

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a priority plan to strengthen the education of students at Prairie View A&M University and Texas Southern University. It is the most recent step in Texas' long-term commitment to higher education for all Texans beginning with the development of the "Texas Plan" in 1983.

The plan is based on recommendations by the Committee on OCR Issues. The Committee on OCR Issues was formed to address concerns expressed by OCR after it conducted a two-year review of public higher education in Texas pursuant to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In March 1999, OCR officials indicated they had reached a preliminary conclusion that disparities traceable to *de jure* segregation still existed at Prairie View A&M University and Texas Southern University, Texas' two historically Black public universities. These disparities were in the areas of the mission of the universities, the land grant status of Prairie View A&M University when compared to Texas A&M University, program duplication, facilities, funding and the racial identifiability of public universities in Texas.

The Governor's Office agreed to respond to OCR's concerns through the Coordinating Board's higher education planning process, the mechanism the Board has used to develop a new plan for public higher education in Texas. Thus, the issues raised by OCR were recognized as particular and important aspects of an overarching issue for the state: closing gaps in participation and success in higher education across Texas for all the people of the state.

The committee was composed of representatives from Texas Southern and Prairie View, from other Texas public universities, and from business and employers. It was charged with reviewing OCR's concerns and developing recommendations to strengthen education at Prairie View A&M University and at Texas Southern University.

The committee met monthly from November 1999 and April 2000 and formed subcommittees to examine mission, land grant status, program duplication, facilities, funding and recruitment, retention and graduation at Prairie View and Texas Southern. Coordinating Board staff was assigned to work with each subcommittee. Both the committee and the subcommittees met with representatives from Texas Southern and Prairie View and reviewed large amounts of information prepared by the institutions and by other sources. The public was also invited to present testimony at one of the committee meetings and throughout the process.

The committee agreed that Prairie View A&M University and Texas Southern University would be enhanced and strengthened by ensuring that any student attending these universities would receive the best quality education available in an environment conducive to high levels of student achievement and success.

A vision was put forth that each institution should be one where any parent would be willing to send his or her child because it offers high quality, desirable programs and facilities and is successful in helping students achieve their full potential.

The committee adopted its recommendations unanimously at its final meeting on April 28, 2000. Those recommendations were used as the bases for the priority plan described in this document. The priority plan calls for an ambitious set of actions to raise the educational success of students, particularly in retention and graduation. The plan also places emphasis on establishing or improving systems and developing the infrastructure to support the delivery of high quality education and provide excellent student services. In addition, the components of the plan are each to be tied to a benchmark to guide and ensure each institution's progress under the plan.

For Texas Southern University, the plan includes actions to strengthen its operational systems related to finance, academics, human resources, facilities planning, information technology, and related areas, including establishing a system for generating revenue through an active and effective institutional development office. It requires actions to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation of students; developing an attractive and well-maintained campus; strengthen academic programs (especially those in law, pharmacy, business and educator preparation); construct a new science building; add ten new high value, high demand programs in seven fields; re-establish the School of Public Affairs; create 12 endowed chairs for new and existing programs; develop a program of merit scholarships; and other important steps, including a change in the statutory mission statement to remove an apparent limit on the mission of the Texas University to "urban programming."

For Prairie View A&M University, the plan includes key initiatives to improve the recruitment, retention and graduation of students; strengthen systems related to information technology and human resources to support the development of students, faculty, and staff; strengthen key academic programs (particularly nursing, engineering, educator preparation, architecture, and juvenile justice); add state-of-the-art buildings for key programs; complete building renovations; strengthen its institutional development office; create 12 endowed chairs for new and existing programs; add a merit scholarship program; amend the statutory mission statement to ensure that it includes no exclusionary language that discourages any Texan from taking advantage of the excellent educational opportunities afforded at Prairie View A&M University; and other important steps.