We have wrapped up another record-setting semester at Prairie View A&M University! The official headcount for Fall 2018 was 8,524 undergraduates and 992 post-baccalaureate, graduate, and doctoral students. This Sunday, we anticipate 565 students who will walk across the stage at the Berry Center of Northwest Houston to obtain their degrees. The Fall 2018 degree count will join over 73,500 degrees awarded at PVAMU! The speaker for commencement is Entertainment Executive Debra L. Lee. Lee previously served as chairman and CEO of BET Networks, and she launched Centric, which are both popular entertainment networks of today’s generation.

An event to mark the calendar for is the second speaker for the Symposium: Scholars’ Voices Series, African American Culture and History. Philosopher, author, and social activist Dr. Cornel West will be on campus Friday, January 18. Dr. Nell Irvin kicked off the series in October by hosting a discussion with President Ruth Simmons.

Happening today is the last Faculty Friday of the year. Faculty are invited to the Ag/Business Building where Mark Taylor of Taylor Programs will lead talks on moving to research-based instruction and helping students develop reasoning and critical thinking skills. There are also speakers on partnerships and opportunities for education abroad, financial planning, and discovering new happenings at the John B. Coleman Library, to name a few. Faculty will also have a chance to talk with President Simmons.

As mentioned in previous issues, we are working to ensure all students are engaged in high-impact practices (HIPs). HIPs are active learning practices that promote deep learning through student engagement. In November, we hosted a HIPs Fall Symposium at the Northwest Houston Center where we provided beneficial information on how to put HIPs into action to enhance our teaching and learning environment. Dr. Tia Brown McNair, Vice President in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Student Success at Association of American Colleges and Universities, presented on HIPs, student success, and direct assessment of student learning outcomes. Dr. Shonda Gibson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for The Texas A&M University System, also presented and provided System updates.

A few more events from the past few months—PVAMU hosted Senior Day on “The Hill.” There was also a Department of Defense Regional HBCU and MSI Technical Assistance Workshop where we had representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Army, Navy, Air Force, along with representatives from non-government organizations and academia, including Dillard University, Norfolk State University, Spelman College and North Carolina A&T State University.

Regarding other news, a team from our university developed a payload that launched into space this October. The payload is currently aboard a spacecraft for the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency helping to collect various data. It’s this month’s research focus, so be sure to read more about this tremendous achievement.

It’s been an excellent year for PVAMU, and more great things are on the horizon. As always, we hope you enjoy this issue of Academic Insights.
Professor Achieves 40-Plus Years of Teaching Excellence

By Marchita Shilo

Dr. Alfred L. Parks is the College of Agriculture and Human Science’s (CAHS) 2018 Outstanding Faculty Member. It’s no wonder – this is his 42nd year teaching at Prairie View A&M University. He started back in the ‘70s as an associate professor and department head in the CAHS.

“When I started in this profession, I never dreamed that I would do it for this long,” said Parks. “I often get asked, ‘Are you retired?’ or, ‘When are you going to retire?’ My answer, of course, is, ‘Why retire?’ I’m enjoying the best years of my career.”

Parks, a professor of agricultural economics and agribusiness at PVAMU, started teaching in Louisiana in 1972. When asked what’s changed over the years, he said the students.

“The newer generations are not as attentive, and I think that has a lot to do with technology. You have to keep them engaged, keep the classroom interactive, otherwise they become distracted,” said Parks. “Group activities and group projects help. Also, Quick Questions. That’s when you ask a question from the lecture in the middle of class. It keeps the students on their toes and gets their juices flowing. It helps me too,” he chuckled.

And, although generations are continually transforming, Parks says there is one thing that has remained the same, students need nurturing.

