development in the semiconductor industry. Additionally, A&M will provide secure production of semiconductors for the defense department. The board of regents was told that over 85 faculty members in the A&M system and 52 public and private collaborators have an interest in semiconductor manufacturing. The regents were told that administrators have proposed \$200 million dollars in start-up funding to the state. Once established, the institute will pursue a share of \$13 billion dollars in federal money to operate the program for five years.

Another attraction is coming to College Station's Century Square district. The board of regents, without public discussion, approved leasing land for a PopStroke golf

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin

entertainment venue. PopStroke's parent company is co-owned by Tiger Woods. The attraction includes a pair of 18 hole putting courses. Construction is expected to start this summer and be completed in about a year. The A&M system did not make public, details of their agreement.

Construction has officially been moved up one year for Texas A&M's new outdoor track project. The board of regents approved the request that was made by A&M chief operating officer Greg Hartman. The more than \$9 million dollar project includes a warmup track and an outdoor competition throws area. Hartman was also asked by new regent Sam Torn of Houston about how much A&M has spent on track...including this facility and those that have been torn down...how that compares with other SEC universities, and what are the net positive revenues that the track facilities have produced. Hartman told Torn he would get him that information. Hartman also told WTAW News that he would send that information to us.

<https://wtaw.com/texas-am-system-board-of-regents-approve-flagship-proposals-for-two-institutes-a-new-golfing-attraction-and-moving-up-the-construction-of-a-new-track-facility/>

## ALAN SAMS PROMOTED TO PROVOST



*Figure 4 - Provost Alan Sams*

As reported by Alex Miller of the Bryan Eagle on May 23, 2023, Alan Sams has been promoted to be Texas A&M University's provost and vice president for academic affairs, A&M officials announced Tuesday. Sams will begin June 1 after serving as the university's interim provost since last August.

"I am honored to have the support of Chancellor Sharp and President Banks and thank them for allowing me to serve our students, faculty and staff as provost," Sams said in a statement. "Our shared vision of transformative education and translational research will foster the

learning environment of Texas A&M and propel us to greater heights among the world's leading institutions of higher learning."

The search was internal to schools in the A&M System and facilitated by Executive Searches, which is within A&M's Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness. A search advisory committee for the position was appointed by A&M President M. Katherine Banks and made up of A&M faculty and staff, a student representative, and other university officials, according to co-chair Dale Rice. Candidates could apply or be nominated for the position.



“Dr. Sams’ wealth of experience, as well as his knowledge and affinity for Texas A&M, uniquely qualifies him to lead our academic enterprise,” Banks said in a statement.

Sams first came to A&M in 1987 and became a professor before he served as head of A&M’s poultry science department and interim head of the nutrition and nutrition and food science department.

Sams later served as dean of agriculture, forestry and life sciences at Clemson University, and dean of agricultural sciences and director of the statewide agricultural experiment station agency at Oregon State University. He returned to A&M as vice president of operational innovation.

[https://theeagle.com/news/a\\_m/alan-sams-promoted-as-texas-a-m-s-new-provost/article\\_d8f2d160-f9af-11ed-](https://theeagle.com/news/a_m/alan-sams-promoted-as-texas-a-m-s-new-provost/article_d8f2d160-f9af-11ed-)

## **TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT’S MONTHLY UP-DATE: MAY 2023**



*Figure 5 - President M. Katherine Banks*

This month, we celebrate the graduation of 11,900 undergraduate and graduate students in College Station, our branch campuses in Galveston and Qatar, and our educational sites across Texas. I have great confidence that, like the half million Aggies who came before them, the achievements of the Class of 2023 will be exceptional.

This year, we advanced important efforts to assist students with the cost of education. We announced a \$100 million scholarship development initiative and are supporting the expansion of open educational resources across campus. We launched the Good Bull Fund to support promising student-led projects that benefit the campus and community. We also committed to strengthening mental health services and support for our students by expanding access and services. To date, we have added 10 new embedded mental health professional positions across campus in key academic locations, and created a comprehensive online resource for quick identification of mental health services.

