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President Emeritus George C. Wright Speeches

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## **Legislative Budget Board Facts About PV AMU**

George C. Wright

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## **Legislative Budget Board**

### **Facts About PVAMU**

PVAMU is the second oldest public university in the State of Texas. We are very proud of the fact that along with Texas A&M University at College Station and the University of Texas at Austin, we are the only three Universities mentioned in the State Constitution as being Universities of the “first class.” **Key Point: we must pursue excellence in our programs.**

**Another key point: the Constitution was amended regarding PVAMU, mandating that we “serve the under-served.”** This means that PVAMU has a dual mission. This is a significant aspect of what we must accomplish.

**The significance of the OCR funds to the creation of new programs and new buildings.** A key point: these programs must be of the quality that they will attract all Texans, regardless of race. **Inherit in the OCR is a mandate for PVAMU to become a much more diverse University.**

## **Goals and Objectives for PVAMU for the Next Five Years.**

1. **Strengthen the Quality of Academic Programs**
  - Conduct external academic program reviews
  - Achieve specialized accreditation of selected academic programs
  - Succeed in achievement of Licensures in applicable academic program areas
  - Eliminate non-productive academic programs
  - Increase the prominence of faculty scholarship
  - Increase the number of faculty FTE's producing research/scholarly and creative works
  - Retain regional accreditation
  - Retain accreditation held in specialized programs
  
2. **Improve the Academic Indicators of the Student Body**
  - Conduct annual reviews of admission standards / requirements
  - Increase / improve the standardized test scores of matriculates
  - Collaborate with Texas' other educational programs to increase the number and success of transfer students.
  - Admit and enroll an increasingly higher caliber of student
  - Increase the number of students who adhere to the University's Conduct Standards
  
3. **Increase Applied and Basic Research**
  - Enhance the research environment and expertise of faculty and staff
  - Align university research goals with federal, state, and industry needs and goals
  - Enhance pre and post-award services to the university research and sponsored program community
  
4. **Strengthen Environmental Health and Safety Programs on the Campus**
  - Implement off-site storage of critical data
  - Prepare and train for business continuity

5. Achieve (and maintain) Financial Stability
  - Expand the financial capacity of PVAMU
  - Address potentially critical funding issues involved with the eventual loss of special OCR Priority Plan funding
  - Meet or exceed expectations associated with the current Capital Campaign
  - Take appropriate steps to “right-size” the annual operating budget of PVAMU
  - Increase the availability of scholarship funds
  - Increase the size and number of endowments for student scholarships and for academic chairs
  - Increase funded research
  - Stay competitive in tuition and fees / align tuition and fees to be competitive with other general academic institutions in Texas
  
6. Increase the Efficiency of University Operations
  - Design and implement a document imaging program
  - Identify additional outsourcing opportunities
  - Improve the quality of support staff
  - Transfer fiscal processes to online applications
  - Maximize space usage
  
7. Promote Programs that Contribute to Student Success
  - Engage students in rigorous educational programs and provide an environment conducive to success
  - Increase/improve the percentage of PVAMU graduates who are accepted to graduate and/or professional schools
  - Increase placement rates of all PVAMU graduates

8. Strengthen University Advancement Programs including fund-raising.
  - Communicate the accomplishments of the University through publications to the various constituent groups.
  - Enhance corporate relations through Industry Cluster publications that show the strength of corporate partnerships with the University.
  - Use technology to communicate the University's accomplishments to a broader audience
  - Continue to implement the fund-raising model and university advancement model developed from the planning study and refined by Ketchum's progress reviews of Extend the View: The Capital Campaign for Prairie View A&M University
  
9. Increase and Enhance the Visibility and Awareness of the University to the Community at Large / all Stakeholders
  - Effectively communicate to all Stakeholders the PVAMU Vision / 2020
  - Expand its service to the community by promoting Service Learning, Distance Education, Continuing Education, K-16 programs, Small Business and Entrepreneurial Initiatives, Cooperative Extension, and Health Care by engaging its people and resources in a renewed commitment to outreach.
  - Improve the climate for diversity

## **What Makes PVAMU Unique? Why Is This School Significant?**

Accomplishing the goals outlined in April 2005 memo to the Chancellor will result in significant progress at PVAMU. But, frankly, these goals don't come close to capturing the excitement and optimism I had when assuming the Presidency of this historic HBCU in August 2003 and these goals fail to give the special "brand" that PVAMU needs to carry it to even greater heights.

To enhance PVAMU, to build on the "quality" that already exists here, I believe we need to raise and then attempt to answer some questions. **"What really should be the 'goals' of PVAMU?"** Besides its longevity and proven track record of success, **"Why should this school exist and receive support?"** Or to state these questions another way, **"When considering all of the very fine colleges and universities in this region, state, and nation, why should a student come to this particular school?"** **"What is unique or special about PVAMU?"**

**Key Point:** I believe that if we can fully articulate the uniqueness of this school, demonstrate that there is a special type of "spirit" here, that there is something that we do that makes all of our graduates successful, then all of our constituents will be impressed enough to where they will remember and appreciate what is unique about PVAMU.

Or to say the same point another way, **if we are going to ensure that PVAMU is going to make a difference is going to reach all of its lofty goals we must have a vision, a sense of the direction of this University. This is essential if we are going to “sell” PVMU to students, alums, and taxpayers.**

## **Goals**

**First. The recruitment of students: increase the quality.** Lower number of Provisional Admits, means that we experienced this year a drop in enrollment. It means we must recruit in high schools and above all in Community Colleges.

