

State/Local

Pierre sets goals after Prairie View

By Kelly S. Brown
Staff Writer

When Dr. Percy Pierre perceives his goals to be achieved and his job completed, he pushes forward to a new challenge and does not look back.

It was with this attitude that Pierre came to Prairie View A&M in 1983 as president, and it's the outlook he'll be packing up with him when he leaves office this May to be the first holder of the Honeywell Professorship in Electrical Engineering.

Pierre proposed certain goals when he first arrived at Prairie View six years ago, and now that his objectives have been accomplished he wants to serve the university in another capacity.

A&M System Regent Dr. John Coleman said although he's disappointed that the president chose to retire, he understands why Pierre is doing so.

"He still has much more to offer this institution with his contacts in government and industry," Coleman said, "and at the same time he can pursue something he really loves — research. The good he accomplished will always be with the university."

The good of the university is what Pierre had in mind in the beginning when, he set out to make a drastic change in the stature of Prairie View A&M.

He established a new college of engineering technology, eliminated programs that had few students and worked to upgrade the quality of faculty by requiring all new faculty members to have earned the highest degrees in their field.

And that was in his first year as president.

While Pierre was president the enrollment of Prairie View A&M increased by more than 25 percent. Presently, 5,607 students are enrolled. Grade point averages were higher than ever before, and average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for entering freshmen had increased by 100 points.

The endowment of the 111-year-old college northeast of



Dr. Percy Pierre

Houston increased from \$500,000 to more than \$3 million during Pierre's presidency.

Pierre's most visible achievement was the establishment of the Benjamin Banneker College, which was named after one of America's first recognized black intellectuals.

The residential college, which is basically a college within the university, selects academically motivated students in the sciences and applied sciences. It provides an emphasis on the academic strength of the entire student body, enhances the quality of instruction and research and improves the quality of the university's graduates.

Pierre's involvement in education has spanned decades.

The duration of Pierre's presidency has been one of improvement and growth for the school, and he hopes the success continues after he leaves May 31.

"Prairie View has so much potential, and it will take years for everyone to realize that potential," Pierre said. "It's also going to require strong support from the Board of Regents and the chancellor. But most of all, it's going to take everyone buying into the vision of the college."

Dr. Coleman said a search advisory committee will be appointed this weekend during the Board of Regents meeting to select the next president.

A&M moves up in national rankings of schools attracting merit scholars

By Melissa Naumann
Reporter

Texas A&M moved up to No. 8 nationally last year in new enrollment of National Merit Scholars. A&M is one of the three schools in the Top 10 that increased its number of the honor students.

Dr. Dale T. Knobel, director of the University Honors Program, said that one reason for the increase to 113 National Merit Scholars is A&M's improving academic reputation.

"Texas A&M has always drawn a healthy share of National Merit Scholars in engineering and sciences," he said. "There was a large pool of these students interested in humanities and many hadn't recognized our strength in the liberal arts. Since we've become more prominent in the liberal arts fields, students have noticed."

Another reason more National Merit Scholarship students are attracted to A&M is the growing availability of honors classes. As the University Honors Program is

expanded, Knobel hopes to attract more top students.

"In high school most of these students were in advanced placement or accelerated classes," he said. "When they get to college, they expect this to continue."

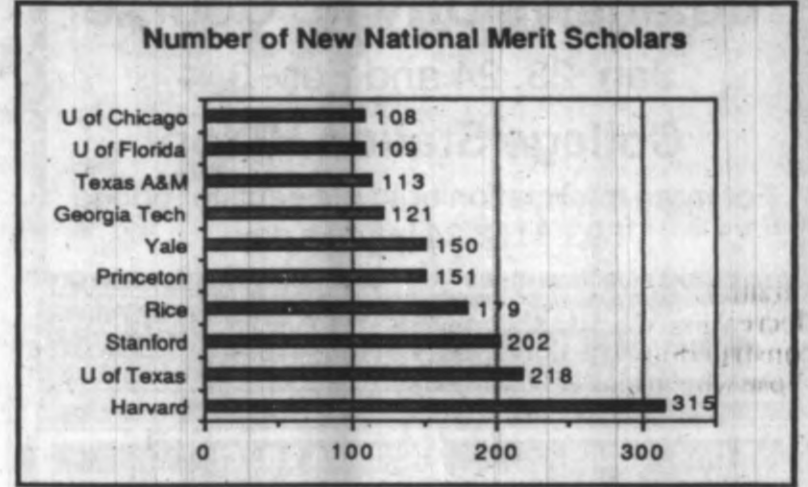
"Their college decision is based on where they'll have the opportunities to be involved in honors classes."

Financial concerns also can bring these students to A&M. Since the National Merit Scholarship is prestigious but involves little money, A&M offers a number of other scholarships to supplement it.

Recruiting also is responsible for A&M's jump into the Top 10.

"We've been aggressive in getting the word out," Knobel said. "My office has been going on the road around the state to high schools. We think we have turned the corner and know what to do to attract National Merit Scholars."

Harvard ranks at the top of the crowd in recruiting National Merit Scholars with 315. The



University of Texas is second, with 218. Rice University is fourth, recruiting 179 scholars for last year.

The importance of attracting National Merit Scholars involves the University's image to poten-

tial students, Knobel said. "If you have a substantial number of them," he said, "the word is out that you have academic quality and that's what students are looking for."

Senator: Clements' choice of regents shows lack of minority representation

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements came under attack Thursday from a state senator who charged that Clements' appointment of three new University of Texas regents slighted South Texas and Hispanics.

"He has left us with a board of regents which has no Hispanic member," Sen. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi, said. "There are no blacks, no women; simply put, there are no minorities at all on the board."

Earlier this week, Clements named as new members of the nine-person panel former GOP congressman Tom Loeffler, former state GOP chairman Chester Upham Jr. and Houston lawyer Robert Cruikshank.

Among those replaced was Mario Yzaguirre of Brownsville, the board's only Hispanic member.

Truan, chairman of the Senate Hispanic Caucus, said the Republican governor's action showed a lack of recognition of the needs of South Texas residents.

"Governor Clements has given us a board with no representation at all by anyone who resides in

South Texas, the region of the state which historically has been the most severely deprived in the allocation of educational resources," Truan said.

The senator also noted that the appointments came at a time when the UT system is considering a merger with Pan American University, in Edinburg, and the state is trying to expand higher education in South Texas.

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Sen. Carlos Truan
D-Corpus Christi

"It takes someone who really knows the problems confronting young Hispanics struggling to get a college education to relate that experience to someone who has never lived south of the af-

fluent-enclaves of San Antonio's north side," Truan said.

Clements wasn't available for comment. He was in Washington, D.C., attending president-elect George Bush's inaugural ceremonies.

A spokesman for the governor, deputy press secretary Jay Rosser, defended the most recent appointments and denied that Clements' isn't concerned about South Texas.

"UT is a statewide system. The governor's appointees reflect geographic diversity," he said.

Rosser also noted that Clements had appointed regent Sam Barshop, a San Antonio resident in 1987, and said the governor has appointed Hispanics to numerous offices, including the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Asked about the Truan charges, University of Texas System Chancellor Hans Mark said, "In order to be a good representative, it's not necessary that you actually... be a woman, or be black, or Hispanic or anything else. I don't think that's a necessary condition."

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