Aggie Park continues to be a destination for our students, faculty, staff and community. Since opening last year, the 20-acre green space hosted more than 70 events and has become the home of countless memories. This weekend, the venue will host its first music and barbecue festival - the Troubadour Festival . Aggie Park was made possible by the generosity of individual donors and the vision of The Association of Former Students.

In April, we celebrated outstanding members of the Texas A&M family at our inaugural University Awards Ceremony . Ninety-eight exceptional faculty, staff and

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin

students were honored for their contributions in academics, teaching, research and service. Congratulations again to our awardees for representing the university so well.

This week, we announced the inaugural recipients of the Research Leadership Fellowships, the first of two awards through ASCEND, our collaborative research seed grant initiative to encourage research partnerships across all disciplines. Recipients of the second phase of our ASCEND awards, Targeted Proposal Teams, will be announced in July.

In April, the search committee for the next provost, vice president for academic affairs and chief academic officer hosted five candidates on campus for second-round interviews, open forums, presentations and Q&A sessions. Thank you for your active engagement in this important process.

Earlier this month, we announced the appointment of Dr. Leann Horsley as dean of the School of Nursing. Currently dean and professor at the College of Nursing at East Tennessee State University, Dr. Horsley brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this important role as our nursing programs continue to expand and gain national prominence.

Our national search for the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences is underway. Search committee members have been nominated, an election will soon be held to install these individuals, and committee activities are planned for the summer. More information will follow as the search progresses.

The search for the vice chancellor and dean of the College of Engineering is progressing with campus interviews expected in the fall. Also in the fall, we will launch national dean searches for the School of Architecture and School of Performance, Visualization and Fine Arts.

Texas A&M's commitment to excellence in graduate education was recognized in the latest Best Graduate Schools rankings just released by U.S. News & World Report. Our College of Engineering and School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences both ranked nationally in the top 10. Our School of Law rose to 29, an all-time high and a 54-spot climb over the last four years. Overall, 41 programs ranked in the top 50.

The School of Medicine rankings also improved significantly. Our primary care program ranking rose more than 50 spots from last year to 44 and the medical school's research ranking rose from 80 to 64. Rankings are one of many metrics used to determine the success of our programs. Our investments in graduate education have positioned Texas A&M among the nation's best universities.

M. KATHERINE BANKS, PRESIDENT

<https://president.tamu.edu/messages/monthly-update-may-2023.html>



## GOV. ABBOTT APPOINTS A&M LAW STUDENT TO HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

As reported by the Eagle Staff on June 2, 2023, Gov. Greg Abbott appointed Texas A&M Law School student Cage Sawyers of Van Alstyne to serve as a student representative on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, according to the governor's office.

Sawyers is pursuing a Juris Doctor from A&M Law School after receiving a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy with a minor in energy technology, management and policy from Texas Christian University. He will serve as a board representative until May 31, 2024.

[https://theeagle.com/news/local/abbott-nominates-texas-a-m-university-system-student-to-texas-higher-education-coordinating-board/article\\_c028d1fe-0150-11ee-a0b7-1b99bc5e0355.html](https://theeagle.com/news/local/abbott-nominates-texas-a-m-university-system-student-to-texas-higher-education-coordinating-board/article_c028d1fe-0150-11ee-a0b7-1b99bc5e0355.html)

## A&M TAKES NEW DIRECTION IN JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT



Figure 6 - Dean Joe Luis Bermudez with Dr. Kathleen McElroy '81

The Texas A&M Division of Marketing and Communication reported on June 13, 2023, that Dr. Kathleen O. McElroy '81, a veteran journalist with more than 40 years of experience, has been hired to direct Texas A&M University's new journalism program. This story was originally published by Texas A&M Today.

Dr. McElroy, a 1981 Texas A&M graduate, will oversee the program's

vision to prepare the next generation of journalists, forge collaborations and work to rebuild community confidence in the free press.

"There is so much trust in A&M and the Aggie core values, and we want to position the planned new journalism degrees and program as an integral part of the Aggie brand," McElroy said.

