Spring semester 2018 has come and gone, and new alumni are taking on the world as Productive Panthers. Nearly 900 bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate degrees were awarded on May 12, bringing the total number of degrees conferred by Prairie View A&M University to more than 73,000. Lonnie G. Bunch III delivered an inspiring Commencement address. Bunch is not only a historian, author, curator, and educator, but he is also founding director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. The University is honored that he took part in our students’ special day.

As students graduate, orientation season is underway for the incoming class. There are orientations scheduled through the end of June. A few weeks ago, Academic Engagement and Student Success hosted the first one of the season to an eager group of 370 new students. These students registered for classes, accepted financial aid rewards, secured residential housing, and received identification cards. Their parents and families also received an orientation detailing facts about PVAMU and its many support services.

Many of those going through orientation heard about the recent awards in the School of Architecture and College of Business. Both areas had students take home the top prize in two national competitions. Details about these events are inside this issue. They may have also heard about Dean Danny Kelley performing in the famed New York Steinway Hall this past month. This fellow alumnus continues to make PV proud.

Incoming orientation students scheduled for May 18 will hear that PVAMU announced the next Dean and Director of Land Grant Programs for the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences (CAHS), Gerard E. D’Souza. Currently, Dr. D’Souza serves as Director of Division of Resource Economics and Management and is Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at West Virginia University. We look forward to all that he is going to do in the CAHS in the coming academic year.

Congratulations to those who graduated this past weekend, and we look forward to highlighting their many accomplishments in forthcoming issues of Academic Insights.
Dr. Rambod Rayegan is the 2018 recipient of the Roy G. Perry College of Engineering Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award.

“The award is given out once a year during National Engineers Week, or E-Week,” said Rayegan, an assistant professor in Prairie View A&M University’s Mechanical Engineering Department. “To qualify, you have to submit a portfolio, including your achievements, and student and supervisor feedback through evaluations, comments, letters, and emails. If they are satisfied with what you’re doing as a teacher, it’s great. It means you’re doing a good job.”

Rayegan joined PVAMU in the fall of 2013, after spending a few years teaching at the University of North Texas. Before that, he taught in his home country of Iran at Semnan University.

“My present career kind of began by accident. I was working at a company in Iran, and one of my interns recognized that I had the gift of teaching,” said Rayegan. “He recommended that I apply for an adjunct position at Semnan, and I ended up working there for five years before coming to the U.S. to get a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering.”

During his time here at PVAMU, Rayegan has been vigorously working to improve undergraduate STEM education.

“In 2015, I was awarded an NSF grant to develop and implement a technical elective course,” said Rayegan. “With this course, and with every course I teach, I start with a big picture, what students should know about my class, why they need to take it, and how it plays a role in their degree plan. I do a similar introduction at the beginning of each chapter and each session in my courses. My students have told me that this “Big Picture” technique helps them a lot.”

Rayegan also says the book, “The A Game: Nine Steps to Better Grades,” is a significant game-changer.

“When PVAMU began The A Game initiative a few years ago, I realized that I was already advising students to do many of the things listed in the book,” said Rayegan. “Students should be attentive in class, study and work on every suggested problem. I really hate the sentence, ‘I have a dumb question.’ Because, in reality, nothing is dumb! We are all constantly learning.”

And Rayegan says his students are what keeps him going.

“What profession is better than teaching? It’s more about people than money, unlike most industries. The teaching environment is one that is joyful and one that I am proud to be a part of.”

Rayegan (right) pictured alongside two students, Jasmine Lewis and Gokul Babudas.
The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded Dr. Yolander Youngblood, assistant professor of Biology at Prairie View A&M University, a $300,000 grant to study the weed *Amaranthus palmeri*. *Amaranthus palmeri* is an aggressive weed that is native to our part of the U.S.

“This particular plant is considered to be a nuisance weed to some, one that invades cash crops like corn and wheat. It is also important as it can serve as a source of food,” said Youngblood, who serves as principal investigator on the three-year project.

Youngblood and a select group of undergraduate students will use different combinations of acetic acid, which is the active ingredient in vinegar, as an organic pesticide to determine which amount will work best with keeping the *A. palmeri* invasion under control while causing the least amount of change to the environment.

