Welcome again to the spring 2018 semester. It’s hard to believe that we’re already on the path toward midterm exams and spring break next month.

This February, we celebrate Black History Month on “The Hill” with a number of great events scheduled and underway. The 4th Annual Essay and Oratory Contest will have its culminating event on February 22, with a winners’ oratorical showcase. This year’s theme is The Awakening: “Know Who You Are, Before They Have to Tell You” – a Wolof Proverb. Also, the 3rd Annual Juried Student Art Competition has a call out for artists. Like the Essay and Oratory Contest, prizes for the Art Competition range from $2,500 to $1,500. Both of these contests over the last few years have become an important part of the fabric of this month’s celebration.

Speaking of great events, a few weeks ago, the Marching Storm performed on the national stage once again, this time, for the 2018 Honda Battle of the Bands in Atlanta. Hundreds of Panthers took to the field and the stands, and we commend our students for all of their hard work and dedication during this historic season. We also thank faculty, staff, fellow students, and alumni who have shown their support for the band throughout the year.

PVAMU’s Confucius Institute recently welcomed nearly two dozen students and instructors from China’s Xi’an International Studies University (XISU) for their winter exchange program. While here, our Honors students paired up with our special guests. The XISU students attended class with our students and followed their daily routines, which immersed these young minds in American culture. I’m confident new friendships were foraged, which will be extremely helpful when our students visit the XISU campus this summer.

This month, several Engineering faculty will travel to California, as will our president, to attend the Intel HBCU Consortium, and some of our students are gearing up to compete in the 2018 HBCU Battle of the Brains in Austin. Updates on both of these events, as well as other activities, will follow in the next issue of Academic Insights.

It is busy behind the scenes as we focus on the University’s upcoming reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges (SACSCOC). As part of the process, we are seeking broad-based participation to help establish a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which we expect to implement in Fall 2020. Feedback thus far from faculty, staff, and students has indicated five areas that stand out to most positively impact student learning and success. They include advising and career development; critical thinking and analysis skills; basic foundational knowledge and skills; application of knowledge and concepts; and communication, both written and oral. Additional feedback is being solicited to help in narrowing in on a topic.

As you can see from reading this letter and examining this issue, we strive to continue achieving excellence and relevance in teaching, research, and service. We invite readers to share ideas and highlights at academicinsights@pvamu.edu. We look forward to speaking with you soon.
Dr. Patrick D. Jefferson currently serves as director of Student Academic Support Services at Prairie View A&M University. In this capacity, he oversees PVAMU’s Learning Curve, Testing Center, Developmental Education Program, Programs for Minors, and Social Support Services. Before assuming this role, Jefferson served in several areas in the field of education, serving students, families, and communities.

Jefferson began his career in education as a high school science teacher and football coach. Since then, he has worked in adult education, in community-based organizations and services, and as a leader and innovator in higher education at the community college and university levels. He most recently served as assistant vice president for Student Services and dean of students at the University of Houston-Downtown, after relocating from California where he served as executive vice president of Student Learning and vice president for Student Development at Ventura College in Ventura, California. Prior to those posts, he served as the vice president of Academic Affairs and Dean of Student Services and Academic Affairs at Los Angeles Southwest College.

Jefferson is very active in his community and speaks regularly about the benefits of education and service. He is an active member of the Houston Metropolitan Chapter of the 100 Black Men of America and currently serves as the organization’s membership chair. He was also a founding board member of African American Educational Network and Development (A2MEND), a California-based non-profit which focuses on improving academic attainment for men of color.

The Houston native completed his undergraduate education at Xavier University of Louisiana where he earned a degree in Biology. Jefferson holds a Master of Arts degree in Education Administration from Loyola Marymount University. He completed his doctoral studies in Educational Leadership at the University of California-Los Angeles.

Jefferson’s research interests include higher education leadership, student engagement, and underrepresented student academic achievement. His many hobbies and interests include traveling, outdoor and adventure sports, and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.
For Prairie View A&M University’s faculty and staff, there’s never a shortage of things to do, see, and learn at the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). If you don’t believe me, just look at the center’s calendar of events that comes out once a month in Campus Announcements.

“We regularly host webinars, workshops, and institutes which cover a variety of subjects. We also offer multiple modes of training and tools that provide opportunities for faculty and professional staff development,” said Dr. Laurette Foster, director of the CTE, who is also a professor of mathematics here at PVAMU. “These opportunities encourage our attendees to become knowledgeable of the best practices of instruction that reflect teaching students at an ‘institution of the first class.’”