“The act of nurturing goes a long way in developing students. You must first instill in them that you care about them and their future. That is the foundation upon which Prairie View A&M University was built,” said Parks. “Secondly, I’m motivated by my students. I always have been. I get excited each day when I teach my classes. I also get excited when I see growth and development in my students. They come as freshmen, from all different backgrounds, with many of them being the first in their family to go to college. When I see them start to grow, start to come around my office more, and we engage in life conversations, I try to ingrain in them that they can achieve far beyond what they dream or imagine. That’s when I realize there is a divine purpose for me. And that purpose is teaching.”
Spacecraft Carrying PVAMU Payload Launches into Space

By Marchita Shilo

A team from Prairie View A&M University developed a payload that launched into Earth’s polar orbit on October 29. The payload is riding aboard the Ten-Koh spacecraft built by the Kyushu Institute of Technology-Japan (KIT) for the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

“We designed and developed the payload, SHARP-CPD (Solar and Heliospheric Assessment of Radiation Particles – Charged Particle Detector), from May 2017 thru May 2018,” said Regents Professor Dr. Premkumar Saganti, who also serves as PVAMU’s principal scientist on the project. “It’s a collaborative effort between the Texas A&M University Chancellor’s Research Initiative (CRI), Radiation Institute for Science and Engineering (RaSE), and the NASA Johnson Space Center for the Ten-Koh spacecraft of KIT-Japan.”

Two undergraduate students, Patierre Thorpe and Seth Saganti, and two graduate students, Mahmudur Rahman and Sonia Kolluri, along with Dr. Gary Erickson, Ramesh Dwivedi, and Brian Cudnik from PVAMU helped along the way.

“We had great support from Doug Holland as a principal engineer and Richard Hagen of NASA laboratories with technical and engineering support from Jacobs Engineering,” said Saganti. “Our PVAMU envisioned and developed payload is the primary scientific investigation instrument on Ten-Koh. With SHARP-CPD, we can understand the radiation data variations and its impact of the radiation risk for future human explorations in earth orbits and deep-space expeditions. The way we designed and integrated these sensors could be first of its kind approach for space exploration.”

Researchers hope to have the spacecraft collect data over the next three to five years. If it continues to remain in orbit with optimal power consumption and rotational dynamics, Ten-Koh can operate for up to 25 years.

“This certainly is a unique opportunity for our institution in space exploration endeavors,” said Saganti. “PVAMU has had a partnership with NASA for several decades, and our partnership with KIT-Japan goes back at least five years. These agencies trust us with their time and expertise in our exploration endeavors. It is a tremendous honor.”
First Aid Training Addresses Youth Mental Health

By Marchita Shilo

This fall, Prairie View A&M University’s Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center hosted a first aid training on youth mental health. Teachers, counselors, and school resource officers from surrounding school districts, as well as officials with the Prairie View Police Department and the City of Prairie View attended the training on November 2 for free.

“The course, Youth Mental Health First Aid, is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help adolescents, ages 12 through 18, who are experiencing mental health or addiction challenges and crises,” said Director of the Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center Dr. Susan Frazier-Kouassi. “Here at PVAMU, nearly one-fourth of our students are still mid-to-late adolescents, so it is important for staff and faculty who work with them on a daily basis to be informed and ready to help if they experience a mental health or substance use crisis.”

Trained Mental Health First Aid provider Brian Gurbach led the eight-hour course. He covered topics including anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD), and eating disorders. He also included a five-step action plan on how to help students in both crisis and non-crisis situations.

“This is a much-needed service for adults who work with adolescents,” said Frazier-Kouassi. “With an increased number of school shootings, suicides, and opium use and abuse among our youth, it is imperative that we all become equipped with the necessary tools to intervene and help as first responders. The more we know about mental health and how it manifests itself among young people, the better prepared we are to help them in their times of crisis.”
Students Put Research on Display for Annual Symposium

The Biology Department hosted its annual Undergraduate Research Symposium on October 26. The event showcased students at PVAMU while encouraging other students to conduct research and share knowledge.

“When students engage in research as an undergraduate, it deepens their learning. It also makes them much more competitive when applying to professional and graduate schools,” said Dr. Yolander Youngblood, assistant professor of biology and organizer of this year’s event. “That being said, we encouraged all of our participants to submit their abstracts and papers for publication in PVAMU’s undergraduate research journal PURSUE.”