“So, there are two versions of *A. palmeri*, one that is resistant to traditional pesticides, and one that is not,” said Youngblood. “The information we learn from this study will give us significant information in evolutionary science because the two versions evolved in a relatively short period. The genomic data will provide insight into these evolutionary changes. The results will also affect other weeds, because applying acetic acid at the right time and using it as an organic weed control will serve as a model technique and practice for producers, and it will lower their costs while increasing productivity.”

Not to mention, this project will benefit PVAMU as well.

“It is one step in the right direction to focus on our University’s research agenda,” said Youngblood. “The students who participate will gain the needed experience and hands-on knowledge to help them in the professional world. It will also help them be more competitive when it comes to applying for graduate and professional school.”

The grant is a part of the NSF’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities-Undergraduate Program (HBCU-UP) Research Initiation Awards (RIAs), which provide support to STEM faculty at HBCUs to pursue research at their home institution, research-intensive institution, a national laboratory, or an NSF-funded Center like the Center for Computational Systems Biology at PVAMU. The genomic data will be examined there.
New Center Services
University’s Design Needs

By Marchita Shilo

Graphic design is a hot commodity in the university community and beyond. Prairie View A&M University’s School of Architecture recognizes the need—its DesignView Media Center is open for business.

“We opened the center this spring, and, so far, four Digital Media Arts students have been able to get real-world experience servicing clients who work at PVAMU,” said Tracey Moore, advisor, assistant professor and Digital Media Arts coordinator in the SOA.

The students can design a wide variety of things including logos and branding, letterheads, invitations, posters, fliers, catalogs, newsletters, brochures, t-shirts, and signage.

“The center is a great opportunity for students to learn things they cannot learn in the classroom,” said Moore. “They become professionals at understanding time management and having a system in place to get items out to their clients on time.”

The idea for the center came into view for Moore and two PVAMU students, Elizabeth Komen and Samaria Percival, a few years ago because of a Title III HBCU grant.

“According to information provided to our student workers during the phase of writing the business plan for the center, in academic year 2015-2016, PVAMU spent about $250,000 hiring outside and hub vendors for graphic design services,” said Moore. “The cost to run the DesignView Media center is approximately $70,000 a year. It is a no-brainer. We should use our students instead of hiring so many outside vendors. Also, University departments and organizations should not have to rely on their personnel to develop what our students can do. This center is a great way for our University to reinvest in its students.”

To learn more about the center, or to request services, email Tracey Moore at designview@pvamu.edu.
**Nursing Professor Publishes Chapter in New Book**

Pamela Brandy-Webb, MSN, RN, a clinical assistant professor in Prairie View A&M University’s College of Nursing, published Chapter 48 in “Maternal & Child Health Nursing, 8th Edition,” called Nursing Care of a Family When a Child Has an Endocrine or a Metabolic Disorder.

“Chapter 48 describes both physical and psychosocial changes that occur when children develop an endocrine disorder or a metabolic disorder. This is significant information as it pertains to building a base for care and health teaching,” said Brandy-Webb.

The book is available to buy online.

**Pre-Law Society Students Head to Court in Galveston**

On April 12, eight students from Prairie View A&M University’s Blackstone Pre-Law Society traveled to the U.S. District Court in Galveston to view a case and interview staff. Students also met with Judge George C. Hanks, Jr. and learned about the structure of federal civil cases and Hanks’ job as a judge.

The Blackstone Pre-Law Society prepares students for admission into law school with programming related to the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), visits to national and regional law schools, and engaging speakers. The active group also conducts many hours of community service. The Blackstone Pre-Law Society is supported by the College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology, with faculty mentors from the Texas Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Center, and the Psychology and Political Science programs.
Philosophy Professor Leads Presentation in South Africa

The South African Medico-Legal Association (SAMLA) invited Dr. Mark Tschaepe, assistant professor of Philosophy at Prairie View A&M University, to Johannesburg, South Africa to give a presentation that was simulcast to five cities across the country.

