January 1999

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Taronda Spencer
Spelman College

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Taronda Spencer

In 1987 Robert Smith, then director of Library and Media Services for the Highland Park (MI) School District, created an audiovisual presentation on the history of African American education for the training academy of the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE).\(^1\) Moved by the presentation, many of the academy participants encouraged Smith to expand it into a documentary film. A year later Smith, intrigued by the idea and armed with a $5000 planning grant from the National Alliance, began research to determine the feasibility of such a venture. He discovered in the process that much of the material

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\(^1\)NABSE, a 5,000 plus member, nonprofit organization founded in 1970 by Dr. Charles D. Moody, Sr. and other prominent educators, is the nation’s largest network of African American educators. It is dedicated to improving the educational accomplishments of African American youth through the development and deployment of instructional and motivational methods that increase levels of inspiration, attendance, and overall achievement.

PROVENANCE, vol. XVII, 1999
needed to document the history was not readily available to re­searchers.

Locating and identifying primary source material document­ing African American educational history in the United States became Smith’s mission. In 1990 his search, dubbed the African American Education Archives initiative (AAEA), found a home at Wayne State University, where the education depart­ment provided office space, equipment, and clerical support, and the Reuther Library assigned an archivist to assist AAEA with identifying repositories with holdings related to African Ameri­can education. Additional support came from the computer and information technology department, where staff members were thrilled at the possibility of using the information gathered by AAEA as the centerpiece of a database on African American history.

This coalition planned a number of research projects to accomplish the goals of AAEA: a survey of the archives of histor­ically black colleges and universities (HBCUs); a survey of state and local government repositories; a survey of national re­positories; a survey of material held in private collections; a sur­vey of oral history collections; and a series of oral history inter­views with educators. AAEA staff and advisors saw the HBCU archives survey as the most important of these projects, one that would bring together the broadest sources of information on Af­rican American education. Therefore, AAEA directed its pri­mary attention and efforts to launching this survey.

The survey proposed by the AAEA initiative was not the first effort to bring HBCU archival material under bibliographic control. In 1971 North Carolina Central University in Durham had started a project to identify and describe African American material in repositories in North Carolina, South Carolina, Vir­ginia, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. The Alabama Center of Higher Education in the mid-1970s began a project to collect
and evaluate material about African Americans in that state. In 1980 the United Negro College Fund held a conference of archivists and historians to demonstrate the significance of their archives to officials of member institutions, which led to a survey of those materials. In 1990 Jackson State University’s Margaret Walker Alexander Research Center and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History conducted a statewide survey of African American material in private hands.²

In 1991 the AAEA enlisted the aid of the librarians, archivists, historians, and other scholars who had worked with these ventures and similar projects to shape the HBCU archives survey. AAEA staff quickly learned that HBCUs housed a massive amount of material, institutional records as well as extensive special collections, and that there were notable differences in archival development and management stages (staffed, understaffed, and unstaffed, with collections that were processed, nearly processed, and unprocessed) among the institutions. Given these facts, it became quite clear to the AAEA staff that a comprehensive survey would require on-site work to take in all archival and manuscript material at the institutions, not just collections relating to education.

During the spring and fall of 1992, AAEA staff conducted telephone interviews with archivists, librarians, and administrators at more than seventy HBCUs. Nearly one-third of the respondents indicated that a formalized archives program had been established with adequate facilities, staff, and intellectual con-

²For additional information on these early projects, see records for the North Carolina Central Project, the African American Project, at North Carolina Central University; for the CEMBA Collection and Evaluation of Material about Black Alabama at Alabama A&M University, Huntsville; for the UNCF Conference Material in the UNCF Archives at Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center; and for the Mississippi survey conducted by the Margaret Walker Alexander Research Center at Jackson State University, Mississippi.
trol of material. The remaining two-thirds reported situations that ranged from the archives being closed for the lack of funds to material being warehoused with no foreseeable plans for archival preservation.

