

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Membership

The Very Rev. Dr. Martini Shaw, <i>Chair</i>	Pennsylvania, III	2016
The Rev. Canon James G. Callaway, D.D.	New York, II	2016
Dr. Joel Cunningham	Tennessee, IV	2016
Mr. Scott Evenbeck	Indianapolis, V	2016
Dr. Anita George	Mississippi, IV	2016
The Rev. Dr. Canon Michele V. Hagans	Washington, III	2016
The Rev. Dr. Eugene Y. Lowe, Jr.	New York, II	2016
The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	2016
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex-Officio</i>	Ohio, V	2016

Mandate

The HBCU Task Group was appointed by the Executive Council at the direction of a resolution in January 2015: that the Executive Council...requests the Presiding Officers appoint a task group to consider how the Episcopal Church can better support our Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including financial, administrative, leadership, and other forms of support.” The two remaining Episcopal HBCUs are St. Augustine’s University in Raleigh, NC and Voorhees College in Denmark, SC.

Summary of Work

The appointments were made in the Fall of 2015, headed by The Rev. Martini Shaw, Rector of St. Thomas’ Church in Philadelphia, and the HBCU Task Group first meet by teleconference on October 22, 2015. While the initial work was by teleconference, the Task Group convened both institutions at St. Augustine’s University in Raleigh, North Carolina from January 28-30, 2016. A second on site visit was held at Voorhees College from February 2-4, 2017. The Task Group was formed to fill a void in understanding and communication between the institutions and the council. The timing was especially fortuitous, however, as both St. Augustine’s and Voorhees had significant cash flow crises in the summer of 2016. The rapport between the schools and TEC facilitated church support overcoming a longstanding financial crisis in the short term. This also laid the groundwork for ongoing support addressing student recruitment, especially of Episcopal students, and fund development. Initiatives in these areas are well underway at St. Augustine’s assisting Dr. Everett Ward, President and beginning at Voorhees with the appointment of Dr. W. Franklin Evans.

WHAT IS YET TO BE DONE IN 2016-17?

Last summer, TEC’s development director Ms. Tara Elgin Holley started working with Bishop Michael Bruce Curry to marshal local support from five (5) congregations in Raleigh, North Carolina, in providing material and other relational support to St. Augustine’s University, while working with their development staff to up their game. Then Dr. Lang Lowery was sent by TEC’s CFO Kurt Barnes to facilitate the sale of a golf course in August 2016, leading to a new sustainable financial plan to overcome a chronic deficit, while looking at telecommunication and property maintenance to enhance student experience.

Such assistance is only beginning at Voorhees College, which is vexed by the fracture in the church in the former Diocese of South Carolina. Voorhees called on two (2) years support in July 2016. In 2017 they are receiving monthly payments from the support budgeted for 2018, a situation that will leave them at risk in 2018, a threat the Committee is watching carefully, as their fundraising assistance from TEC is only in its beginning phase.

St. Augustine’s University drew down all three (3) years of TEC block grant funding last summer, but now has a financial plan for establishing a year end surplus supported by accelerated fundraising. Currently, St. Augustine’s accreditation is on probationary status, which makes their financial success all the more crucial.

As a baseline, continuing relationship with the Church is one of the marks of Identity and Character of the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion. These institutions are members of the Association of Episcopal Colleges, CUAC’s Episcopal chapter, where Canon James Callaway works to bring them together with their eight (8) sister Episcopal peers for mutual support and sharing. TEC’s *Black Ministries* Officer, Canon Angela Ifill has carried out an invaluable programmatic role with St. Augustine’s and Voorhees through annual Campus Symposia, bi-annual Recognition Events, and presence at General Conventions. But while these efforts have gone a long way to connect students and engage administrators, the level of church engagement has been limited to the historically flat but ongoing budgetary support. The Task Group has discovered that much more is needed and possible.

WHAT PART OF THAT WORK BEYOND MEETINGS HAS BUDGET IMPLICATIONS FOR 2019-2021?

The systemic finding of the HBCU Committee has been that the linkage we have established has met a crucial need of supporting these Episcopal institutions connected with their sponsoring Church at a governance level. Perhaps it can be best described in terms from the Anglican Congress in 1963 as “mutual responsibility and interdependence.” Our task is to help The Episcopal Church find the ways and means for its being continued. One area we are exploring is to find ways to include the diocesan bishops relating to St. Augustine’s and Voorhees more directly into the Task Force.

The original Executive Council resolution called for an “Episcopal Historically Black Colleges and Universities Task Group to consider how the Episcopal Church can better support” these two (2)

institutions, “including financial, administrative, leadership and other forms of support.” We have found the need to sustain that emphasis particularly as it is reflected in the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) over the next five (5) to seven (7) years. (We will never forget that in 2012, after 140 years of witness, one of our heroic Episcopal HBCU’s, St. Paul’s College in Lawrenceville, Virginia closed on losing its accreditation.) As we are seeing with St. Augustine’s now, the vibrant support of a sponsoring church can play a significant role in their assessment of a member’s viability.

All this suggests the need for continuing work together beyond the next Triennium. We really need to be mindful of actively supporting the places that do this critical yet vulnerable work of the Episcopal Church. We need to have an ongoing body that brings together experienced church folk with academic, administrative and fundraising capabilities.

HOW DOES THAT WORK FIT INTO THE JESUS MOVEMENT VISION? (WHY IS IT NECESSARY?)

Bishop Curry gives the following voice to The Jesus Movement: “We’re following Jesus into loving, liberating and life-giving relationship with God, with each other and the earth... This crucially includes Reconciliation: Embodying the loving, liberating way of Jesus with each other to repair and restore that we call racial reconciliation.”

It can be argued that material Racial Reconciliation in the Episcopal Church began in 1868 with the opening of St. Augustine’s Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina. As Thelma Roundtree wrote in her history of St. Augustine’s (“Strengthening Ties that Bind”), “Its purpose was to train freedmen quickly to prepare other freed slaves to teach... therefore, the establishment of St. Augustine’s is believed to have been the result of initiatives taken by twelve (12) priests who traveled from North to South... to start a school for freedmen.”

In 1883 in Lawrenceville, Virginia, the son of a former slave, James Solomon Russell, a newly ordained priest started a Normal School for former slaves that became St. Paul’s College (which tragically closed in 2012.) Finally, in 1893 Elizabeth Evelyn Wright, trained by Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute, opened a Normal School in Denmark, South Carolina that with the purchase of land made possible by Ralph Voorhees became Voorhees College.

The Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) and Canon Ifill have offered the following perspective, which we quote:

“There are few historically black institutions more valuable to its community and the economics and culture of the larger society than Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Statistics show that approximately one half of all black college graduates are products of HBCUs... While far from circumstances which spawned them, Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still essential mission to the black community.”

In our time our Episcopal HBCUs are reaching out to other disadvantaged ethnic groups, principally Hispanics, and their role continues to evolve. In seeking Racial Reconciliation, however, they stand as the beachhead of the church's witness to racial healing.