“I was invited by SAMLA, in partnership with the University of Cape Town, to teach a module within their Foundations of Medico-Legal Practice course. I taught a section of Psychology and Communication in Medico-Legal Practice. My particular module was entitled Special Communication Skills: Dealing with Diversity and Special Circumstances. I spoke specifically about addressing diversity and celebrating pluralism within medicine. My talk presented tools for inquiring into issues concerning microaggressions, in particular, especially those involving race, gender, sexuality, and disability,” said Tschaepe.

Medical doctors, spiritual healers, lawyers, and other healthcare professionals attended Tschaepe’s presentation on April 14, and over 1,000 people watched online.

Kelley Performs in New York’s Steinway Hall

Dr. Danny Kelley, dean of Prairie View A&M University’s Marvin D. and June Samuel Brailsford College of Arts and Sciences, performed in recital solo and chamber music at New York’s Steinway Hall, April 26. The program consisted of works composed by Johannes Brahms (Piano Pieces, Opus 118, and the F Minor Piano Quintet, Opus 34).

Kelley, a PVAMU alum, has maintained an active performance schedule while serving as dean. He has performed throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Germany in recital and as a soloist with orchestras in Baltimore, San Antonio, and Houston. He, along with the PVAMU University Chorale, will travel to Torun, Poland this August where he will perform solo repertoire and accompany Leon Turner, Bass Baritone, in a program of music written by American composers.
College of Nursing Hosts its Largest-Ever Open House

By Forest Dent Smith, PhD, LPC, Director, Office of Admissions & Student Services

Prairie View A&M University’s College of Nursing held its annual Spring Open House on April 19.

“Reporting over 160 potential students, the largest attendance in the history of the event, made it a very special occasion,” said Dr. Forest Dent Smith, director of Admissions and Student Services.

Dozens of local high school students interested in the nursing profession attended. There were also students present from the Houston Community College System, Lone Star College, San Jacinto College, University of Houston, Texas Southern University and Western Governors University.

“Tangela Woodland-Ballard, who is pursuing her third nursing degree, a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the College of Nursing, gave students information about our bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral Nursing programs,” said Smith.

After being greeted by Smith and Dr. Philisie Washington, director of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, students received University information from Enrollment Services represented by Community College Recruiter Vernon Henry and Verlicia Pope, a freshman admission counselor.

“In addition, attendees had the opportunity to tour our state-of-the-art nursing building, simulation laboratories, and interact with CON students, faculty, and staff,” said Smith.

The college’s next Open House is November 15.
WHAT? Partnering School Leadership Conference

Hosted by Enrollment Services’ Office for Strategic Partnerships and K-12 Outreach with Dr. Talitha Lewis, Director

WHEN? April 18, 2018

WHO? 756 students from 12 schools. “This was our first time having a daytime Partnering School Leadership Conference, and it was our first time bringing such a large number of our rising senior partnering students together.”

WHY? “As part of PVAMU’s Memorandum of Understanding with its partnering school districts, the University serves as a host site for Student Leadership Conferences which are for rising seniors (11th graders). Students come to the conference to enhance their leadership skills, visit with our Financial Aid and Admissions teams, and they have the opportunity to have one-on-one time with professors and students in PVAMU’s award-winning colleges and school. After the conference, during the students’ senior year, we keep close contact with each of them, working hard at continuing to expose them to what PVAMU has to offer.”

WHAT’S NEXT? “We have two residential Partnering School Leadership Conferences scheduled this summer. Mansfield ISD and Aldine ISD will each return with over 100 students. They will be here for two to three days, touring the campus, visiting with professors, interacting with students, participating in team-building activities, visiting with our Financial Aid and Admissions offices, living in our dorms, and dining in our cafeterias. We can’t wait.”

“It was a very exciting and informative day. The students from Jones Futures Academy really enjoyed being on campus, experiencing campus life and getting all the information about the various schools and colleges at PV.”