If that’s not enough, the CTE offers Faculty Friday once a semester, and during May, the CTE hosts the Grant Writing Institute and the Curriculum Institute. The center also supports faculty attending off-campus training to keep abreast of updates in instruction.

“We just want our faculty and staff to come and experience the good things we have here in the center. Whether it’s for refreshments, a game of chess, or the training and resources we offer, we want to make sure everyone is staying up-to-date on teaching techniques and practices that are nationally recognized so we can continue to grow,” said Foster.
New Research Center Inspires Promising, Long-term Expectations

Prairie View A&M University’s growing achievements in research, combined with its intensified outreach to industry partners, represent a powerful and promising future for the university’s new Innovation and Commercialization Center for Entrepreneurs (ICCE). ICCE is the culmination of a $10 million Chancellor’s Research Initiative, sparked by Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp’s challenge to the entire Texas A&M University System, to take on a more significant role in accelerating economic growth statewide. When it opens, ICCE will offer more laboratory and innovation space that coincides with a growing number of PVAMU faculty and students engaged in large-scale research activities.

Dr. Cajetan M. Akujuobi, Vice President of the Office of Research, Innovation and Sponsored Programs, said ICCE will be a meeting point for faculty, industry partners and students.

“We’re trying to make sure we have a place where industry partners bring prototypes they would want to market, and we can help them with those prototypes,” Akujuobi said.

Key developments accompanying the soon-to-be opened ICCE include:

• Newly built infrastructure (including new facilities) to accommodate prototype development for innovative commercial applications
• Seminars and workshops for project directors and principal investigators
• Further development of the research mini-grant program; Mini-grants have increased by 100 percent in recent years, and researchers can gather baseline data for future external proposals

Akujuobi said ICCE will also enhance the university’s activities related to the Internet of Things (IoT) — a network of physical devices, vehicles, home appliances and other items embedded with electronics, software, sensors, actuators and network connectivity which enable these objects to connect and exchange data.

“About four years ago, our research expenditure was about $8 million. Now, it’s about $16 million. We’re committed to becoming an emerging research institution,” Akujuobi said. “This will give us some of the recognition that we don’t have now and will really enhance many of our funding opportunities.”
A few weeks ago, a fellow staff member at Prairie View A&M University wrote in about Bridget Ross, director of PVAMU’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and how she’s going above and beyond to serve the public.

“I recently met with Ross to learn about the activities of SBDC. I was highly impressed with the fine job she was doing with helping the PVAMU community, especially faculty, staff, and students who were wanting to grow their small businesses,” said the staff member.

I contacted Ross, who humbly took the spotlight off of her and onto the center.

“Our entire focus is the community. We help people and students here in Waller County and nearby Grimes County who are wanting to start or expand a business,” said Ross. “We offer free consulting and low-cost training seminars. We also help our customers develop strategies, figure out marketing strategies and ways to attract more customers, increase sales, and improve their productivity and profitability.”

PVAMU’s SBDC is part of the University of Houston SBDC Network, which serves 32 counties in Southeast Texas. It is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

“Prairie View is the only HBCU in Texas to host an SBDC, and that is major,” said Ross. “Like PV Produces Productive People, we have a program that is producing a strong business community.”

Since 2011, the PVAMU SBDC has assisted over 900 people in Waller and Grimes Counties with starting or expanding their businesses. This number includes community businesses and student-, faculty-, and staff-run businesses.

To find out more information about the PVAMU SBDC, visit pvamu.sbdcnetwork.net.
Alumnus Flourishes Post-Graduation

By Marchita Shilo

Draylon Leassear is only a few months into his post-PVAMU life, but the Construction Science graduate is already making headlines at his new company.

“Upon completing my probationary period with AECOM at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, the vice president of our Houston office featured me on the front page in our company’s newsletter as a matchmaking success story,” said Leassear. “He said he was intrigued by the passion I had for airports and the company, and he was thrilled to bring me aboard AECOM’s $100 million DFW project.”

Leassear, who serves as an aviation construction coordinator consultant, secured his job only a month after graduation.

“I started working at AECOM in September of 2017. The job offer was an awesome opportunity to get a head start on my career in the construction industry,” said Leassear. “Since my junior year at PV, I’ve always planned and expected to be a part of some type of residential or commercial construction project. Although, since I’ve started in the aviation field, I have fallen in love with the different operations, processes, and the overall diversity within this portion of the construction industry.”

