



**PVAMU SPOTLIGHTS DR. MERLYN PULIKKATHARA FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**  
*The Prairie View A&M Professor is a trailblazing physicist, educator, and space researcher shaping the next generation.*

PRAIRIE VIEW, Texas (March 18, 2026)- [Prairie View A&M University](#) is proud to recognize [Dr. Merlyn X. Pulikkathara](#) during Women's History Month; a trailblazing physicist, award-winning educator, and researcher whose work is impacting students, science, and space exploration.

A two-time PVAMU graduate, Dr. Pulikkathara turned early academic challenges into a career defined by excellence, earning her Ph.D. in applied physics from Rice University before returning to The Hill as a faculty member in 2017.

In 2020, she became the **first female physics tenure-track professor at PVAMU**, a milestone she views not as a finish line but as a doorway for others. "Being the first is not as important as making the path more accessible for the second, third, and fourth," she said.

In 2022, Dr. Pulikkathara secured a \$491,847 Department of Defense award to expand interdisciplinary research opportunities for PVAMU students, further positioning the University as a leader in innovation.

Her impact extends far beyond the classroom; through global collaborations with NASA and Japan's Kyushu Institute of Technology, PVAMU has contributed to space-based research measuring radiation in orbit. She also leads the **SHIELD Project**, an award-winning initiative developing "smart skin" technology designed to protect systems in extreme environments, with applications in space exploration, defense and energy.

Known for her dynamic, hands-on teaching style, Pulikkathara is committed to building students' confidence in STEM fields. Her research, spanning nanotechnology applications in aerospace, energy, and cancer, has been featured in more than 20 publications and earned multiple teaching awards.

Her journey from struggling student to pioneering scientist embodies the spirit of Women's History Month and serves as a powerful reminder of what is possible through perseverance, mentorship and belief.

To speak with Dr. Pulikkathara, contact **Liz Faublas-Wallace**, Communications Specialist III, at [lswallace@pvamu.edu](mailto:lswallace@pvamu.edu).

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**PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY**, founded in 1876, is the second oldest public institution of higher education in the state of Texas and the third largest Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the nation. Designated as an “institution of the first class” in the Texas Constitution, the enrollment exceeds 10,000 students and over 80,000 graduates. PVAMU offers academic programs through its ten colleges and schools, boasting degree options leading to bachelor’s and doctoral-level degrees. A Carnegie-classified high-research (R2) University and a member of The Texas A&M University System, PVAMU is dedicated to fulfilling its land-grant mission of achieving excellence in teaching, research, and service. For more information, visit [www.pvamu.edu](http://www.pvamu.edu).

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