Ann Obi, Chonique Long, and Asja Jackson placed first, second, and third in the symposium.

Digital Media Arts Team Wins in Game Jam Competition

Seven students from Prairie View A&M University’s digital media arts program won the popular vote in Chilennium 2018, the largest student-run game jam in the world. College students from more than a dozen universities across the nation traveled to Texas A&M University October 12-14 to participate in the competition, which involved creating a video game from scratch. At the end of the 48 hours, a panel of experts from the game industry played the games, judged them, and awarded prizes.

“Not only did our team create a fully functional game, but they returned home with a trophy,” said Dean of PVAMU’s School of Architecture (SOA) Ikhlas Sabouni. “The Digital Media Arts Team got the most the most responses, likes, and reposts on social media, rendering them as the winners of the social media award.”

“Even though this is already a large event, the organizers of the game jam are working to make the event even larger and spread the word through social media. As winners of the social media award, our team is greatly helping to facilitate that goal,” said Tracey Moore, SOA digital media arts coordinator. “Our next goal is to try and win more categories in future game jams,” said SOA Assistant Professor Hira Tariq.

Tariq and Moore prepared the students for and supported them throughout this year’s competition.

► PVAMU Student Participants: Terrence Cormier, Gloria Gyebi, Lemuel Harris, Mildred Ohen, Monet Readeaux, Nicholas Sloan, Taylor Washington-Cockrell
Students Win Big at 15th Annual TAMUS Research Symposium

Nine Prairie View A&M University students took home awards at the Texas A&M University System’s Pathways Student Research Symposium, which was held November 1-2 at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. Graduate deans from each member institution host the annual event.

“Prairie View A&M University students have consistently presented competitive and intriguing research during the Pathways symposia and this year was no different. We are extremely proud of our students who took extra steps this year by participating in Graduate Studies workshops where a team of faculty helped to sharpen their presentations and public speaking skills. We are also thankful for the support provided by all the colleges and the Office of Research, Innovation, and Sponsored Programs. It truly takes a village,” said Dr. Tamara Brown, interim dean for Graduate Studies.

Dr. Ali Fares, interim vice president of Research, Innovation, and Sponsored Programs, said, “It was an outstanding performance for our students, and they received lots of compliments on their work. PVAMU was the leader!”

The symposium featured research efforts from students across the system with separate categories for undergraduate, masters, and doctoral level research.

Twenty-nine graduate and undergraduate students from PVAMU participated, along with faculty and staff members Drs. Carmen Carter, Ramaswamy Krishnamoorthi, Grace Abolaji, Richards Griffin, Peter Ampim, Pamela Martin, and Ms. Lorie Proctor.

2018 PVAMU Pathways Winners

Damilola Adesina (Doctoral)
Kolade Adelaja (Master’s-Agriculture)
Asja Jackson (Undergraduate-Agriculture)
Victoria Parker (Undergraduate-Agriculture)
Ellen-Ashley Williams (Undergraduate-Agriculture)
De Jaune’ Bickham (Undergraduate-Engineering, Computer Science)
Esther Armah (Undergraduate-Environmental Science)
Chanelle Ferguson (Undergraduate-Humanities and Social Science)
Chonique Long (Undergraduate-Life Science)

Visit pathways.wtamu.edu for a complete list of winners from the 2018 Pathways Symposium.
PVAMU Alumna Recognized for Her Work at NASA

Shirley Holland-Hunt (‘81) is an innovator at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. She recently appeared in one of the space agency’s publications for her role as an agreements integration manager. Two years ago, she was recognized as one of NASA’s modern-day Hidden Figures.

“The most thrilling part of my job is being involved in shaping innovative ideas by supporting and assisting the team in implementing new technology. Seeing the future of space being shaped by technology and applying better solutions for space travel is exciting,” said Holland-Hunt.

The Hempstead, Texas native started her work at NASA in 2006. She says, ultimately, “The Hill” prepared her for success.

“Prairie View gave me the tools to compete with any school represented in the space industry,” said Holland-Hunt. “I was prepared to face the toughest challenges, and my professors taught me to embrace my confidence and be ready to compete. I never felt inferior to students from any other schools in the nation.”