Leassear says his dream-come-true wouldn’t have been possible without several PVAMU faculty and staff members who helped him along the way.

“During my journey at PV, I faced many adversities, though, with the help of so many individuals there, too many to name, I was able to overcome many difficult obstacles and achieve my end goal, graduating. I would not have been able to make it through without their guidance and encouragement. Now that I am working in my respective field, I will continue to reflect on the ups and downs it took to get here, and I’m grateful to have had such wonderful people in the midst of my growth,” Leassear said.

Dean Elected to Serve on Board of National Honor Society

Dr. Ikhlas Sabouni, dean of the School of Architecture, has been elected to serve as treasurer on the National Board of the Tau Sigma Delta Architecture Honor Society. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the Association of the Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), the Board of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Houston Chapter, and the Board of Architecture and Construction Alliance (A+CA).
Two Librarians Publish Chapter in New Book


“The chapter discusses the achievements and challenges of a Japanese librarian and her collaborations with myself, an African American librarian, at PVAMU,” said Brumfield. “Chieko’s experiences shed light on a recent trend in academia which indicates that Asian Americans and Latinos comprise two of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States. There has also been a substantial increase in graduation rates among these two groups at HBCUs.”

The book is already being used as a teaching tool, and it is available to buy online.

Bonner Speaks at Colorado Diversity Summit

Dr. Fred A. Bonner, professor and endowed chair in the Whitlowe R. Green College of Education, was a featured speaker at the University of Denver’s Diversity Summit on January 26. The topic for the day: *A Conversation for, by, and About Black Faculty, Staff, and Administrators in Colorado*.

Bonner is also on tap to serve as a speaker at the 2018 Texas Caucus of Black School Board Members’ 11th Annual Educational Summit next month in Austin. You can read more about that visit at pvamu.edu/blog/fred.
About the event?

“The Houston Independent School District’s College and Career Readiness Department, along with its Counseling and Student Support Department, hosted the district’s first Elementary College Week. During the week, students learned: what is college, why to go to college, who can go to college, how do you get to college, and where can you go. Prairie View A&M University’s Office for Strategic Partnerships and K-12 Outreach had the opportunity to visit Lockhart Elementary School to visit and talk with students about the great opportunities PVAMU has to offer. Lockhart Elementary designated Friday, February 2 as PV Day.”

Who helped make PV Day a success?

“Our office’s new program coordinator, Jenta Young, along with PV Spot Team members Kartz Rowel, Lauren Foster, Taylor Scott, Johnathan Chevalier, Franklin David, and Bijuana Stevens. By the way, our SPOT Team is very active in our partnering school districts. They are making a great impact by visiting schools and spreading the goodness of PVAMU with future Panthers.”

Why is this important?

“The purpose of PV Day was to plant seeds early in little minds. It encouraged students to begin thinking about college and also if they would like to become an engineer, nurse, doctor, lawyer, etc. Not to mention, early exposure increases a student’s interest and expands their knowledge about the opportunities that higher education has to offer -- it is exciting! In fact, some students made remarks that they were looking forward to attending Prairie View A&M University in the future. Now, just to hear a child say that is worth more than what money can ever buy. Also, when I hear these statements, I know we have done what we set out to do, and that is to encourage and broaden students’ horizons.”

What’s next?

“Middle Partnering School Day this spring!”
in case you missed it...

Marching Storm Performs at 2018 Honda Battle of the Bands
January 27, 2018

“The Storm” captivated thousands at the 16th annual Honda Battle of the Bands (HBOB) Invitational Showcase in Atlanta. This was the 8th year for the band to perform at the event.

“This was a culmination of an outstanding season. I mean, the laws of band apply, where you get a brand new band every fall, and with it comes a new personality. However, we love being able to mold young people into this fine band that we call the Marching Storm every year...and this year was one heck of a year! It will definitely be one to talk about for a long time,” said Director of Bands Dr. Timmey Zachery.

Other participating bands at HBOB included: Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Bethune-Cookman University, Hampton University, Miles College, North Carolina A&T State University, and Tennessee State University.
Over the winter break, three professors from Prairie View A&M University’s School of Architecture (PVAMU-SoA) traveled to Nepal. Their primary focus -- to measure the damage that was done to five historic temples in the country’s capital during a catastrophic earthquake in 2015.

