

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 PhD student was graduated in December 2004, and enrollment in all doctoral programs reached a new high in fall 2006.