

# Prairie

(continued from page 1)

Pierre and Dennis want to offer more activities for students: dances, concerts and night football games are possibilities. A Residence Hall Association was established in January, and eight Greek organizations are recognized on campus. The Council of Organizations, an umbrella organization for about 120 student organizations, is planning fundraisers for the Charles Gilpin Players, Prairie View A&M's drama group.

Johnson says the physical improvements on the campus will create greater school loyalty and pride. "There is some school spirit, but we need more," Johnson says.

Poor facilities are a visible reason for low morale. But a less obvious morale destroyer has been a faculty teaching load that was too heavy. Dr. Elaine Adams, associate vice president for academic affairs, says the university has tried to equalize teaching hours and has reduced the teaching load from 15 hours to 12 hours — still a heavy load by Texas A&M standards.

As it stands now, the number of faculty members Prairie View A&M can hire is determined by a formula that is based on enrollment. Because enrollment has actually decreased, more faculty members couldn't be hired.

One of Pierre's brightest hopes for academic improvement at Prairie View A&M is the Benjamin Banneker College, an honors program that will debut this fall with 50 freshmen students participating. The college, named for one of America's first recognized black intellectuals, will offer intensive courses for freshmen in biology and electrical engineering. Additional courses in chemistry, computer science, math, economics, finance, management, mechanical engineering and civil engineering will be added. Students must have at least an 800 on the SAT to participate in the college.

The college's ultimate purpose for participants is graduate school and advanced degrees. But the college also is expected to increase overall academic standards at the school by exposing other students to high academic goals and motivation. The college also will allow professors to teach at a higher level — something recommended by all who have studied the university's problems.

Adams and Pierre expect the program to be a valuable recruiting tool. The program has a number of special features. Freshmen students in the program will be housed together in a dormitory. Supplemental programs beyond homework are planned. Adams says the residential

feature also will allow the observation of students' study habits.

Adams says recruiters have been frank with potential Banneker College students about facilities at Prairie View A&M.

"They're pioneers," she says of the students. "Pioneers don't expect luxury."

Banneker College students aren't the only pioneers. The president of Prairie View A&M has pioneered a new way of viewing Prairie View A&M's purpose.

The Legislature's stated purpose for Prairie View A&M seems contradictory.

The Legislature said: "Prairie View A&M University is a statewide general purpose institution of higher education and a land-grant institution." The charge further states that Prairie View A&M is a special purpose institution that should provide programs for "students with latent aptitudes."

Providing programs for "students with latent aptitudes" can be translated as programs for students who are poorly prepared for college. Some remedial work is required, but such work is considered a function of community colleges. Charges of too many remedial classes and a 50 percent dropout rate among freshmen and sophomores make it difficult to compare Prairie View A&M with other statewide general purpose institutions.

The emphasis on students with latent abilities seems to be detrimental to Prairie View A&M's "first class" aspirations.

It is, until Pierre gives his version of the Legislature's purpose for the university. He gets his guide from the first part of the statement: "a statewide general purpose institution of higher education." He's emphasizing competitiveness in academic excellence with other state universities.

But to be competitive with other state universities, Prairie View A&M needs more money — money that Texas voters can provide in the November election.

If a proposed amendment to the Texas Constitution passes, Prairie View A&M stands to gain \$60 million over 10 years and a share in the Available University Fund.

If the amendment fails, Prairie View A&M's efforts to upgrade facilities and programs will take longer than administrators would like.

"We understand where we want to go and we understand how to get there," Pierre says. "The pace at which we go depends upon funding."

House Joint Resolution 19 — the proposed amendment sponsored by state Rep. Wilhemina Delco, D-Aus-



Kevin Dennis, student body president at Prairie View A&M, isn't just another student body president. He becomes "Special

K" when he takes a shift as a disc jockey at KPVO-FM, Prairie View A&M's well-equipped radio station.

Photo by PETER ROCHA

tin — would provide Prairie View A&M with a stable source of funds.

Under the state constitution, Prairie View A&M now receives funds for construction from Permanent University Fund bond proceeds. But it doesn't have access to the Available University Fund, which finances enrichment programs such as scholarships and endowed professorships.

