



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

A Member of The Texas A&M University System

Prairie View A&M University Appoints Joel B. Thornton as Inaugural Dean of Libraries

Dear Prairie View A&M University Community,

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Joel B. Thornton, MSOM, MSIS, CPA, as the inaugural Dean of Libraries at Prairie View A&M University, effective October 20, 2025. This historic appointment reflects the University's commitment to elevating the role of the Libraries in advancing our mission of teaching, research, and service as we pursue our bold *Journey to Eminence 2035* strategic plan. In addition to his appointment as Dean of Libraries, Mr. Thornton will also hold a faculty appointment in the College of Business as Professor of the Practice.

Mr. Thornton brings to PVAMU a distinguished record of leadership in academic libraries at nationally recognized research institutions, including the University of Utah, the University of Arkansas, and Texas A&M University. He currently serves as Associate Dean for Collections & Scholarly Communication at the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library, where he oversees a \$9.5M collections budget and a team of more than 30 faculty and staff. There, he has secured significant recurring funding for open-access initiatives, negotiated transformative publishing agreements with leading academic publishers, and enhanced digital scholarship and liaison services in support of a growing research enterprise.

Previously, at the University of Arkansas, Mr. Thornton provided strategic leadership across research, learning, and collections, directing faculty and staff in multiple branch libraries and managing a \$7M collections budget. His work included launching the institution's inaugural Undergraduate Research Week, contributing to planning for a \$25M library renovation project, and developing sustainable collection strategies that expanded access while reducing costs.

Mr. Thornton's early career at Texas A&M University further underscores his commitment to student success and innovation. As Business Librarian and later as Client Services & Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, he integrated research and information literacy into curricula, advanced user-centered library design, and fostered collaborative learning environments.

Across his career, Mr. Thornton has authored numerous peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and data projects on scholarly communication, open publishing, and the economics of information. He is also deeply engaged in national leadership, serving with the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), the Center for Research

Libraries, and the Association of College & Research Libraries. His selection as a 2023–2024 Association of Research Libraries Leadership Fellow further highlights his stature as a forward-looking academic library leader.

The creation of the Dean of Libraries role marks an exciting transformation for PVAMU. As we strengthen our research capacity, deepen our student success initiatives, and expand digital scholarship, the Libraries — spanning the John B. Coleman Library, the Dr. Robert A. Henry Music Library, the College of Nursing Library, and the Northwest Houston Center Library — will serve as the intellectual heart of our University. Mr. Thornton’s vision, expertise, and commitment to excellence uniquely position him to lead our Libraries in this pivotal moment.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Cheryle Snead-Greene, Chair, and to all the members of the Dean of Libraries search committee. The sheer competitiveness of the applicant pool demonstrates PVAMU’s national prominence and relevance across the landscape of higher education. Your careful attention, diligence, and profound wisdom led us to a very successful outcome. I am also especially grateful to Mr. Karl Henson, who has provided steadfast leadership as Interim Executive Director of Libraries over the past academic year. As he prepares for his well-deserved retirement on August 31, we honor his contributions with gratitude.

In the interim, Dr. Snead-Greene will serve as the administrative contact for the libraries until Mr. Thornton begins his appointment.

Please join me in welcoming Joel B. Thornton to Prairie View A&M University. I am confident that his leadership will elevate the Libraries as a cornerstone of our academic community and further strengthen PVAMU’s role as a premier public, land-grant, research-intensive university.

Warmly,



Aashir Nasim, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Prairie View A&M University