-Vickie Johnson, Pathway Coordinator @Jones Futures Academy
COLLEGE NEWS

MARVIN D. AND JUNE SAMUEL BRAILSFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Army ROTC Hosts Spring Awards Ceremony

Prairie View A&M University’s Army ROTC program annually recognizes the achievements of the Cadets within the program. This year, the program recognized 30 Cadets for their body of work at its ceremony on April 5. Organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars, USAA, and AUSA, to name a few, sponsored awards given to the Cadets. This year, Senior Cadet Amin Ozuna-Mota received the top award, the PVAMU Army ROTC Leadership Award, which is a Saber. Colonel Earl Terry, a PVAMU Army ROTC alumnus, served as this year’s guest speaker.

COLLEGE OF NURSING

48 Students in Centennial Class Receive White Coats

Prairie View A&M University’s College of Nursing held a White Coat Ceremony on April 7. Dr. DeMonica Junious, assistant professor and coordinator of the Nurse Administration Program at PVAMU, served as the keynote speaker.

“Students are still talking about the meaningful way Dr. Junious incorporated the theme Nursing: The Ultimate Adventure into her remarks to them,” said director Forest Smith. “She shared with the 48 Pre-Nursing students representing the main campus in the Nursing Centennial Class very meaningful advice to assist them in the Nursing major and in life.”

Over 750 family and friends attended the ceremony, the largest crowd in the event’s nearly ten-year history.
CAHS Hosts its First-Ever Land Grant Week

Prairie View A&M University’s College of Agriculture and Human Sciences hosted its first Land Grant Week, April 16-19. The event was an effort of the college’s leadership to appreciate and encourage the excellence of students, alumni, faculty, research scientists, extension personnel, and supporting staff. Sixty-two undergraduate and graduate students from five colleges also gave oral and poster presentations during the celebration.

To read more about Land Grant Week, visit pvamu.edu/cahs/2018/04/23/2018-land-grant-week-celebration.

Students Take Home Top Prize in International Student Design Competition

A team of students representing Prairie View A&M University’s School of Architecture competed in the U.S. Department of Energy’s fifth annual Race to Zero Student Design Competition April 20-22, and they won the top prize.

“Our students not only took home first place in the Urban Single-Family Housing contest, but they were also the Grand Winner of the competition among 84 teams representing 68 collegiate institutions from nine countries,” said Dr. Ikhlas Sabouni, dean of the SOA. “It feels like Groundhog Day because another PVAMU Architecture team won the same two awards in 2016, and in 2015, we won first place in the Net Zero Ready Home Design. So, this is our third time winning.”

Shannen Martin led this year’s team which included Kristen Clark, Aaron Farray, Kennia Lopez, Noah Perkins, Cynthia Suarez-Harris, Shelby Skinner, Ledell Thomas, and Kaylay Wesley. The faculty leads were Professors Michelle Pottorf and Jessica April Ward. Click here to view the full press release from the U.S. Department of Energy: www.energy.gov/eere/articles/prairie-view-am-university-team-grand-winner-race-zero-student-design-competition.
COLLEGE NEWS

COLLEGE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND PSYCHOLOGY

Students Present at 13th Annual Research Symposium

By Jourdan B. Scruggs, Communications Specialist II, Office for Marketing and Communications

Prairie View A&M University hosted the 13th Annual Research Symposium on April 5, where undergraduate and graduate students presented research to their peers and faculty. Around 104 students, ranging from first-year students to graduate students, participated in this year’s event. Students from Blinn College and Texas Southern University also took part. The Symposium kicked off with a keynot panel of researchers and welcome remarks from the Dean of the College of Juvenile Justice, Tamara Brown, Ph.D., who spoke on the benefits of research in a student’s academic career. “One of the things we know is student participation in research is vital to their success while they are students, and to their success once they graduate,” said Brown.

She phrased the Research Symposium as a cross-pollination of ideas amongst people in different majors, institutions and faculty advisors. Brown also said there are hard and soft skills students learn doing research that help you learn things like resilience and critical thinking. These skills translate into the classroom and make what students are learning in the classroom come alive. “It informs and connects what they are learning in the classroom, fosters student success, and keeps them engaged,” said Brown.