Dr. McElroy has extensive experience working for several newspapers including approximately ten years at the New York Times where she rose to the position of Senior Editor. According to the Texas Scorecard in an article by Valerie Munoz published June 15, 2023 "during her time there she was part of the Council for Race, Equity and Diversity (CREED)."

She was a Pulitzer juror for the national journalism awards announced in May. Her research includes the relationship between news media and race, particularly regarding newsroom practices — including the Pulitzers — as well as obituaries and sports.

## Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin

According to the Texas A&M press release, “most recently, McElroy was a professor in the School of Journalism and Media at The University of Texas at Austin, where she served as director for four years through 2022. She received her doctorate in journalism from UT in 2014 where she focused on race and its intersection with journalism in her PhD program at UT Austin. She earned her master’s degree from New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Her thesis was on the obituaries of civil rights leaders.”

The Texas Scorecard piece further quotes McElroy as saying “every faculty member and staff member of color is an ad hoc Diversity, Equity and Inclusion officer at UT because our numbers are so small. I have been attending seminars and reading articles about attracting faculty of color because we all have to identify, hire and nurture faculty of color as we have done for privileged groups.”

Munoz’s Texas Scorecard articles further says, “McElroy has also spoken numerous times about her unique perspective towards objectivity and activism in journalism. ‘We can’t just give people a set of facts anymore. I think we know that, and we have to tell our students that. This is not about getting two sides of a story or 3 sides of a story, if one side is illegitimate. I think now you cannot cover education; you cannot cover criminal justice; you can’t cover all of these institutions without recognizing how all these institutions were built.”

McElroy was inducted into the A&M Former Journalism Student Association Hall of Honor in 2007, and in 2013, she became the first Aggie selected to the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Hall of Fame. She is a founding board member of Friends of *The Battalion*, a nonprofit created to promote the long-term sustainability of the independent student newspaper.

Texas A&M President M. Katherine Banks announced a revitalized journalism program as part of her vision for transformational education at A&M in September. The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents approved a new journalism major in February. The program will be administered by the Department of Communication and Journalism in the College of Arts and Sciences, pending approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

<https://today.tamu.edu/2023/06/13/aggie-with-distinguished-career-selected-to-lead-texas-am-journalism-program/>

## A&M HEAD BASKETBALL COACH HAS RECEIVED A TWO-YEAR EXTENSION

On June 16, 2023, Travis L. Brown of the Bryan Eagle reported that Buzz Williams' extension through the 2027-28 season was approved by the A&M University System Board of Regents during a special meeting held via telephone Wednesday. The university exercised a one-year option, which was spelled out in Williams' initial contract, through the 2025-26 season.



Figure 7 - Buzz Williams

“Buzz Williams is a tremendous leader and role model for our student-athletes, and he’s a great example of Texas A&M’s core values,” A&M athletic director Ross Bjork said in a statement. “He’s taken our men’s basketball team to new heights over the past two seasons with even brighter days ahead. It was an easy decision to ensure that Buzz is here in Aggieland for many years to come as we continue our mission of creating opportunities through championship athletics.”

The Aggies made their first NCAA tournament under Williams last season as a No. 7 seed. The Aggies advanced to the final of the National Invitation Tournament, finishing as runner-up to Xavier. In four seasons at A&M, Williams holds a 76-47 record and earned SEC Coach of the Year honors in 2020 and 2023.

Williams said in a statement. “Our family loves the Bryan-College Station community and Aggieland, and we’re grateful for the support of the 12th Man. We are excited about the future of Texas A&M basketball and humbled for the opportunity to be a part of it.”

[https://theeagle.com/sports/college/aggiesports/mens\\_basketball/texas-a-m-gives-mens-basketball-coach-buzz-williams-two-year-contract-extension/article\\_b7be7d36-0c75-11ee-ab5c-4f742fd8b27a.html#tracking-source=mp-sports](https://theeagle.com/sports/college/aggiesports/mens_basketball/texas-a-m-gives-mens-basketball-coach-buzz-williams-two-year-contract-extension/article_b7be7d36-0c75-11ee-ab5c-4f742fd8b27a.html#tracking-source=mp-sports)

## THE APLIN CENTER WILL OFFER TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Figure 8 - Arch Beaver Aplin III - June 12, 2023

Laura McKenzie with The Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications wrote on June 12, 2023 that Texas A&M has selected key partners to advance toward a fall groundbreaking for the Aplin Center.

