

HISTORICAL STATEMENT

Prairie View A&M University, a member of the Texas A&M University System and the second oldest public institution of higher education in Texas, originated in the Texas Constitution of 1876. Having already established the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (later to be named Texas A&M University) in 1871, legislators pledged in the Texas Constitution of 1876 that "separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored children, and impartial provisions shall be made for both." On August 14, 1876, the Texas Legislature authorized the "Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, established for colored youths" and placed responsibility for its management with the Board of Directors of the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Bryan. The Alta Vista College for Colored Youths opened at Prairie View, Texas on March 11, 1878.

The Texas Legislature authorized the original curriculum in 1879 to be that of a "Normal School" for the "preparation and training of colored teachers." This curriculum was expanded to include the arts and sciences, home economics, agriculture, mechanical arts, and nursing. The Twentieth Legislature in 1887 added in "the Agriculture & Mechanical Department" to the official school name of Prairie View State Normal School. Prairie View was established as a Land Grant College in 1890 (Second Morrill Act). The four-year senior college program began in 1919.

In 1945, the name of the institution was changed from Prairie View Normal and Industrial College to Prairie View University. In 1947, the Texas Legislature changed the name to Prairie View A&M College of Texas and provided that "courses be offered in agriculture, the mechanics arts, engineering, and the natural sciences connected therewith, together with any other courses authorized at Prairie View at the time of passage of this act, all of which shall be equivalent to those offered at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas at Bryan." On August 27, 1973, the name of the institution was changed to Prairie View A&M University, and its status as an independent unit of the Texas A&M University System confirmed.

In 1983, the Texas Legislature proposed a constitutional amendment to restructure the Permanent University Fund (PUF) to include Prairie View A&M University as a beneficiary of its proceeds. The 1983 amendment also dedicated the University to enhancement as an "institution of the first class" under the governing board of the Texas A&M University System. The constitutional amendment was approved by the voters on November 6, 1984. In January 1985, the Board of Regents of the Texas A&M University System responded to the 1984 Constitutional Amendment by stating its intention that Prairie View A&M University become "an institution nationally recognized in its areas of education and research." The Board also resolved that the University receive its share of the Available University Fund.

In March 1999, Office of Civil Rights officials indicated that they had reached a preliminary conclusion that disparities traceable to de jure segregation still existed at Prairie View A&M University. As a result, a select committee in mid-2000 agreed that the university should be enhanced. In 2001, the 77th Texas Legislature approved funding to support the state commitment to the Office of Civil Rights Priority Plan. This additional funding, the "Texas Commitment," allowed the institution to expand its program offerings and construct new buildings. The first Ph.D. student was graduated in December 2004, and enrollment in all doctoral programs reached a new high in fall 2006.

A Brief Chronology of Prairie View A&M University

February 1876: Texas State Representative William H. Holland submits an “act to establish an agricultural and manual school for colored youths of the state.”

August 14, 1876: The Fifteenth Legislature authorizes the creation of the “Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas,” “established for colored youths.”

1877: The state takes title to 1,388 acres in Waller County for the site of the college.

March 11, 1878: Alta Vista College for Colored Youth opens with eight students.

1878: L.W. Minor of Mississippi named the first Principal (1878-1879).

April 19, 1879: The school is renamed “Prairie View State Normal School.” The school is the first coeducational public institution of higher learning in the state.

1885: First diplomas granted.

1887: The Twentieth Legislature adds “the Agriculture & Mechanical Department” to the official school name.

1890: The institution becomes a Land Grant College (Second Morrill Act, 1890).

1899: The institution renamed Prairie View Normal and Industrial College.

1901: The institution begins offering a four year course of study.

1918: The Prairie View Training School for nurses established.

1919: Four year senior college program began.

1921: First four year degree offered.

1930: College of Arts and Sciences established.

1937: Division of graduate studies added.

1939: First Masters degree granted.

1945: Prairie View Normal and Industrial College renamed Prairie View University.

1947: Prairie View University renamed Prairie View A&M College of Texas.

1947 - 1948: Dr. E.B. Evans appointed as Principal and subsequently appointed by the Texas A&M University Board of Directors as Prairie View’s first President.

1950: School of Engineering established.

1958: The institution accepted for membership in the Southern Association.

1964: First white students attend Prairie View.

1968: The Navy ROTC program established.

1972: College of Business established (degrees offered since early 1930s).

August 27, 1973: Prairie View A&M College renamed Prairie View A&M University and is an independent unit of the Texas A&M University System.

1982: Prairie View becomes a party to U.S. Dept. of Education's Office of Civil Rights lawsuit.

1983: College of Nursing relocates to Texas Medical Center complex in Houston.

November 6, 1984: A constitutional amendment restructures the state's Permanent University Fund (PUF) to include Prairie View A&M as a beneficiary of its proceeds.

1998: School of Architecture established.

1999: College of Juvenile Justice established.

2000: University College established.

2001: The University's first doctoral program (Ph.D. in Juvenile Justice) is offered.

2001: Funding approved by 77th Texas Legislature to support state commitment to Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Priority Plan.

July 2002: "Land-Grant institution by federal statute" added to Mission Statement.

2003: Dr. George C. Wright is named as the seventh president of Prairie View.

December 2004: First Ph.D. awarded (Juvenile Justice).

Fall 2007: Record enrollment of 8,382 students.

Note: For additional historical information about the institution, see Prairie View A Study in Public Conscience 1878-1945 by George Ruble Woolfolk (NY: Pageant Press, 1962)