This disparity of conditions and the existence of an extensive amount of uncontrolled material made it difficult to employ one approach that would cover all possible circumstances and still allow the project to be comprehensive. Instead, survey staff would have to use a number of techniques to survey material in such vastly different environments. Those institutions with viable archives programs would be analyzed using the existing finding aids to the collections. The second and larger group of institutions would have to be surveyed using a variety of techniques, including a numerical or chronological sampling approach. The end product would be record group and collection level descriptions of the collections.

Armed with this information, AAEA submitted a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for an on-site survey of archival and manuscript collections, both processed and unprocessed, housed at HBCUs. The survey pool would include ninety-five HBCUs, spread geographically across twenty states and the District of Columbia including public and private, 4-year, 2-year, and professional schools that had maintained either institutional records or special collections. The information gathered would be printed in a guide to HBCU archival holdings as well as loaded into the national bibliographic networks, OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) and RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network).

Although the NEH panel supported the goals of the project, they raised concerns regarding the feasibility of completing the survey according to the proposed plan of work and
offered the AAEA $40,000 instead to complete a pilot study of seven institutions.\(^3\) That same year NEH funded a series of workshops through the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) taught by Georgia archivist Brenda Banks. These workshops, which covered basic orientation in archival management and laid an excellent foundation for the work to be carried out in the AAEA survey, gave the staff in most institutions a thorough understanding of the basic archival functions.

The pilot project allowed the AAEA to gather firsthand information about the wide variety of records environments at the HBCUs, to refine the proposed methodology and work plan, to assess personnel and time, and to develop the budget needed to insure the most comprehensive survey possible. When the project confirmed the concerns raised by the NEH panel, the AAEA Advisory Board, with help from William Wallach and Leonard Coombs of the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, revised the methodology to reflect a more efficient and comprehensive plan of work.

The AAEA Advisory Board also suggested that involving one of the HBCUs would further enhance the survey project by adding firsthand knowledge of archival conditions in those institutions. North Carolina Central University, which had just completed a survey of African American material in North Carolina repositories, then agreed to partner with AAEA to conduct

\(^3\)The institutions participating in the pilot survey were Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio; Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia; North Carolina Central University, Durham, North Carolina; Paine College, Augusta, Georgia; Mary Holmes Junior College, West Point, Mississippi; Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tennessee; and Kentucky State University, Frankfort, Kentucky.
the survey. Under this new partnership, the AAEA's HBCU survey project became the Cooperative HBCU Archival Survey Project or CHASP, which was initially funded by NEH in 1995.

The first survey team consisted of Linda Simmons Henry, archivist from North Carolina Central; Taronda Spencer, archivist from Wayne State; and Janet Harper, archives cataloger. Project creator Robert Smith and Benjamin Speller, dean of the library school at North Carolina Central, served as co-directors. David Moltke-Hansen at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, served as project consultant.

In November 1996 Wayne State University chose not to continue its work with the project, and the next year CHASP became an initiative of the Women's Research and Resource Center, the academic unit of Spelman College that coordinates the comparative women's studies program and manages the college archives. Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, director of the center and an original member of the project's advisory board, headed the new project team. Taronda Spencer and Janet Harper continued as project archivists; Robert Smith moved from project co-director to project consultant; and Brenda Banks took on the role of survey consultant. The seamless transition from Wayne State University to Spelman College allowed the project to continue without interruption.

The initial strategy for the survey included several steps. Because surveying the records of ninety-five institutions is a large task, CHASP planners divided the survey into three phases. In each phase approximately one-third of the ninety-five HBCUs were surveyed within an eighteen-month period.

At every site emphasis was placed on capturing information from collections that were fully processed and arranged, described in a guide or inventory, and 100 percent accessible. The work in each repository then continued in collections that were substantially or fully arranged in a logical sequence with some
form of access, then moved on to collections that were minimally accessible though significant portions of the collection were unprocessed. Finally, the archivist surveyed stored material for which no attempt to process had previously been made.