Cynthia Lewis is a senior Chemical Engineering major from Houston who participated in the Research Symposium. Although she was required to attend, Lewis said she was grateful to have the opportunity to present the research she had been working on all semester. She is hoping individuals who visit her poster leave with a better understanding of how the different chemicals we use can help reduce the number of emissions that are released into the environment. “With my research, I was able to create a compound that is used to take away the negative and toxic things in the environment,” said Lewis, “This project is in the beginning phase, but I hope future students will continue building on the foundation I have provided and get better data.”

Oluwatosin Opeoluwa, a graduate student in the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, presented on the assessment of extension services in the growing and usage of *Moringa oleifera* amongst smallholder farmers in Nigeria. “Moringa is the tree of life and, according to the research, it’s the best seed, leaf, and tree that has greater nutrients than you can find in any other plant,” said Opeoluwa. She gained interest in the plant due to her working with Grace Abolaji, Ph.D., the program manager for Undergraduate Research. “I see the reason for the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences to collaborate with some of the Nigerian institutions who can actually have good extensions services,” said Opeoluwa, “like certifications for them to be the best in providing information for those farmers.”

The research conducted and produced by students during the Research Symposium has the potential to make an influence on the world around them. “I just hope students take full advantage of the learning part, which is going around and visiting other presentations, because it opens your mind and makes you think critically and form different questions,” said Brown.
2018 Black College Dance Exchange Draws Hundreds to PVAMU

By Marchita Shilo

You might have noticed the billboards around town for the 37th Annual Black College Dance Exchange (BCDE) April 12-15. Prairie View A&M University’s performing dance company, Classic Dance Ensemble, along with the Health and Kinesiology Department within the Whitlowe R. Green College of Education, hosted the event this year with the theme, “Reflection, Refocus and Rejuvenation: Celebrating the Performing Arts Through Dance.”

“The Black College Dance Exchange is open to all college dance performing groups, private studios, community groups, and organizations. Over 100 people participated, including students from several schools in our K-12 community and dancers from eight other HBCUs across the nation,” said Sherry Harper, Dance Director, and organizer of this year’s event. “Conferences like these really show the community what PVAMU is about, and it lets everyone know we are in tune with the performing and liberal arts.”

The BCDE kicked off with a cross-campus procession featuring PVAMU’s Marching Storm, Panther Dolls, Iconic Living Legends, and Trail Riders. There was also a comedy show in conjunction with Spring Fest, a banquet, concerts, panel discussions, and dozens of Dance-focused classes during the four-day event.

“We had African Dance classes, Ballet, Modern Dance, Tap Dance, Jazz, Break Dancing, and Hip Hop classes, just to name a few,” said Harper. “Our master dance instructors represented some prestigious dance companies and organizations from coast to coast. Participants were able to interact with them and ask as many questions as time could permit.”

The BCDE also featured a scholarship audition in which students received awards to join summer intensive dance programs.

“Three PVAMU students received scholarships, two for our University’s performing dance company, Classic Dance Ensemble, and one alum was awarded a scholarship to the Dallas Black Dance Company Summer Dance Intensive,” said Harper. “It was a memorable occasion, not only for our students but for every student who attended the Black College Dance Exchange. I believe everyone needs to know what we do as dancers. Dance is a necessity, and the Performing Arts is an essential element in any academic setting. We appreciate the opportunity of hosting the BCDE this year and look forward to building on the tradition that was set forth by the conference which promotes dance education in America, and dance discipline in institutions of higher learning while expanding on opportunities for amateur dance performers and students.”

Harper was recently nominated to receive the position of first Vice President on the Black College Dance Exchange National Board of Directors.
Finance Major Wins First Place in National Competition

By Marchita Shilo

Prairie View A&M University’s Romaine Knight, a junior Finance major in the College of Business, won first prize in the national FOCUS Idea Competition, which took place on April 26, at CUMA Mutual Group headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. Knight competed against students from five other universities. The primary objective was to propose ways for credit unions to diversify their membership and offer more services to communities of color.

“This competition starts with an internal contest here at the College of Business. We have students compete against each other, and the winning student or students participate in the national competition,” said Munir Quddus, dean of the COB. “This student contest is one of the programs the COB has emphasized to build up its Finance program, which includes a state-of-art trading room, Bloomberg terminals, college and high school student investment competitions, a financial planning course in the University’s Core Curriculum, a student-managed investment fund, and more.”

