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A&M regents note success as terms end

Gramm, Mays, Adams give up seats as newcomers are picked

By HOLLY HUFFMAN
Eagle Staff Writer

During her six-year term on the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents, Wendy Gramm has helped appoint university leaders, strengthened risk management policies and pushed for increased technology commercialization.

While Gramm takes pride in those successes, they don't necessarily symbolize her time as a leader of the A&M System. She instead turns to a simple photograph to represent the values exemplified by Texas A&M and the University System during her tenure.

The picture was taken by an Eagle photographer during an Aggie football game shortly after the September 2001 terrorist attacks. As a show of solidarity, tens of thousands of Aggie fans traded in their traditional maroon garb in favor of red, white and blue.

"That is something that is really remarkable. It tells you something about Texas A&M. It tells you something about the system," Gramm said, recalling how the Aggies united to support America in a time of need. "It is something I am very proud of to have been there and been a part of that."

Gramm and Regents Phil Adams and Lowry Mays recently completed six-year terms on the A&M System Board of Regents - posts that are filled by the governor's appointment.

Though their terms expired in February, the trio didn't formally conclude their duties until last week, when Gov. Rick Perry appointed their replacements - Aggie alumni Morris Edwin Foster of Houston, J.L. Huffines Jr. of Dallas and James P. Wilson of Sugar Land.

Gramm, Adams and Mays were appointed by Perry in 2001. It was a second term for Mays, who previously served as a regent from 1985 to 1991 and was board chairman from 2003 to 2005.

Mays graduated from Texas A&M in 1957 with a degree in petroleum engineering before going on to Harvard University Business School, where he earned an MBA. Texas A&M's Mays Business School was named for him.

The Aggie graduate serves as chairman of Clear Channel Communications, which operates more than 1,200 radio stations and more than three dozen television stations in the United States, according to his biography. Mays has taken home numerous broadcasting and alumni honors.

He also is a member and past chairman of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, a board member for the YMCA and past chairman of both the United Way in San Antonio and Bexar County and the Joint Board of the National Association of Broadcasters. Mays and his wife, Peggy, have four children and 16 grandchildren.

Mays did not respond to interview requests made by The Eagle.

Adams graduated from Texas A&M in 1971, and launched the Phil Adams Co., which provides

insurance products and services, according to his biography. A Bryan resident, Adams serves on the board of directors for Tampa-based American Momentum Bank, as well as the Texas Public Policy Foundation and the Texas A&M University Mays Business School Development Council.

"Of course, I was humbled and felt ... it would be an opportunity to give back," Adams said of being selected as a regent. "It's taken a lot of time, but it's been a labor of love. I just hope I've been able to make a meaningful contribution."

Both he and Gramm pointed to a renewed emphasis on technology commercialization and strong administrative hires as board accomplishments of which the two were particularly proud. Regents saw significant turnover among campus leaders, which allowed the panel to play a major role in choosing new university presidents and state agency directors, Gramm said.

"Basically, I believe we have CEOs there who pursue excellence along with the right use of resources - just the things we care about," Gramm said.

Adams lauded Vice Chancellor for Technology Commercialization Guy Diedrich, saying he had been a key factor in the success of his department. And he pointed to Chancellor Mike McKinney, who he said had the potential and experience to become one of the great university system chancellors.

The businessman also noted the importance of the expanding Texas A&M Health Science Center and praised the state agencies within the Texas A&M System, describing them as the best in their respective fields.

"I've had the pleasure of being on the board with some really outstanding regents, some really outstanding people that love Texas A&M and love this system," Adams said. "They have spent hundreds and hundreds of hours working on behalf of Texas A&M, and it has been great for me to work alongside the likes of Lowry Mays and Wendy Gramm."

Gramm, who is from Helotes, graduated from Wellesley College in 1966. She earned her doctorate in 1971 from Northwestern University. She previously served in several governmental roles, including chairwoman of the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, executive director of the Presidential Task Force on Regulatory Relief and director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Economics. She taught economics at Texas A&M for more than eight years, and is married to former U.S. Sen. Phil Gramm.

During her tenure as a regent, Gramm said, she tried to renew the importance of internal auditing. When she first came on board, audit committee meetings were sparsely attended, she recalled. But the renewed focus on risk management has turned the meetings into a sort of happening, she joked.

"Being on the board has been a real highlight of my career," Gramm said. "It was a wonderful experience, something I'll always be grateful to the governor for doing."

- Holly Huffman's e-mail address is holly.huffman@theeagle.com.

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