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Introduction

The General Education Board’s (GEB) substantial contributions to African American education in the South are well documented, but how the Board prioritized what types of black educational institutions to fund has received less attention.¹ How did the Board decide between public and private schools, industrial training and academic curricula, common schools and colleges? And how did the Board’s thinking on these issues evolve over time due to changes in personnel and leadership? Furthermore, to what extent did the preferences of white Southerners influence the Board’s decision making in these matters? My research at the Rockefeller Archive Center focused on three institutions that represented the full range of possibilities for black education in the early twentieth century. North Carolina College for Negroes at Durham, which was chartered in 1925 as the region’s first state-sponsored four-year liberal arts college for African Americans, began as the privately funded but denominationally unaffiliated National Religious Training School in 1909. The Mississippi Negro Training School, which did not became part of the Mississippi state system until 1940, began in 1882 as Jackson College, an
institution supported by the American Home Baptist Missionary Society. Virginia State College for Negroes in Petersburg, chartered in 1930, had been part of the public system since its establishment as Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in 1882. In 1902, its name was changed to Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. Each of these institutions received financial support from the GEB at some point in their developing years, though none was ever a favorite institution of the Board. Thus, the correspondence records and reports for these schools in the GEB files reveal more rejections than acceptances of funding proposals. But within these inter-office discussions of why the Board chose not to fund these schools is a treasure trove of information. Because of chronic underfunding, several historically black colleges and universities possess little in the way of archival records concerning their institutional pasts. The state bureaucratic records pertaining to the establishment and maintenance of publicly funded historically black institutions, particularly in Mississippi and Virginia, are also limited. Thus, my research in the GEB records has allowed me to fill in several gaps with regard to the institutional histories of these colleges.

For the purpose of this report, I will focus on one institution, North Carolina College for Negroes at Durham, and its interactions with the GEB between 1909 and 1930. During these years, the Board contributed $50,000 to the institution, which grew from a small religious training school with a handful of students to the South’s first public liberal arts college for African Americans. The correspondence between North Carolina College’s president, James E. Shepard, and the Board’s officials reveal much about the Board’s giving practices. First, by 1915, the Board had constructed a formidable network of influence with regard to the development of black education in the South. Through its officers based in New York, its field agents on the ground in the South, and the State Supervisors for Negro Education that it sponsored, the GEB had a firm grip on the direction black education would take. Accordingly, the institutions supported by the GEB experienced growth, and the Board’s seal of approval had a snowball effect, whereby schools seeking donations modeled themselves after the institutions that had successfully acquired money from the Board. Conversely, the schools that did not resemble the Board’s chosen institutions suffered financially. Second, while the Board made its decisions according to a policy determined by the Board’s staff, the officers also accepted or rejected applications on the basis of personal impressions and character assessments. The case of North Carolina College reveals that the Board’s officers were particularly skeptical of black
autonomy with regard to the management of educational institutions; moreover, the Board considered the extracurricular activities of black educators when making funding decisions.

Finally, the records on North Carolina College demonstrate a theme that has been explored in previous scholarship but bears repeating: northern philanthropic contributions represented both a blessing and a curse for black public education in the South. On one hand, the Board supported public schools for African Americans ahead of many white Southerners. Through its State Supervisors for Negro Education, the Board institutionalized the importance of schools for white and black youth. On the other hand, the Board’s strict adherence to its policy that southern states should assume responsibility for black public education at their own pace resulted in the slow growth of black public schools. Moreover, the Board’s gradual approach also resulted in insufficient funds being made available for black schools from both private and public sources. The effects of this inadequate support are still seen today in the many historically black institutions facing financial crises. Because of the Board’s significant influence over black education in the South, few alternatives to state-controlled and Board-approved schools survived, resulting in a loss of black autonomy over black institutions. This loss of autonomy had particular implications for black higher education—an arena in which African Americans intended to produce the future leaders of the race.