Dean’s Research Published in Environmental Journal

College of Agriculture and Human Sciences Dean and Director of Land-Grant Programs Dr. Gerard D'Souza has a newly published article in the Journal of Environmental Protection. The article highlights innovative computer programs and the means to help individuals develop agent-based modeling, a method used to model complex computer systems.

To read the article, visit Scientific Research at http://file.scirp.org/Html/7-6703498_87059.htm.
Pamela Brandy-Webb, a clinical assistant professor in PVAMU’s College of Nursing, was recognized at the Institute for Spirituality and Health’s 2018 Spirituality in Nursing Awards on October 12.

Receivers of the award show spirituality – an awareness of the value of spirituality in healthcare; compassion – empathy with regard to all levels of diversity in others; communication – an ability to communicate to their relative community the value of respecting the spiritual beliefs and practices of others; and commitment – caring of body, mind and spirit.

“In pursuing careers which constantly puts oneself in an environment of despair and sometimes loss, what I attempt to make my students understand is that strength of faith and spiritually many times originates from our patients and loved ones of those patients. I communicate with my students the many, many times that I have acquired the needed strength to be successful as a caregiver from the patients and their loved ones in waiting. My commitment to my faith in body, mind and spirit has been the one constant that has sustained me throughout my lifetime,” said Brandy-Webb.

This is the 26th year for the event.
Dr. Mark Tschaeppe, associate professor of philosophy at Prairie View A&M University, led a talk on Diminishing Microaggressions in the Clinic and Beyond at McGovern Medical School in the Texas Medical Center on November 6. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion at McGovern invited Tschaeppe to speak as part of their Diversity Days Program for medical students, faculty, and staff.

“I spoke about what microaggressions are, how to identify them, and strategies to stop committing them,” said Tschaeppe. “The Office of Diversity and Inclusion invited me to give the talk because the students had been requesting more information about microaggressions, and this was evident in the questions and answers session. Many of the faculty and staff conveyed how important they believe this kind of educational program is for healthcare practitioners. Giving these talks allows me to enhance my skills for teaching undergraduate students at PVAMU, especially those who are going into healthcare professions.”

After the talk, Tschaeppe was invited by the McGovern Medical School's Residency Program to present a Pediatric Grand Rounds Continuing Medical Education (CME) activity, which is an extension of a talk he gave in November. This talk will be jointly provided by the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston (UTHSC-H) McGovern Medical School and the Office of Continuing Medical Education Baylor College of Medicine (BCM).
Wilson Serves on Panel to Enhance Diversity at Vanderbilt University

As a member of an Advisory Board for Diversity and Enhancement to support graduate students of color at Vanderbilt University Graduate School, Associate Provost Dr. James A. Wilson, Jr. served on a panel of experts October 26 at the Tennessee university. The topic of discussion was encouraging students of color to advance where issues of diversity and cultural representation must be discussed to support students to finish their Ph.D.s.

“There are 265 Ph.D. students at Vanderbilt University, and they all need support navigating through various challenges addressing issues of race and representation,” said Wilson. “Vanderbilt is very fortunate to provide programs that bring experts from diverse academic backgrounds to meet with graduate students. This should be a model for other institutions of higher education, because, often, graduate students of color can feel completely isolated as the only person of color in their department, even in 2018.”

Juan F. Carrillo, associate professor at Arizona State University; Angelino Viceisza, associate professor at Spelman College; Robbin N. Chapman, associate dean at Harvard Kennedy School; and Maisha Gray-Diggs, senior talent acquisition manager at Microsoft also served on the panel of experts.
More students than ever are attending Prairie View A&M University. This fall, PVAMU reported an overall headcount of 9,516 students (up from 9,125 last fall, 8,762 in the fall of 2016, 8,268 in 2015, and 8,343 in 2014).