“My colleagues Stephen Song, Pankaj Chhetri and I scanned and measured the Historic Pancha Deval [five temples] Hindu Temple in Kathmandu, Nepal with 3D laser scanning equipment, and we conducted field measurements,” said William Batson, an associate professor of Architecture. “During this spring semester, students enrolled in a Special Topics class are hard at work creating museum-quality drawings from our 3D laser point cloud and field measurements. From this group, we’ll have approximately ten students, who produce the best drawings, to go present those drawings to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)-Nepal during Spring Break.”

According to Batson, the five-temple complex was built centuries ago by expert Hindu craftsmen, without any drawings or floor plans. However, this is where PVAMU-SoA expertise will come in handy.

“If the building is damaged or destroyed in the future, accurate and precise drawings that PV students produce will be useful in reconstructing the building,” said Batson. “This is a significant project for us. Our students’ drawings will be on record for the world to see, and so we intend to do an excellent job.”
BRAILSFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Department of Mathematics Releases Latest International Journal

The latest issue of Applications and Applied Mathematics: An International Journal (AAM), AAM Volume 12, Issue 2 (December 2017), is available online. According to Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief, and Professor and Head of PVAMU’s Mathematics Department, Dr. Aliakbar M. Haghighi, the volume contains 28 papers and 477 pages of peer-reviewed and quality papers in mathematical sciences and operations research. This issue, as well as others, can be viewed at www.pvamu.edu/aam.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

COB Hosts Income Tax Seminars at NWHC

Prairie View A&M University’s College of Business hosted two income tax seminars at the Northwest Houston Center January 8-9. The first one gave an update on the current federal tax developments affecting tax returns for this season, including new and pending legislation, IRS interpretations, and recent court decisions on tax laws. The second session offered a comprehensive review of tax laws relating to S corporations, or corporations that pass corporate income, losses, deductions, and credits through to their shareholders for federal tax purposes. Dr. James Hasselback, a nationally recognized scholar on tax issues, led both seminars. More than 50 participants earned Continuing Education Unit certificates from PVAMU’s Office of Continuing Education.

► For more information about the tax seminars, email Dr. Rahim Quazi at rmquazi@pvamu.edu.
Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to take part in the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA)'s 2018 Scholarship Program. Applicants who exemplify outstanding scholarship, and leadership, particularly as related to public service, must be enrolled full-time at a traditional four-year college or university, preferably an HBCU. For more information, please visit nfbpa.org/programs/2018-scholarship-program.

Tulane University in New Orleans is hosting its 10-week Summer Research Experience for Undergraduates in Materials for Health, Energy, and the Environment (SMART). Students will learn about state-of-the-art research techniques and research centers in science and engineering. Learn more at smartreu.tulane.edu. Applications are due February 26, 2018.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>Last Day to Withdraw from Course(s) without Academic Record; Late Deadline for Spring 2018 Graduating Undergraduate Students to Submit Application for Tuition Rebate; Late Deadline to Apply for Spring 2018 Graduation Ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td>Application Period for Degree Conferral Only Begins (No Ceremony Participation)</td>
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<td>March 8-10</td>
<td>Mid-Semester Examination Period</td>
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<td>March 9</td>
<td>Last Day of Class (1st 8-week session)</td>
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<td>March 12-17</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>March 16</td>
<td>Spring Break (University Closed)</td>
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<td>March 19</td>
<td>First Day of Class (2nd 8-week session)</td>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td>Mid-Semester Grades Due (Spring 2018); Final Grades Due (1st 8-week session)</td>
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<td>March 26-27</td>
<td>Last Day to Withdraw from Course(s) without Academic Record (2nd 8-week session)</td>
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<td>March 28</td>
<td>Founders’ Day/Honors Convocation</td>
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<td>March 30</td>
<td>Good Friday (Student Holiday)</td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>Priority Registration Period for Summer 2018 Semester Begins; Priority Registration Period for Fall 2018 Semester Begins</td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td>Deadline to Apply for Summer and Fall 2018 Graduation</td>
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<td>April 30-May 1</td>
<td>Course Review Days</td>
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SAVE THE DATE APRIL 20, 2018

PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION
OF

RUTH J. SIMMONS
AS THE EIGHTH PRESIDENT OF PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

1:30 PM PRELUDE & PROCESSIONAL
2:00 PM INSTALLATION CEREMONY

100 UNIVERSITY DRIVE | PRAIRIE VIEW, TX 77446

FOUNDERS’ DAY AND HONORS RECOGNITION CONVOCATION

MARCH 28, 2018

Commencement Convocation
MAY 12, 2018