Supported by a \$50 million gift from former student Arch “Beaver” Aplin III, owner of Buc-ee’s, the academic center will serve as an immersive learning laboratory for students. “The team we’ve assembled is creating a facility unlike anything else in the country,”

Texas A&M University President M. Katherine Banks said. “From the innovative building design to the function of the Aplin Center, students from many disciplines will have an unprecedented opportunity to bring their studies to life in a hands-on environment.”

The Aplin Center will offer a transformational student experience through new university programs in hospitality, retail studies and food product development involving innovative degree programs including viticulture, fermentation processes, coffee and food science. Product development laboratories and food tasting areas will offer collaboration with industry and experiential learning opportunities for students.

The Aplin Center will include outdoor and indoor student recreational space, as well as retail and food service areas managed by students and faculty through the educational programs.

The project will host corporate training and recruiting programs, along with professional development opportunities. Workforce training based on industry needs will be a key component of the center. Texas A&M is already exploring potential collaboration with industry for internship opportunities as students advance through the programs offered at the Aplin Center.

Primary academic partners will be the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Mays Business School, although other academic units will be involved in specialty projects.

Aplin graduated from Texas A&M in 1980 with a construction science degree and opened his first Buc-ee’s in Lake Jackson, Texas, in 1982.

Development Manager, Architects Selected For Design Of Texas A&M Aplin Center - Texas A&M Today (tamu.edu)

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Figure 9- Reveille X

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**WHO, WHY, AND HOW TO RECEIVE THE SRG BULLETINS?**

In order to maintain independence of thought and communication with our membership, the SRG board has decided to communicate directly through bulletins sent by email to the Class Agents and then shared with those in their Classes. Anyone is free to pass these bulletins to any Aggie, friends of Aggies, or just friends. The Board plans to maintain our policy of complete transparency and that is the reason we have inserted the disclaimer on the front page of this bulletin.

**You can contact us at: [SRGbulletin@gmail.com](mailto:SRGbulletin@gmail.com)**

The Sul Ross Group (SRG) Board of Directors (BoD) are solely responsible for producing the SRG Bulletins. We do so in keeping with one of our four charged SRG Constitution’s purposes, which is to ensure our represented SRG Membership is kept informed on pertinent topics in a timely manner.

To access information about us as the elected SRG Board of Directors, and our Constitution and By-Laws, and the SRG’s history and what we are about, please refer to our new “**SRG Tab**” (Under “Programs”) on The Association’s website, at: **[aggienetwork.com](http://aggienetwork.com)**.

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**Mark your calendar - Sul Ross ’24 Reunion will be March 5 – 7, 2024 in College Station**

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**If you wish to comment to those who decide:**

**Sul Ross Group (SRG) Bulletin**

Chancellor John Sharp: [chancellor@tamus.edu](mailto:chancellor@tamus.edu)

The Board of Regents: [vickie@tamus.edu](mailto:vickie@tamus.edu) or [jbelle@tamus.edu](mailto:jbelle@tamus.edu)

President Katherine Banks: [president@tamus.edu](mailto:president@tamus.edu)

Provost Alan Sams: [asams@tamus.edu](mailto:asams@tamus.edu)

Athletic Director Ross Bjork: [rrabun@athletics.tamu.edu](mailto:rrabun@athletics.tamu.edu)

VPSA Joe Ramirez: [jramirez@vpsa.tamu.edu](mailto:jramirez@vpsa.tamu.edu)

Commandant Patrick Michaelis: [pmichaelis@corps.tamu.edu](mailto:pmichaelis@corps.tamu.edu)

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**McElroy Offer PoP 6-27-23.docx**  
Word Document - 203 KB

Professor of Practice



**McElroy-Director 6-27-23.docx**  
Word Document - 180 KB

Director

Tue, Jun 27 at 7:36 PM

Thanks

Please hold until I get back to you on 7/8.