PVAMU is also gaining new ground by:

• increasing the percentage of students who return in good academic standing
• reporting an increase in retention rates (students who return to PVAMU for their second year)

PVAMU’s first-year retention rate stood at 73.7 percent; that’s compared to 2014 when it was at 66.1 percent. University officials say the immediate goal is to reach 80 percent for first-year retention, two points above the statewide retention rate (or the percentage of students who return to college at the same institution for their second year).

PVAMU implemented some new initiatives this year to support student learning, including additional advising and tutoring options such as online tutoring, which allows students of any major to get assistance 24/7 for most classes offered at PVAMU. In the late fall, face-to-face peer tutoring will expand beyond the John B. Coleman Library to academic buildings across campus. In addition, the Office of Academic Engagement and Student Success (AESS) will roll out supplemental instruction in certain core classes, and offerings will increase each semester.

In the spring of 2019, AESS will implement the first phase of the early alert system, CRM Advise. The tool will send an alert to academic advisors, faculty advisors, and key administrators at PVAMU to notify them of any students who are not meeting academic expectations. They will immediately provide students with the support they need to succeed academically.

PVAMU’s enrollment presently breaks down as follows:

9,516 overall headcount
8,524 undergraduate
992 post-baccalaureate, graduate, doctoral
Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) and Texas Southern University (TSU) are collaborators on a nearly $1 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The project is called Excellence in Research: Collaborative Research: Strengthen the Foundation of Big Data Analytics via Interdisciplinary Research among HBCUs.

“Our teams have joined forces to enhance the research capabilities of PVAMU and TSU and enrich the learning environment for underrepresented undergraduate and graduate students in the big data analytics research field,” said Associate Professor of Computer Science Dr. Lei Huang, who is serving as PVAMU’s principal investigator on the project.

Each team has faculty members, post-doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate students from computer science, mathematics, and physics departments participating in the three-year project. The goal is developing an innovative deep learning software package. (Deep learning is the latest breakthrough in artificial intelligence inspired by the structure of the human brain.)

“More specifically, the teams will conduct interdisciplinary research to visualize and open the black box of deep neural networks to unveil the mysteries of the recent success of artificial intelligence. The work with help research and industrial communities to better understand and explain the ‘magic power’ of deep neural networks with the theory of modern physics. We will enhance the mathematical foundation of artificial intelligence, increase the computation efficiency of the deep learning with new scalable algorithms, and implement our research into a new deep learning software package and deploy in the Cloud Computing and High-Performance Computing platforms,” said Huang.

Moreover, research will be integrated into courses in PVAMU’s computer science department to provide students with a broader view of the subjects.

“The collaboration between these two Houston-area HBCU institutions will expand research horizons and expose our students to the state-of-art interdisciplinary knowledge and experience, which will be important to their future careers,” said Huang. “The research should inspire and attract more students in underrepresented minority groups to pursue higher education in the STEM field.”

By Marchita Shilo
Academic researchers, industry professionals, and scholars from more than 13 countries from across the world descended upon Prairie View A&M University for the 29th Annual Conference of the International Information Management Association (IIMA) and the fifth Annual Conference of the International Conference on Information and Economic Development (ICITED). Attendees saw various presentations, workshops, and panel sessions covering cybersecurity, digital, media and network forensics, medical informatics, smart systems, e-learning, library science, IT for economic development, e-government, technological innovations, digital marketing, business analytics, cloud computing, emerging trends, digital accounting, healthcare IT, mobile computing, organizational culture and technology, social networking, and big data.

Dave Clark, Senior Consultant with the Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals; Ian Allison, Dean of Computing, Engineering and Physical Sciences at the University of the West of Scotland; Ned Penley, Program Planning and Control Manager for the Orion Program at NASA; and Victor Lawrence, Senior Advisor to the Cyber Security and Information Communication Systems Research Center gave keynote presentations.

“President Simmons has encouraged the colleges to place greater emphasis on improving PVAMU’s research profile. This conference, hosted by the College of Business (COB), brought global visibility among researchers and practitioners. I want to thank Dr. Emmanuel Opara for his leadership by serving as the conference chair, and all those who sponsored events through financial contributions to make this event possible,” said COB Dean Munir Quddus.

