

- 21 of 28 (75 percent) components are on target;
- Two of 28 (7 percent) components need additional attention;
- Recruitment and retention components are on target;
- The majority of the operational systems components are on target; and
- Facilities components are on target.

In the fourth year of the implementation of the *Priority Plan*, Prairie View A&M University and Texas Southern University are well-positioned to meet the benchmarks of the plan within the specified time frame (2000-2007).

## **Introduction**

The *Priority Plan to Strengthen Education at Prairie View A&M University and at Texas Southern University (Priority Plan)* was created in response to concerns raised by the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) that disparities traceable to *de jure* segregation still existed at Prairie View A&M University and at Texas Southern University in the areas of the missions 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 State, without admitting that any of its present day policies or practices are traceable to its prior *de jure* dual education system, voluntarily agreed to enter into a collaborative process with OCR to strengthen education at Texas' publicly funded historically Black universities.

In May of 2000, then-Governor George W. Bush signed the *Texas Commitment* with OCR, in which the State committed to continue to provide all of its citizens with full opportunities to participate in the benefits of the state's public education system. Texas, in collaboration with OCR, committed to develop specific recommendations to address the following measures:

1. *Further define and enhance the missions of Texas' historically Black institutions to ensure that they do not promote racial identifiability and that they do foster desegregation in other areas to the extent practicable.*
2. *Strengthen existing academic programs and authorize new, high-value, high-demand programs or program components which are not unnecessarily duplicative of programs offered by proximate historically White institutions (HWIs), at each of the historically Black institutions. The State will use its best efforts to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to ensure the successful implementation of those authorized programs.*
3. *Provide Texas' historically Black institutions the facilities and other resources needed to ensure the successful implementation of measures identified pursuant to items 1 and 2.*
4. *Enhance facilities and campus environments at Texas' historically Black institutions and ensure equity with comparable public HWIs with respect to physical character (i.e., landscape, ambience, and appearance), quality, adequacy, and availability of facilities to support programs.*
5. *Improve the recruitment, retention, and participation of African-American and Hispanic students at the State's historically White institutions.*

The first four measures are the framework of the *Priority Plan*. Commitment five was addressed by Texas' higher education plan, *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, which calls for increasing participation and success of all students, including underrepresented students, in higher education.

The *Priority Plan* is based on recommendations of the Committee on OCR Issues—a committee that worked simultaneously with three additional task forces engaged in the Coordinating Board's comprehensive planning process for Texas higher education during 1999-2000. The Committee on OCR Issues was made up of Coordinating Board members, governing board members, university-related groups, employer-related groups, alumni, administrators and faculty from the publicly funded historically Black universities, the higher education community at large, and the Houston business community. The Committee on OCR issues made its recommendations to the larger Higher Education Planning Committee in May of 2000, and at the recommendation of the Higher Education Planning Committee, the Coordinating Board approved the *Priority Plan* in October of 2000.

The *Priority Plan* spans three biennia (2002-2003, 2004-2005, and 2006-2007) and calls for the development of new, high-demand academic programs (10 at Prairie View A&M University and 11 at Texas Southern University); strengthening and maintaining accreditation in key academic areas; strengthening recruitment, retention, and graduation; strengthening institutional development; strengthening facilities and campus infrastructure; and strengthening operational systems at both Prairie View A&M University and at Texas Southern University.

For 2002-2003, the 77th Texas Legislature (2001) funded the *Priority Plan* at \$50 million, with \$25 million appropriated to Prairie View A&M University and \$25 million appropriated to Texas Southern University. In addition to appropriations from general revenue, the State also authorized \$177 million in tuition revenue bonds for capital improvements in support of the plan and appropriated about \$3 million per year per university for debt service of *Priority Plan*-related bonds and other authorized bonds. For 2004-2005, the 78th Texas Legislature (2003) continued the state's commitment to the *Priority Plan* by appropriating \$44 million—\$22 million for Prairie View A&M University and \$22 million for Texas Southern University.

Texas has entered the fourth year of the six-year *Priority Plan*. At the end of the implementation of the plan, OCR will determine whether the measures in the plan have been fully implemented and whether the Title VI (of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) concerns have been resolved. Should Texas successfully implement the plan, OCR will acknowledge in writing that the State has eliminated all vestiges of segregation in its higher education system in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, thus concluding the review.

### **Priority Plan Outcomes**

The *Priority Plan* is designed to strengthen and enhance Prairie View A&M University and Texas Southern University by ensuring that any student who attends these universities will receive a high quality education in an environment that supports