Surveyors initially used LibraryWorks, then MicroMarc software, to complete preliminary cataloging of the records in the field. They began by reviewing records for collections already cataloged in MARC-AMC (machine-readable cataloging-archival and manuscripts control) format to determine whether they accurately reflected the materials described and followed the guidelines for description used in *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts* (APPM) [4]. The archivist next reviewed the catalog descriptions for collections represented by non-MARC records and used the existing data to create MARC records. Where individual manuscript collections or record groups had been defined by the institutions but no cataloging data existed, the archivist inspected existing finding aids or surveyed the records themselves as needed to create MARC-AMC records.

Field staff did not seek to create a single type of model record that would have been impossible to achieve at some institutions and easily have been exceeded at others. Rather, the quality and level of detail in each description and the number and specificity of access points in each catalog record depended on the conditions of the records and the kind of processing and description that existed. Attention focused on accurately identifying creator and title of collections (fields 1xx and 245), physical description (field 300), organization and arrangement (field 351), biographical and historical information (field 545), scope and content note (520), restrictions on use and access (fields 506 and

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Finding aids (field 555), general note containing identifying information about the institution (field 500), subject access (fields 6xx), added entries (fields 7xx), and a location note (field 852).

In the early phase of the survey, records created in the field were sent back to Wayne State, where the cataloger checked the records for adherence to APPM and performed authority work on all name and subject access points. CHASP initially made these records available through the on-line catalog at Wayne State University, which was also available via the World Wide Web. Currently, staff are working with both the computer and information technology department at Spelman and the staff of Woodruff Library at Atlanta University Center to develop a database to house the descriptive records and make them accessible via Spelman’s webpage.

Phase I of CHASP began 1 June 1995 with institutions located in the mid-Atlantic states: Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia. On-site visits identified approximately 1,129 collections of material ranging from 1 item to 950 linear feet at thirty-one institutions. Phase II included institutions in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida and resulted in the description of 261 collections of material, ranging in size from 1 item to 464 linear feet. Spelman received funding from NEH for Phase III in spring 1999; that survey has begun at institutions located in Texas, Oklahoma, Ohio, Tennessee, Missouri, Louisiana, Arkansas, Kentucky and West Virginia led by Janet Harper, who assumed the duties of the project archivist in 1998.

In each phase of the project, staff found a full range of archival environments at the schools:
Nine schools had fully functional programs including personnel, funding, facilities, and collections that were arranged and described with available finding aids and reference activity;

Fifteen schools had programs with some elements of the above, but usually fell short in staffing or space that hindered collection development and reference activity;

Seventeen schools had new programs or defunct programs that were being revitalized. Most of this activity could be attributed to participation in seminars and workshops sponsored by local and state archival and historical agencies and national initiatives such as the basic training workshops offered through NAFEO and the Georgia Archives Institute. These programs, though small, exhibited potential for significant development and would, in time, consistently meet the archival needs of the institution and research community; and

Ten schools had no programs. Funding and staff were minimal; space was a major concern as well as administrative support for archival activity.

In all of the institutions, administrative, library, and archives staffs proved cooperative and supportive of the survey and the activities related to it. This cooperation led to unlimited access to material, including records stored in administrative offices and other remote locations, and a willingness to cooperate with the archivist to improve conditions in the institutions. Several repositories, for example, moved material identified as part of an existing collection but stored in a remote location to create one coherent collection.
When time and conditions permitted, the archivist created preliminary inventories of collections. Additionally, the survey team was able to interest campus personnel in discussions about the institution's records, particularly immediate concerns and needs, as well as identifying potential resources of assistance. The archivist also offered examples of and advice on records management, accessioning guidelines, collecting policies and forms.