Ok. It's going to be a little awkward. I'll need to think of what to say. Good thing that NK is out and can't approve.

Yes, tell her that he is on vacation.

Sat, Jul 8 at 8:29 AM

So what did McElroy say when you talked to her?

It was pretty gruesome.

So what did she say? Going to think about it?

Yes. She was pretty angry. It was awkward, because obviously so didn't want to go into details and specifics. But she is not stupid.

She has an offer, so she can't say that we didn't give her an offer. And she asked for the tenure change, so she can't say that we pulled that back.

I hope she doesn't go public with her anger.

Now she just has to decide if she is willing to put up with the negative scrutiny. From many people. The Rudder Association and Sul Ross group are lining up to make a big deal about it, so expect more press and awful emails.

I don't think she will go public. But she may not be able to control the narrative. I hope she'll tough it out because the optics of her withdrawing will be bad whatever happens. Good to know about Sul Ross and Rudder Association. That helps me with framing.

Ok, so she is looking over the letters now? And will decide whether to accept?

Yes. She is deciding over the weekend.

Ok thanks

Mon, Jul 10 at 1:47 PM

I believe that KM has pulled out. Department head just got query from Texas Tribune. I'll make sure that everything is referred over to Kelly.

Ok.

I assume all texts were deleted.

When will you know for sure?

Let me know as soon as you get confirmation.

**From:** [Bermudez, Jose Luis](#)  
**To:** [Holle, Jennifer D](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Draft letters  
**Date:** Friday, June 30, 2023 3:43:38 PM

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No please hold. I will let you know when we are OK to proceed. This is the only one I am sitting on. OK with all others.

I hope you like the new benefits language. I think that Damon did a good job.

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean  
Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)

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artsci.tamu.edu

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**From:** Holle, Jennifer D <jholle@science.tamu.edu>  
**Date:** Friday, June 30, 2023 at 2:31 PM  
**To:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <jbermudez@tamu.edu>  
**Subject:** FW: Draft letters

Dear Dr. Bermudez,

Ok to move forward with signature? Revised benefits language now included.

Thank you  
Jennifer

Jennifer Holle | Director of Faculty Affairs  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979-845-8817 | [j-holle@tamu.edu](mailto:j-holle@tamu.edu)

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[artsci.tamu.edu](http://artsci.tamu.edu)

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**From:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <jbermudez@tamu.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 12:17 PM  
**To:** Blanton, Hart C <hblanton@exchange.tamu.edu>; Holle, Jennifer D <jholle@science.tamu.edu>  
**Subject:** Draft letters

Jennifer, Hart,



Please review the attached. Let me have your comments but please do **\*not\*** share with Dr McElroy until I give the go ahead.

Director letter needs to come from Hart.

Thank you,

José

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean

Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts

College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University

[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)

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artsci.tamu.edu

**From:** [Holle, Jennifer D](#)  
**To:** [Bermudez, Jose Luis](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Draft letters  
**Date:** Friday, June 30, 2023 2:31:17 PM  
**Attachments:** [McElroy-Director 6-27-23.docx](#)  
[McElroy Offer PoP 6-27-23.docx](#)

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Dear Dr. Bermudez,

Ok to move forward with signature? Revised benefits language now included.

Thank you  
Jennifer

Jennifer Holle | Director of Faculty Affairs  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
Office: 979-845-8817 | [j-holle@tamu.edu](mailto:j-holle@tamu.edu)

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**From:** Bermudez, Jose Luis <jbermudez@tamu.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 12:17 PM  
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**Subject:** Draft letters

Jennifer, Hart,

Please review the attached. Let me have your comments but please do **\*not\*** share with Dr McElroy until I give the go ahead.

Director letter needs to come from Hart.