This year’s conference was IIMA and ICITED’s second joint conference and the first one held at PVAMU in nearly ten years.
in case you missed it...

NASA Day on “The Hill”
October 16, 2018

Representatives from NASA spent the day networking and sharing their expertise with faculty and students about available programs, research opportunities, full-time employment, and internships.

“A lot of our technologies today come from NASA, and we want our students to be a part of that innovative culture. This day was a great chance for our students to understand the mission of NASA and connect with alumni working at the Johnson Space Center,” said Dr. Pamela Obiomon, dean of the Roy G. Perry College of Engineering.
Students, faculty, and staff turned out in large numbers to listen to historian, author and award-winning scholar Dr. Nell Irvin Painter and President Ruth Simmons. In this first Symposium, they discussed the importance of integrating African-American Studies into the HBCU learning experience. The Symposium is a part of Prairie View A&M University’s new effort to establish an African-American studies initiative. You can read more about the initiative at pvamu.edu.
in case you missed it...

Homecoming
October 21-27, 2018

#PVHC18 TakeOver was full of exciting events for the PVAMU community. As pictured below, alumna Loni Love made an appearance at the West Wing Alumni Tailgate. You can view a full recap of the homecoming week festivities at pvamuhc.com.
in case you missed it...

Department of Defense Workshop
November 7, 2018

‘The Hill’ served as the location for the Department of Defense’s Regional Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-Serving Institutions Technical Assistance Workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to increase awareness of Department of Defense opportunities, provide a platform for collaboration, and encourage increased participation in the Department of Defense’s initiatives to support national security functions.
Dec 3-4  Course review days

Dec 4  Last day of class; Deadline to apply for degree conferral only for Fall 2018 graduation (no ceremony participation or listing in program); Last day to submit application for tuition rebate (for undergraduate graduation candidates)

Dec 6-12  Final exams

Dec 14  Final grades due (for graduation candidates)

Dec 16  Fall Commencement

Dec 19  Final grades due (for all other students)

Jan 10  Regular registration begins

Jan 14  First day of class; Late registration begins

Jan 14-18  Drop/add period

Jan 21  Martin Luther King Jr. Day (university closed)

Jan 22  Last day to withdraw from course(s) without academic record (Spring 2019 1st 8-week session)

Jan 30  Last day to withdraw from course(s) without academic record

Feb 12  Application period begins for tuition rebate for spring graduation undergraduate candidates
Prairie View A&M University

SACSCOC 2020
Reaffirmation of Accreditation
Timeline 2018 - 2020

2017
- Faculty and Staff Briefing on 2020 Reaffirmation Cycle
- University Personnel Attend Annual SACSCOC Conference
- Institutional Data and Stakeholder Input Supporting Potential QEP Topic Review

FALL 2017

2018
- SACSCOC Orientation of PVAMU Leadership Team
- Core Team Establishment
- Initial Compliance Certification Drafting
- Electronic Organizational Tools Operationalized

SPRING THRU SUMMER 2018

- Continuation of Compliance Certification Drafting and Editing
- University-Wide Reaffirmation Sessions
- Specialized Reaffirmation Critical Workshops
- University Personnel Attend Annual SACSCOC Conference

FALL 2018

2019
- Finalization of Compliance Certification
- Finalization of Quality Enhancement Plan

SPRING THRU SUMMER 2019

- Submission of Completed Compliance Certification
- Receipt of Focused Report from Off-Site Review
- QEP Stakeholder Engagement and Marketing

FALL 2019

2020
- Submission of Focused Report Response and QEP
- Hosting of On-Site Review Team (March, 2020)
- Address any SACSCOC Commission Concerns

SPRING THRU SUMMER 2020

- Finalize Post Visit Follow-Up
- PVAMU Leadership Receive Notification of Reaffirmation Status

FALL 2020

Teaching
Research
Service
Commencement
Convocation
DECEMBER 16
2018
www.pvamu.edu/academicaffairs/commencement

SPRING 2019
FIRST DAY OF CLASS
JANUARY 14