CHASP revealed that a large quantity of material exists that documents the development of HBCUs against a backdrop of tremendous odds. Records relating to the governing boards of the institutions, the office of the president, administrative departments, academic departments, accreditation, faculty and staff, students, and alumni along with institutional publications and audiovisual collections highlight strong presidents, committed faculty, and determined students. The HBCU has consistently made an effort to collect and preserve records of its constituent community in addition to institutional records and to hold significant collections relating to medicine, religion, politics, and agriculture alongside the records documenting education. The majority of repositories surveyed, therefore, house extensive special collections of personal papers of former presidents, faculty, administrators, staff and alumni and community leaders, as well as records of organizations and church-related collections spanning a broad range of subject areas.

One example of the richness of documentation about the development of HBCUs is the Hampton University (Virginia) collection comprising nearly one hundred record groups and more than forty thousand photographs directly related to the history and administration of the university. The collection contains correspondence from a number of educational and political leaders of the post-Reconstruction era including Frederick Douglass,
Alexander Crummell, Robert C. Ogden, Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, John Mercer Langston, George Washington Carver, and Mary McLeod Bethune. The collection also contains proceedings of conferences on African American education in the South as well as material related to Hampton’s educational outreach to Africa, South America, and the Middle East.

The survey described significant collections of records related to African American women’s institutions and the papers of women educators. The institutional records of Spelman College (Georgia) and Bennett College (North Carolina) are invaluable sources for documenting the efforts to provide quality education for African American women and girls. The collections also include the personal papers of administrators, faculty, and alumnae of these institutions such as Elizabeth Koontz, Willa Player, and Constance Maetenna at Bennett and Sophia Packard, Harriet Giles, Emma Delaney, and Eleanor Franklin at Spelman. The institutional records of Hartshorn Memorial College5 (Virginia), now closed, are housed at Virginia Union University (Richmond). Also important are the papers of Evelyn Elizabeth Wright at Voorhees College (South Carolina), that institution’s founder and first president; the papers of Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and first president of Bethune–Cookman, at Bethune–Cookman College (Florida); and the papers of Lucy Diggs Slowe and Anna Julia Cooper at Howard University (District of Columbia).

In addition to providing important source material for studying higher education, the survey also revealed collections relating to K–12 schools and educational organizations. The records of Mather Academy are among the collections at Benedict

5The Reverend J. C. Hartshorn of Providence, Rhode Island, founded Hartshorn Memorial College in Richmond, Virginia, in 1883 to provide Christian education to young African American women. Hartshorn College merged with Virginia Union University in 1932.
College (South Carolina); the records of Palmer Memorial Institute are at Bennett College; and the records of Gilbert Academy are at Dillard University (Louisiana). Dillard also holds the records of the Louisiana Colored Teachers Association, while the collections of the Virginia Teachers Association and the Prince Edward County (Virginia) Free School are housed at Virginia State University (Petersburg).

Collections dealing with medicine include the records of Meharry Medical College and Hubbard Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. The Tuskegee University (Alabama) Archives houses the records of Andrews Hospital and the papers of the African American physicians and other personnel of the hospital. The records of Flint–Goodridge Hospital of New Orleans are a part of the Dillard University collection. Records of Freedman Hospital and the papers of Charles Drew and Daniel Hale Williams are at Howard University; the Leonard Medical School records are at Shaw University (North Carolina), and the records of the Palmetto Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association are housed at South Carolina State University (Orangeburg). Material related to early nursing programs at HBCUs are a part of the collections at Spelman College, St. Augustine's College (North Carolina), and Hampton University.

The survey revealed a vast amount of available material relating to religious and denominational history. Records of the United Methodist Church are located at Rust College (Mississippi), Claflin College (South Carolina) and Bethune–Cookman College. Material concerning the African Methodist Episcopal Church can be found among the collections at Allen University (South Carolina) and Edward Waters College (Florida). Baptist Association and church records are a part of the collections housed at Florida Memorial College (Miami) and Virginia Union University. Collections relating to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church are at Miles College (Alabama) and Paine College.
Oakwood College (Alabama) holds an extensive collection of material concerning African American Seventh Day Adventist Congregations. Talladega College (Alabama) houses material concerning the Congregational Church, and Xavier University (Louisiana) holds a sizable collection relating to African Americans and the Catholic Church. One of the largest collections related to denominational history is the archives of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church at Livingstone College (North Carolina). This collection includes more than three hundred linear feet of material comprised primarily of the administrative files of AMEZ bishops, the proceedings and minutes of national and regional conventions, and church publications.