**Also leads to diversity.** From its inception, PVAMU has served predominantly black students. But, in the future, providing opportunities and educating the “underserved” means that PVAMU must aggressively recruit Hispanics. Why should this be done? Because of the changing demographics of Texas and American society. It is important to understand that “While not neglecting our commitment to Afro-Americans here at PVAMU, we must recruit Hispanic students because it gives us yet another significant way to truly make a difference in our society. The very nurturing that PVAMU has done for blacks will benefit Hispanic young people. **But here is the bottom line: regardless of the race of its students, PVAMU must continue making a strong contribution to society, and this will best be achieved by providing opportunities to the under-served of Texas and American Society.**

**We must continue our commitment of being accessible to all students.** Making funds available in the form of scholarships is a key. Doing a much much better job in the processing of financial aid is essential. Better coordination between the academic units and financial aid in the offering of funds to students and doing this quickly. Identifying scholarships that have not been awarded. Working with Alumni groups in establishing scholarship for students from their communities.

**Increase the financial resources of the University.** Assess our programs. Build on excellence: Nursing, Engineering, Business. Must improve in Agriculture and Education. Real possibilities for excellence is in the areas where we have the new buildings: Electrical Engineering, Criminal Justice, and Architecture.

**A major challenge:** The increasing cost for students is a reality. Designated Tuition will increase again. I am determined to help them understand that we have no choice but to increase cost to make sure (1) that PVAMU graduates remain competitive with others; and (2) that their education is an investment.

A way of offsetting some of the increasing cost: the Capital Campaign successes: Brown Foundation \$1 million, Houston Endowment, \$2.5 million, and others.



## Core Value for Students

**A core value of PVAMU and me: a fervent belief in the value of an education, of how this will change one's station in life more than anything.** Despite its modest financial support throughout its 130-year history, the school has placed educating its students and preparing them to be productive citizens at the forefront of its mission. I have long stressed to students the value of an education and not just obtaining a degree while in college. Raising expectations so that ordinary people set and achieve extraordinary goals. Could that be the “spirit” that makes this place unique?

**To succeed students need to be grounded in the basics.** They must be able to communicate—to express ideas in writing. My handing out copies of Strunk and White, Elements of Style is consistent with my belief in challenging students to obtain an education outside of the classroom.

Furthermore, to be successful in the larger society, students, after having mastered their studies, must be well rounded, thus my emphasis on reading and culture. And manners. I want students who leave PVAMU to have something that no amount of money can buy and that is “class.”

I truly don't have the answer—perhaps some of you do, but I want people outside of this campus, when they interact with our graduates, to notice that something occurred at PVAMU that led to these students being “educated.” There is something about their appearance, attitude, etc. that leads to them “standing out,” and yet they perfectly “blend in.”

**Core Value: Students make good choices when it comes to their health and their mental well-being.** Simply stated, how do they handle sexual temptations, drugs and alcohol, and fighting? Yes at a University, we must stress moral and ethical behavior as the cornerstones to society.

While we cannot and should not make their choices for them, this should be a place where we challenge their thinking and encourage them to take personal responsibility for their choices. I believe encouraging them to wait (Not Right Now) to make critical life choices is the least we can do at a place like Prairie View. *Challenging them to say “NO” to an organization whose members insist upon hazing by branding with hot irons and subjecting prospects with dehumanizing acts.*

**Another Core Value: this University must provide our students with a huge dose of Afro-American history and culture and of what it means to attend an HBCU.** Understand the struggle but keep your eye on the prize. I would like for us to find a way to educate them about who they are and from whence they came, but challenge them not to get stuck **in stereotypes or destructive behavior.** To use that knowledge as a source of inspiration and pride to propel them beyond even what their ancestors ever dreamed. To encourage students who “have it all together” like our student leaders, scholars, and University PALS to reach out and mentor others.

**Key Point: Accountability must be at our core, especially among Administrators.**

**A Core Value: At PVAMU we will have a high level of Professionalism in everything that we do.** My “catchy” theme: **Blocking and Tackling: Being on Time in Every Way.** Last school year, I appropriated a line from Dr. William Harvey, President of Hampton University, who said “Being on time means that you are late for the start of the meeting.” I like that. Earlier this month, while in Washington D.C. for a meeting, I heard something new: “Being on Time is a courtesy shared among Kings.” **The bottom line is clear: it means acting in a professional (there is that word again) manner and always remembering that a major part of our responsibility is to set good examples for our students. That begins with blocking and tackling.**

PVAMU must provide professional growth for its faculty, something that was done for me at UT Austin.

If we are Professional in everything that we do, then it stands to reason that there will be on this campus an intolerance of inappropriate behavior. We can create a culture of excellence that starts with each of us and flows to the students. It is important!

**A Core Value To  
Alums, Supporters, Politicians, and the General Public**

Input, the free exchange of ideas is needed, respected, and valued. Note, that it must be done in an honest manner, not in the way that some of our critics choose to do so. How can Alums and others best serve the University?

Challenge to them: don't believe the negative before getting the facts.

We need their moral support, financial support.

### **Conclusion: Practical Activities**

- Enhance Quality
- Enhance Financial Stability
- Must hire faculty whose credentials, personal commitment and conduct are models for all students at all levels.
- Diversity.
- Governance at all levels is important.
- Seek additional revenue sources (enrollment, grants, etc.)

Candid Comment: I truly believe that the vision I have outlined will result in PVAMU being a much better university than it already is at present. I don't know if its national rankings will increase. But the quality of the education students receive will be better. They will continue to be productive contributors to society.