



Photo by PETER ROCHA

Students lounge in the Memorial Student Center at Prairie View A&M University.

## Prairie View

(continued from page 1)

posed amendment to the Texas Constitution passes.

In November Texas voters will decide the fate of the proposed Permanent University Fund amendment (House Joint Resolution 19).

Muse says the proposed amendment is more important to Prairie View A&M than any other school in the two systems.

If the amendment passes, Prairie View A&M will receive \$6 million a year for 10 years from the University of Texas's two-thirds share of the AUF. Prairie View A&M also will gain access to the Available University Fund, which it hasn't had previously.

Prairie View A&M shares problems as well as the PUF with Texas A&M. Both schools need additional buildings for classroom space, research and other facilities. Existing buildings need renovations and repairs. But the reasons for construction are different.

Texas A&M needs additional space because it has yet to catch up with the enrollment explosion of the 1970s. Prairie View A&M needs new buildings and renovations on existing buildings because it essentially was neglected by the System until the 1960s and 1970s.

"We wouldn't be going through this if they (Prairie View A&M and Texas A&M) had been equal since the beginning," Nelson says. "From this point on, Prairie View A&M will be treated equally."

Prairie View A&M and Texas A&M face enrollment problems — with 180 degrees separating the two. Prairie View A&M wants to increase enrollment. Texas A&M wants to curb enrollment.

Prairie View A&M has had a decline in enrollment in the past four years. In Fall 1980 enrollment was 5,528; in Fall 1981 enrollment had dropped to 4,588. That drop was attributed to a stringent new fee collection that required students to pay tuition fees on time. Enrollment continued to decline slightly — for Fall 1983 enrollment was 4,452.

Facing problems is nothing new to Prairie View A&M. In 1981 a state representative, Foster Whaley of

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Pampa, introduced a bill that called for no new admissions to the university after the summer of 1981 and a cessation of operations on Aug. 31, 1984.

Whaley argued that continuing the two separate schools was just as racist as segregation.

The state Coordinating Board for colleges and universities and Gov. Bill Clements disagreed. So did the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education.

While Whaley was arguing for his bill, the state was trying to meet federal integration requirements in public colleges and universities as outlined by the Department of Education. The agency had released a study in January 1981 that blasted the Texas A&M System for its treatment of Prairie View A&M. From 1958 to 1978, Texas A&M received more than \$54 million in bond money from the PUF, while Prairie View A&M got \$8 million during that time.

"From day one, the funding was difficult," says Dr. Percy A. Pierre, president of Prairie View A&M. "Prairie View was separate but certainly not equal — not equally funded."

The Texas Desegregation Plan was the result of the federal study and a threat to withhold \$250 million in federal funds.

The plan calls for new academic programs benefitting the state's black population. Prairie View A&M is committed to six new degree programs and four others are possible. The university received \$1 million from the state legislature to implement the new programs in the 1983-84 academic year.

As defined by the Texas Legislature in 1981, Prairie View A&M is a statewide general purpose institution of higher education and a land-grant institution. It is also a special purpose institution with programs dedicated to "enabling students with latent aptitudes, talents and abilities and of diverse economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds to realize their full potential; assisting small and medium-sized communities to achieve their optimal growth and development; and assisting small and medium-sized agricultural, business and industrial enterprises to manage their growth and development effectively."

The main campus consists of 1,475 acres of prairie land in a rural location, between Hempstead and Waller. A farm for agricultural instruction and research is part of the campus. The clinical program of the College of Nursing is in the Texas Medical Center near downtown Houston.

Prairie View A&M has nine colleges and one school: the College of Agriculture, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business, College of Education, College of Engineering, College of Home Economics, College of Nursing, the Graduate School and the Benjamin Banneker College.

The Benjamin Banneker College is a new program created by the Prairie View A&M president. The program, which begins this fall with approximately 60 students, is essentially an honors program with a new twist — it's residential. Freshmen participants will live near each other in a dormitory. The college is only one of several programs planned to enhance academics at Prairie View A&M.

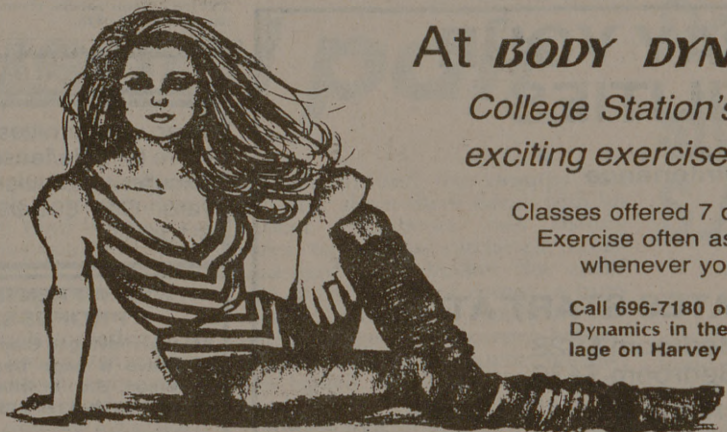
"There's a plan in place, committed people and people talking about first class," Nelson says. "That's the important thing."

Prairie View A&M's president agrees.

"I don't find people dwelling on the past," Pierre says. "The important thing is the future."

(Tomorrow: Students views of problems facing Prairie View A&M.)

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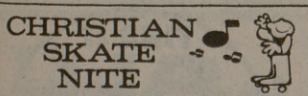
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