COB Instructor Danny Harvey said, “This is the second year in a row that a PVAMU student has won this national competition. Last year, senior Engineering majors Kehlin Swain and Jaylen James won. This competition has produced great opportunities for our students. Since being involved in the competition, we have had at least one intern with the company, and now we have a student going to work for them full-time, Carrington Johnson, a senior finance major.”
The Presidential Inauguration of Ruth J. Simmons
April 20, 2018

Prairie View A&M University inaugurated Ruth J. Simmons as its eighth president. She is the first woman to hold the position in the University’s 142-year history.

"Time magazine has called her America’s ‘best college president.’ I could not be prouder to call her a member of the Texas A&M System family,” said TAMUS Chancellor John Sharp.

Simmons said, “I am proud to serve as the eighth president of Prairie View A&M University. I am very appreciative to have the support of students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members, and other university stakeholders. Prairie View A&M University has a compelling legacy and a bright future. It is an honor and a pleasure to help shape the future of this great “institution of the first class.” Let us continue to work together diligently and with urgency to help Prairie View A&M University reach its full potential.”
PVAMU’s Office for Strategic Partnerships and K-12 Outreach hosted its 5th-ever Elementary School Day. More than 1,000 students from 12 area schools attended.

“Our theme this time around was “It’s Carnival Time.” We had hotdogs, sack races, fraternities and sororities stepping, music, etc., in addition to the kids learning about our campus, meeting some of our faculty and staff members, and learning about all of the different careers they can pursue,” said Dr. Talitha Lewis, director of Strategic Partnerships and K-12 Outreach. “Schools came from as far away as Hearne and the Dallas area. It was absolutely an enjoyable event that impacted so many lives. Elementary Partnering School Day has truly become a popular event for all.”

The next Elementary School Day will take place in the fall.
in case you missed it...

New Student Orientation Kickoff
April 27, 2018

Prairie View A&M University’s Office for Academic Engagement and Student Success kicked off orientation season for the upcoming semester. Nearly 400 freshmen and their families attended Orientation on April 27, to sign up for classes, housing, and financial aid. According to John Gardner, assistant vice president for Academic Engagement and Student Success, the number of students pre-registered for the fall semester is up 14-percent from this time last year.

▲ Upcoming Orientation dates: May 18, June 8, June 13*, June 15, June 27*, and June 29.
* Transfer Orientation dates.
May 1  Last Day of Class; Last Day to Withdraw from University (from all courses); Last Day to Apply for Spring 2018 Degree Conferral; Late Deadline for Graduating Undergraduates to Submit Application for Tuition Rebate for Spring 2018

May 2-8  Final Examination Period

May 10  Grades Due (for graduation candidates)

May 12  Commencement

May 14  Final Grades Due (for all other students)

May 28  Memorial Day (University Closed)

May 29  Regular Registration Begins for Summer 2018

June 4  First Day of Class, Late Registration and Drop/Add (Summer 2018)

June 7  Last Day to Withdraw from Course(s) without Academic Record (Summer 2018 1st 5-week Session)

June 19  Last Day to Withdraw from Course(s) without Academic Record (Summer 2018)

June 27  Late Deadline to Apply for Summer 2018 Graduation (Ceremony Participation)

June 28  Application Period Begins for Summer 2018 Degree Conferral (no ceremony participation or listing in the program)

July 4  Independence Day (University Closed)

July 6  Final Examinations, Last Day of Class (Summer 2018 1st 5-week Session)

July 9  First Day of Class, Late Registration and Drop/Add (Summer 2018 2nd 5-week Session); Final Grades Due (Summer 2018 1st 5-week Session)

July 12  Last Day to Withdraw from Course(s) without Academic Record (Summer 2018 2nd 5-week Session)
NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

MAY 18  JUNE 15
JUNE 8  JUNE 27*
JUNE 13*  JUNE 29

*Transfer Orientation Dates

pvamu.edu/orientation

SUMMER CAMPS & PROGRAMS
JUNE – JULY
pvamu.edu/summer

Commencement Convocation
AUGUST 11 2018