Thank you,

José

**José Luis Bermúdez** | Interim Dean  
Professor of Philosophy and Samuel Rhea Gammon Professor of Liberal Arts  
College of Arts & Sciences | Texas A&M University  
[jbermudez@tamu.edu](mailto:jbermudez@tamu.edu)

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artsci.tamu.edu

June 26, 2023

Dr. Katherine McElroy  
Communication and Journalism  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

Dear Dr. McElroy,

This letter confirms your appointment as Director of the Journalism Program in the Department of Communication and Journalism, College of Arts and Sciences effective August 1, 2023. This appointment is through August 31, 2026, and may be renewed based upon performance, need, and mutual agreement. You will report to the head of the department of Communication and Journalism, who will be responsible for your annual performance evaluation.

As director, you will work with me and department leadership to develop and implement plans for strategic growth. These plans will target: (1) curricular development, (2) infrastructure development, (3) expansion of an immersive internship program, and (4) hiring of faculty to support both its research and teaching missions. Your plans and their implementation will conform to all applicable laws, as well as the policies, rules, and processes of Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M University System.

Employment in your administrative position will be "at-will," which means that either you or the university can terminate your appointment at any time for any reason or without cause. The administrative stipend, summer salary, bursary, and course reduction will be removed once you no longer hold the administrative position. This position is not eligible for overtime under the provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This offer is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time by either party.

While serving as Director, you will receive an administrative stipend of \$3,000 per month, two months of summer salary as well as an annual professional bursary of \$30,000. Unused bursary funds may be carried over for one year following the end of your term. Your teaching load while serving as director will be 0-1.

This is an 11-month appointment and does not accrue vacation. Your leave during any fiscal year will be limited to 22 business days (i.e., one month per year), which may be distributed throughout the year. You should notify me if you are planning to take personal time. Your sick leave and other benefits will be consistent with university policy and State law.

If the conditions described above are agreeable to you, please sign below.

Sincerely,

Hart Blanton  
Head, department of Communication and Journalism

ACCEPTED:

---

Katherine McElroy

---

Date

Kathleen McElroy

June 30, 2023

Dear Kathleen,

The purpose of this correspondence is to extend to you a formal offer of employment as Professor of Practice. This is a three-year appointment ending August 31, 2026, and may be renewed based upon performance, need, and mutual agreement. It is a non-tenure accruing position. Your employment will commence on August 1, 2023. Prior to the start of classes, there will be required training and other professional development opportunities to assist with your integration as a faculty member at Texas A&M University.

You will have a 9-month salary of \$155,007 (\$17,223/month). Your annual full-time, 100% FTE, nine-month appointment for FY 2024 will commence on September 1, 2023. You will receive one month of summer salary in August 2023 to prepare for classes and familiarize yourself with department procedures. You are required to be in residence during this time. Upon acceptance of this offer, your employment will require further and final administrative approval.

Pending university approval, you will be appointed to an administrative role as Director of Journalism, reporting to the department head of Communication and Journalism. The terms of that at-will appointment will be detailed in a separate letter.<sup>1</sup> As Professor of the Practice, your responsibilities for the Department of Communication and Journalism will include teaching courses in journalism and contributing service to the department and the discipline. The standard teaching load for Professors of Practice is 2-2. However, with your administrative role as Director, you will be responsible for a 0-1 teaching load.

As a faculty member at Texas A&M you will be bound by all Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University System rules, processes, and regulations. An annual performance review is conducted for all faculty. You will be evaluated annually by the head of the department of Communication and Journalism on your performance in the areas of teaching and service.

You will receive a one-time payment of \$25,000 to cover moving expenses and other considerations with your relocation. The relocation allocation is payable once you have arrived on campus and fully processed as a new employee after your official start date. The payment will be regarded by the U.S. government as taxable income. Please consult with a tax expert if you have questions or concerns.

Employees who work at least 50% effort for 4.5 months or longer qualify for Texas A&M University group insurance benefits and participation in a mandatory retirement program effective on the date of hire. In addition, this position is eligible for an employer contribution, to assist in payment for health insurance premiums. You may elect to initiate insurance benefits from one of the following options:

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<sup>1</sup> "At-will," means that either you or the university can terminate your administrative appointment at any time for any reason or without cause.

1. Immediately enroll in a Texas A&M University System sponsored insurance plan on your hire date; or
2. Defer enrollment until the first of the month following your hire date; or
3. Defer enrollment until the first of the month following a 60-day waiting period.