Collections documenting the southern civil rights movement are found throughout the HBCU community. The papers of Aaron Henry, Fannie Lou Hamer, Edwin King, Rims Barber, Ernst Borinski, and the Southern Civil Rights Litigation records are housed at Tougaloo College (Mississippi). Mary Holmes Junior College (Mississippi) holds the papers of Dora Adams, a grass roots organizer in central Mississippi. The E. D. Nixon Papers are at Alabama State University (Montgomery), and the Aminda and Roy Wilkins Papers are at Rust College.

Many of the 1890 land grant universities and other HBCU institutions document the development of southern agriculture and extension services. Included among the records of Alcorn State University (Mississippi), Fort Valley State University (Georgia), Alabama A&M University (Huntsville), Southern University, Baton Rouge (Louisiana), North Carolina A&T University (Greensboro), Virginia State University, and Tuskegee University are collections that document agriculture programs and the extension services provided by these institutions to small farmers. This is particularly apparent from records during World War
II when farmers were encouraged to grow crops for war supplies. Also, records exist that document black chapters of Future Farmers of America throughout the South. In the archives of Mary Holmes Junior College are transcripts and audiotapes of three hundred interviews conducted by the college with elderly black citizens of West Point, Mississippi, about their lives as farmers and sharecroppers.

Like the two earlier phases of the survey, Phase III is expected to yield equally rich results from the remaining institutions. After reviewing the record descriptions from Phase I, Debra Newman Ham, professor of history at Morgan State University and project consultant, concluded that the collections provide "a unique glimpse into the black social, professional and business communities from the Civil War and Reconstruction period through much of the twentieth century." According to Dr. Ham, the collections also provide important information with regard to the study of history, political science, sociology, literature, fine arts, women's studies and African American history.6

Similarly, James Anderson, professor of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois, believes that contemporary scholars will benefit from the survey because it will not only improve access to the unique information the collections contain but also enhance the scholarly value of these collections. Anderson contends that sources at majority institutions tell more about the interaction of African American culture with the larger community and are, therefore, more conducive to the study of race relations. On the other hand, according to Anderson, "the HBCU sources permit a detailed and intimate study of how African American community developed as a community."7

When completed, CHASP will far outdistance all past efforts in the amount of descriptive information it will make accessible to researchers. These sources are not only critical to the study of the history of education and African Americans but also to an understanding of the larger society. The primary mission of the historically black college and university has always been to educate African Americans. The secondary mission has been to nurture and conserve the distinct character of the African American community. In pursuit of their missions HBCUs have collected a massive and unique body of primary source material. Without a carefully planned, national effort like the Cooperative HBCU Archival Survey Project, these valuable resources would be destined to remain hidden from scholars and society as a whole.

Taronda Spencer is college archivist at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. She served as project archivist for CHASP, 1995–1999. This article is based on a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, 28 August 1999, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Appendix
CHASP Survey Plan