"To really make educational programs move where I'd like to see them move," Pierre says, "we're going to need PUF money."

The Permanent University Fund is the constitutional endowment of 2.1 million acres of West Texas lands which is administered for the benefit of the Texas A&M and University of Texas systems. The fund is used as collateral for construction bonds. Income from the oil-rich land is invested and the profits make up the Available University Fund. The University of Texas System receives two-thirds of the AUF and the Texas A&M System receives one-third.

Funds for most of the renovation and repair work done at Prairie View A&M has come from specially appropriated sums from the Legislature.

"You can't build excellence on state-appropriated funds alone," says Dr. Ivory Nelson, executive assistant to the chancellor and a former acting president of Prairie View A&M.

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

"Six million dollars provides a major infusion," Nelson says. "Once they get going, they can sustain themselves."

Adams is more specific on the benefits of HJR 19. With funds from the amendment, Prairie View A&M would be able to buy more library books and more instructional equipment such as computers. Computers are needed because Prairie View A&M requires all students entering in the 1984-85 year to have one computer course.

Funds from HJR 19 also would be used to recruit new faculty members and provide opportunities for further study and research for faculty members.

"We need new people to keep from stagnating," Adams says. Pierre and Adams say Prairie View A&M wants to increase research. The interest in research is documented by Prairie View A&M's allocation of research dollars per faculty member. It ranks third in the state, behind Texas A&M and the

University of Texas. Funds from HJR 19 would help upgrade equipment for research.

"I think HJR 19 is a reasonable solution," Pierre says. "If it doesn't pass," he says, "there's a lot of uncertainty."

There are mixed opinions about the amendment's chances for success. George Torres, chief clerk for the state House Committee on Higher Education, says he expects the amendment to pass.

"I think it would take really strong, organized opposition to defeat it," Torres says.

Pierre, and other administrators in the System, aren't leaving the amendment's fate to chance. Pierre often speaks to groups about HJR 19. The System and the System universities have formed committees to prepare information about the amendment. Prairie View A&M's members of the Chancellor's Student Advisory Board have printed brochures explaining HJR 19 and urging people to register to vote in the November election.

Whether voters pass the amendment or defeat it, Pierre is optimistic.

"I expect to convince everybody at Prairie View by Nov. 5 that even if it doesn't pass," he says, "we have a great future. Frankly, I think the future is looking up."

# Midday heist costs Brinks' co

United Press International

UKIAH, Calif. — A gang of men wearing orange masks robbed a Brinks armored car on a highway in rural Northern California Tuesday, shooting out the tires and forcing the vehicle to stop. The car was carrying 10 to 15 bags of money, authorities reported.

The three guards in the car and one woman, were injured, although none seriously. The woman suffered a shoulder wound, according to witnesses, and the men sustained abrasions from shattered glass.

The midday heist on a four-lane road near a resort area 11 miles north of Ukiah took less than a minute, according to eyewitnesses. The car was carrying four to eight gunmen wearing orange masks, blue jeans and T-shirts and traveling in two vehicles used rapid-fire weapons to bring the armored car to a halt.

It was not known immediately how much money the Brinks car was carrying or where it had come from. But the witnesses said the car appeared to have taken 10 bags of money from the vehicle.

The quickly executed heist took place on an uphill grade that led to the fully loaded armored car rolling down. One vehicle carrying two men got in front of the Brinks car and another holdup vehicle got behind it and an apparently preplanned point the gunmen shot out the tires forcing the armored car to stop.

At the same time the gunmen used high-powered rapid-fire weapons to blast out the supposedly let-proof windows of the armored car.

Officers from the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office and the California Highway Patrol found the getaway vehicles, a pickup truck, some distance from the robbery scene, about 100 miles north of San Francisco.

Investigators speculated that robbers had hidden other getaway vehicles in the area. Forest service employees joined the search, and a helicopter and airplane were called in to help.

The FBI in San Francisco immediately dispatched two agents to the scene.



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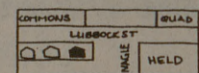


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