Should you choose options 1 or 2, please note that you will be financially responsible for the full monthly health insurance premium until the employer contribution begins (first of the month following a 60-day waiting period) and you must complete assigned onboarding tasks in Workday within 5 days of the hire date.

Please contact an employee benefits specialist at [benefits@tamu.edu](mailto:benefits@tamu.edu) for additional information related to benefits and retirement programs. Additional information regarding health and retirement programs can be reviewed online (<https://www.tamus.edu/benefits/>).

This offer is contingent upon your ability to provide employment eligibility documentation to work in the United States as required by federal law. In addition, the approval of this offer is also contingent upon the successful completion of the degree verification and criminal background check processes, and your compliance with the Selective Service law if applicable to you. To help expedite the administrative approval, Marisa Winking in the Department of Communication and Journalism will email the Degree Verification form to you. Please complete, sign, and return this form to Ms. Winking upon acceptance of this offer. For all degree(s), please proceed with requesting the official transcript from the institution and request that they are mailed in a sealed envelope directly to Faculty Affairs, Texas A&M University, 1126 TAMU, College Station, Texas, 77843-1126. Instructions for the criminal background check are attached explaining how this process will be conducted. This offer will not become final and thereby vest until the degree verification and criminal background check have been successfully verified and cleared by Faculty Affairs.

As an employee of the State of Texas, it is your responsibility to maintain accurate contact information to include your primary work and residence addresses in your employee file located in Workday. State of Texas employees who are approved to work outside of the state of Texas, may be subject to state and local taxes of the locale in which the work is performed. Members of the Texas A&M University System must comply with those applicable state and local tax laws. In addition, the employee benefits offered with your position will be in accordance with and will not exceed those defined by Texas state law.

We are delighted at the prospect of your joining the faculty at Texas A&M University.

If you accept this appointment as described herein, please indicate by signing below.

Sincerely,



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Hart Blanton, Professor & Head

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José Luis Bermúdez, Interim Dean

I accept the terms and conditions of this agreement:

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Katherine McElroy      Date

Yes. She was pretty angry. It was awkward, because obviously so didn't want to go into details and specifics. But she is not stupid.

She has an offer, so she can't say that we didn't give her an offer. And she asked for the tenure change, so she can't say that we pulled that back.

I hope she doesn't go public with her anger.

Now she just has to decide if she is willing to put up with the negative scrutiny. From many people. The Rudder Association and Sul Ross group are lining up to make a big deal about it, so expect more press and awful emails.

I don't think she will go public. But she may not be able to control the narrative. I hope she'll tough it out because the optics of her withdrawing will be bad whatever happens. Good to know about Sul Ross and Rudder Association. That helps me with framing.

Ok, so she is looking over the letters now? And will decide whether to accept?

Yes. She is deciding over the weekend.

Ok thanks

Mon, Jul 10 at 1:47 PM

I believe that KM has pulled out. Department head just got query from Texas Tribune. I'll make sure that everything is referred over to Kelly.

Ok.

I assume all texts were deleted.

When will you know for sure?

Let me know as soon as you get confirmation.

Tue, Jul 11 at 5:40 PM

I'm sorry for all this mess. We never got that confirmation, by the way.

Don't worry about it. I think we dodged a bullet. She is a awful person to go to the press before us. We will learn from this and move on.

We have a lot of skeptics now about the whole concept of journalism, so let's talk when I get back about next steps to address. Put pause on Director search for now.

Thanks. A terrible journalist too. Completely self-serving. Half of what was attributed to me was a lie and the other half taken out of context. Hopefully Sharp and others will get that

I have told them that before you even told me that she lied. So they know.

So lucky!

Just think if she had accepted!!! Ugh.

Agreed. And also on pausing Journalism search. It's disagreeable having to deal with this as you well know. But comes with the job.

Yes, unfortunately.

Monday 12:42 PM

There are lots of places where tenure can run into trouble. College, dean, provost/VPFA

One possibility: take a closer look at multi-year appointments/reappointments for APT faculty