Phase I schools
Allen University, Columbia, SC 1870
Barber–Scotia College, Concord, NC 1867
Benedict College, Columbia, SC 1870
Bennett College, Greensboro, NC 1873
Bowie State University, Bowie, MD 1865
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, Cheyney, PA 1837
Claflin College, Orangeburg, SC 1869
Clinton Junior College, Rock Hill, SC 1894
Coppin State College, Baltimore, MD 1900
Delaware State University, Dover, DE 1891
Denmark Technical College, Denmark, SC 1948
Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, NC 1891
Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC 1867
Hampton University, Hampton, VA 1868
Howard University, Washington, D.C. 1867
Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, NC 1867
Lincoln University, Lincoln University, PA 1854
Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC 1879
Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD 1867
Morris College, Sumter, SC 1908
Saint Augustine’s College, Raleigh, NC 1867
Norfolk State University, Norfolk, VA 1935
North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro, NC 1891
Saint Paul’s College, Lawrenceville, VA 1888
Shaw University, Raleigh, NC 1865
South Carolina State University, Orangeburg, SC 1896
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, MD 1886
1University of the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C. 1974
Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA 1882
Virginia Union University, Richmond, VA 1865
Voorhees College, Denmark, SC 1897
Winston-Salem State University, Winston Salem, NC 1892

1The District of Columbia Teacher’s College, Federal City College, and Washington Technical Institute merged in 1974 to form the University of the District of Columbia.

Phase II schools
Alabama A&M University, Normal, AL 1875
Alabama State University, Montgomery, AL 1874
Albany State University, Albany, GA 1903
Alcorn State University, Lorman, MS 1871
Arkansas Baptist College, Little Rock, AR 1884
Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona Beach, FL 1904
Coahoma Community, Clarksdale, MS 1949
Concordia College, Selma, AL 1922
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Dillard University, New Orleans, LA 1869
Edward Waters College, Jacksonville, FL 1866
Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL 1887
Florida Memorial College, Miami, FL 1879
Fort Valley State University, Fort Valley, GA 1895
Grambling State University, Grambling, LA 1901
Hinds Community College, Utica, MS 1903
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS 1877
Lewis College of Business, Detroit, MI 1928
Mary Holmes College, West Point, MS 1892
Miles College, Birmingham, AL 1905
Mississippi Valley State University, Itta Bena, MS 1950
North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC 1910
Oakwood College, Huntsville, AL 1896
Paine College, Augusta, GA 1882
Rust College, Holly Springs, MS 1866
Savannah State University, Savannah, GA 1890
Selma University, Selma, AL 1878
Southern University and A&M College,
  Baton Rouge, LA 1880
Spelman College, Atlanta, GA 1881
Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, AL 1876
Talladega College, Talladega, AL 1867
Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS 1869
Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL 1881
Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA 1915

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Phase III schools
Bluefield State College, Bluefield, WV 1895
Central State University, Wilberforce, OH 1887
2Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA 1989
Fisk University, Nashville, TN 1866
3Harris–Stowe State College, St. Louis, MO 1954
Huston–Tillotson College, Austin, TX 1875
4Interdenominational Theological Center,
  Atlanta, GA 1958
Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, TX 1912
Kentucky State University, Frankfort, KY 1886
Knoxville College, Knoxville, TN 1875
Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA 1867
Morris Brown College, Atlanta, GA 1881
Lane College, Jackson, TN 1882
Langston University, Langston, OK 1897
LeMoyne–Owen College, Memphis, TN 1862
Lincoln University, Jefferson City, MO 1866
Meharry Medical College, Nashville, TN 1876
Paul Quinn College, Dallas, TX 1872
Philander Smith College, Little Rock, AR 1877
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX 1878
Shorter College, North Little Rock, AK 1886
Southwestern Christian College, Terrell, TX 1949
St. Philip’s College, San Antonio, TX 1898
Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN 1912
Texas College, Tyler, TX 1894
Texas Southern University, Houston, TX 1947
University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff, AK 1873
West Virginia State College, Institute, WV 1891
Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, OH 1856
Wiley College, Marshall, TX 1873

2Atlanta University merged with Clark College in 1989 to form Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia.

3Harris College (1857) and Stowe Teachers College (1890) merged in 1954.

4The Interdenominational Theological Center was formed in 1958 by an amalgamation of the Gammon Theological Seminary, the Morehouse School of Religion, the Phillips School of Theology, Johnson C. Smith School of Religion, and the Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary.