



**EXCLUSIVE PVAMU INAUGURATION EVENT:
OFFICIAL UNVEILING OF “BENCH BY THE ROAD”**

The memorial bench will be prominently displayed on the 14-hundred-acre campus as a historic marker.

PRAIRIE VIEW, Texas (March 18, 2024) – Prairie View A&M University has prepared a series of momentous events to mark the inauguration of Dr. Tomikia P. LeGrande as its ninth president, including the Toni Morrison Writing Program official unveiling of “The Bench by the Road” on March 19, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.

The “Bench by the Road” project is a memorial history and community outreach initiative of the Toni Morrison Society. The name is taken from Morrison's remarks in a 1989 interview with World Magazine, where she spoke of the absences of historical markers that help remember the lives of Africans who were enslaved.

The Bench will be placed on PVAMU's campus to memorialize Matthew Gaines and William H. Holland, Reconstruction Era legislators whose initiatives led to the August 14, 1876, establishment of the Alta Vista Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas for Colored Youth, now Prairie View A&M University.

Dr. E. Johanne Thomas-Smith, Provost Emerita, says the occasion is a fitting tribute to the University's rich academic legacy. “The difference PVAMU has made in the lives of African Americans for 148 years as it progressed from literally a less than diploma or certificate offering school to a doctoral level degree-granting, land grant “institution of the first class,” designated as a Carnegie Two Research University is worthy of a prominent place in American history. The Toni Morrison Society found the University fully worthwhile and responded exuberantly to Dr. Tomikia P. LeGrande's quest for A Bench by the Road to be unveiled on the opening of her inauguration.”

For media inquiries, please contact Liz Faublas-Wallace at lswallace@pvamu.edu.

Event: The Unveiling of Bench by the Road
Date: Tuesday, March 19, 2024
Time: 10:30 a.m.
Place: Opal Johnson Smith Auditorium, Memorial Student Center
L.W. Minor Street St., Prairie View, TX 77446

###

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY, founded in 1876, is the second oldest public institution of higher education in the state of Texas and the third largest Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the nation. Designated as an “institution of the first class” in the Texas Constitution, the enrollment exceeds 9,000 students and over 80,000 graduates. PVAMU offers academic programs through its ten colleges and schools, boasting degree options leading to bachelor's and doctoral-level degrees. A Carnegie-classified high-research (R2) University and a member of The Texas A&M University System, PVAMU is dedicated to fulfilling its land-grant mission of achieving excellence in teaching, research, and service. For more information, visit www.pvamu.edu.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Candace Johnson

Executive Director of Marketing and
Communications
936-261-1566 • [cajohnson@pvamu.edu](mailto:cjohnson@pvamu.edu)

Liz Faublas-Wallace

Communications Professional
936-261-1562
lswallace@pvamu.edu

The Office for Marketing and Communications • 936-261-1560 • www.pvamu.edu/marcomm