

## The Makings of A Good Alumnus

In 1987 I was on a college tour of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. To say that I was bowled over by the campus, the facilities and amenities is an understatement. I knew that I would be the first Runnels Aggie in my family! I returned to Dallas and completed the enrollment packet. (back then applications were still on paper.) Place it in the envelope put a stamp on it and placed the letter on the dining room table. In my family my dad would take mail to the post office on his way to work. Day 1, I go to school, I return home the letter is still on the table. Day 2 I go to school I return home the letter is still on the table. Day 3 that letter is still on the table. I finally ask my mother. "Momma, why hasn't Daddy mailed my letter to Texas A&M?" ... She didn't even look at me as she said, "Your daddy said that the only place his money was going was to Prairie View." And I stand before you today a proud 2<sup>nd</sup> generation PVite!

Fast forward 11 years and I've graduated, living on my own, young, single and free. A classmate, would drop by the apartment every now and then and she would always invite me to alumni meeting. "Alumni meeting?! I have no time for alumni meeting." I'm young, single and free. But as would happen there was a lull in activity one Friday night and I attend my first alumni meeting of the Dallas Alumni Chapter under the leadership of Mr. Clever Dean Lewis. I fell in love with the people, the organization the programming. I've been a faithful member for almost 20 now.

One day I will have to thank my father and Angela

I have a question and I want you to listen to me before you answer. Are you an ACTIVE Alumnus?

Are you building and fostering understanding and support of the University;  
Are we talking to other alumni and businesses in support of our alma mater? Are we assisting the deans with garnering internships at our companies and places of business? When people ask us what's the purpose of an HBCU do we get quiet or do we tell of our rich history and explain that as long as there is educational inequality in this world there is a place for the HBCU and the minority student.  
Are we asking each and every alumnus in our phones and on our list-serve to join an alumni chapter, join the NAA, or donate to a chapter, donate to the NAA or donate to the University? Are we ACTIVE Alumni?

Is the National Alumni Association following its purpose?

Is the association providing services to alumni and loyal friends of Prairie View?

The Alumni Chapters sponsor activities and programs to benefit and engage alumni, current students, and friends of the university. If you receive the Alumni Voice you see that our chapters and classes are hosting events throughout the year. There are membership picnics, golf tournaments, Networking events, mentoring of current students, Fundraising Galas, Endowments, Casino Nights, Happy Hours...numerous opportunities for alumni to fellowship. By fostering loyalty among our alumni and providing opportunities for involvement, we facilitate an environment in which we can establish

life-long contact among alumni and with our alma mater. To answer my question of ,‘Is the association providing services to alumni and loyal friends of Prairie View?’ I’m going to answer in the affirmative.

Are we encouraging communications among alumni and the University?

Now more than ever the lines of communication will need to be open as the NAA does more to advocate for the students of PVU. We have begun to ask students to tell us the challenges to their academic progress in the classroom and on the campus.

In doing that the NAA has to Keep Alumni Conversant (knowledgeable) with the programs and activities of the University.

Are we serving as the central organization for the various alumni chapters and clubs?

Kudos to Ms. Erma Sadberry who is as the students would say, “holding it down” at the NAA office during the week. This woman is one of the most professional and capable persons I’ve ever had the privilege to work with. But it's time to move into a new era with major fundraising for an executive director and coordinators. The NAA needs \$1.5 million to ensure employment for these positions over a 5 year period. Imagine 60 chapters instead of 30. Imagine regional conventions across the country. Imagine web-based meetings. Imagine \$2-\$3 capital campaigns to meet student needs. But all of that takes resources sand manpower.

We are providing financial support to the University and its programs via Fundraising Galas, Endowments, and scholarships. We must organize and implement programs necessary for securing grants, and additional financial assistance for the University. The local chapters are doing an exceptional job awarding more than \$37000 in local scholarships, more than \$76,000 was awarded to PV students via endowed scholarships and there is over \$1,000,000 in endowed scholarship monies on the campus.

Phenomenal!

But for far too long, PVAMU students have been dropped for non-payment. Prairie View is averaging 30-40 students per semester being dropped due to non-payment. Would it not be a good thing if within hours of the fee drop, personnel in enrollment services proactively reach out to students who have just been dropped, offering small grants supplied by the NAA? In some cases, the difference between a student staying enrolled or not hinges on as little as \$300-a surprising claim until one realizes that a high percentage of Texas State students come from households with annual incomes of \$40,000 or less. The Projected Outcome of these situations would be that grant recipients meet with financial aid counselors, and hopefully the majority would re-enroll for subsequent semesters without requiring additional grants.

This is a proven program implemented in other universities; small grants in the amount of \$300-\$1000 to assist students in emergency situations. This type of emergency assistance is what students will remember and lead them to returning to the NAA as a member. We are seeking financial assistance from alumni across the country. Are you willing to give? As I’ve learned in my many years serving as Scholarship Gala Chair Real Money is cultivated one- on-one but we have to start somewhere.

For you to be an ACTIVE alumnus of Prairie View A&M University it will demand as much of you as being a good student at PVU demanded when you were here on the campus. I'm not talking solely or even primarily of the financial demands that will be asked of you. There will be a demand of your time. A demand of your effort. A demand of your skill.

Prairie View is a University of the first class! Mr. Clever Lewis drilled that into us. A University of the first class! Its students and alumni should reflect such.

1. THANK YOU