**The General Education Board’s Funding Philosophy Regarding Black Education**

Despite being founded in 1902 with the intention of funding education for African Americans in the southern states, the GEB did not actually make substantial contributions to black institutions until a decade into its existence. Reluctance to provoke opposition from white Southerners who opposed education for African Americans convinced GEB officials to proceed with extreme caution. As Raymond Fosdick explained, “The problem [of aiding black education] was too vast, the complexities too intricate, Southern prejudice too deep rooted.” The Board’s early administrators believed that they should encourage southern states and communities to support education for white and black students with tax dollars. Accordingly, they made the Board’s gifts conditional, meaning that the state, locality, or institution had to raise an equal or greater share of the funds. The Board contributed to black public education in its early years by funding summer teacher training institutes, donating equipment to state-sponsored normal
schools, and improving rural classrooms in many parts of the South. A majority of these projects were limited to the elementary grades, given that southern states had little to no interest in supporting higher education for African Americans for the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Until southern states invited the Board to contribute to additional projects, the Board focused on funding select private educational initiatives for African Americans. The primary beneficiaries of the Board’s largesse prior to 1915 were the Hampton Institute, the Tuskegee Institute, and other industrial schools modeled after these institutions. Long-standing relationships between the Board officers and Hollis Frissell, the principal of Hampton, as well as Booker T. Washington, the principal of Tuskegee, partially explained these institutions’ disproportionate share of GEB funds. But the Board also found that the Hampton-Tuskegee model was more palatable to white Southerners than a curriculum based in academic training. White Southerners believed that industrial training would instill in African Americans their political, economic, and social subordination to whites. The officers of the Board also valued the industrial education model because it was consistent with Progressive standards of education that emphasized “learning through doing” over classical training and rote memorization. Between 1902 and 1914, 80% of the GEB’s appropriations to black education—which represented just 4.4% of its overall appropriations—went to support industrial education. Half of the appropriation for industrial education went to Hampton and Tuskegee; just over one quarter went to Spelman Seminary, which was considered at the time to be an industrial institute and had been a long-term beneficiary of the Rockefeller Family; the remainder went to support a number of small industrial institutes.

As reflected in a self-published report from 1915, the GEB realized the need for public high schools for African Americans in the South. The private industrial schools it sponsored, in many cases, did not offer secondary education. Moreover, in 1914, Booker T. Washington expressed to Wallace Buttrick his concern that the Board was funding white but not black high schools; he thought that southern states would perceive the Board’s inaction as a sign that it did not consider high school education necessary for African Americans. In its 1915 report, the Board emphasized the need for black public high schools to provide students with an incentive to continue their education beyond the elementary grades and to produce high school graduates who could then serve as sorely needed teachers in the elementary schools. The Board praised the
southern states that had set up normal (teacher training) schools for this purpose. The Board also explained its rationale for funding private schools that provided secondary education: Until southern states were ready to support black high schools with tax dollars, the Board would fund alternatives. Hoping that many of these private schools would eventually be absorbed by state systems, the Board emphasized its belief that public schools should be the “main reliance” of black and white youth.  

The GEB’s primary vehicle for encouraging southern states to establish publicly funded education for African Americans was the “State Supervisor of Negro Schools.” In 1910, the Board began subsidizing the salary of its first State Supervisor, Jackson Davis, who worked in the Virginia Department of Education and was thus a formal part of the state system. By 1914, the Board subsidized the salaries of seven State Supervisors of Negro Schools including in North Carolina. These southern white men were charged with organizing summer training institutes for black teachers; improving industrial and domestic training curricula; raising funds for local schools from members of the black and white communities; lobbying state legislatures for greater funds for normal schools; and working to convince white Southerners of the need for public education for African Americans. State Supervisors thus provided an official link between the Board and southern state governments; they also insulated the Board from southern backlash, because the supervisors worked inside southern state governments and thus could gauge opinion and guide policy. Although State Supervisors furthered the cause of black public education in the South, the pace of change remained slow. By 1920, 85% of black children in the South remained in the first four elementary grades. The majority of black public high schools were not established until the late 1910s and 1920s.

Significantly, between 1902 and 1914, the Board appropriated $140,000 to seven private African American colleges in the South, representing 20% of its total appropriations made to black education. Atlanta University, Florida Baptist Academy, Fisk University, Lane College, Livingstone College, Shaw University, and Virginia Union University were the schools that received appropriations. To be sure, these institutions were colleges in name only, as there were few opportunities for students to acquire a sound secondary education prior to entering college. Even as they funded these institutions, the Board’s officers spoke out against what they saw as a proliferation of denominational colleges for African Americans. There were so many colleges, the Board claimed, that there were not enough pupils to learn or teachers to instruct. Moreover,
the majority of institutions offered a classical curriculum, which the Board found to be impractical; the classes were “too abstract, too ambitious, or too learned”\textsuperscript{14} The Board’s approach was to fund the private colleges that it considered to be most worthwhile, thereby effectively encouraging the others to consolidate, convert to high schools, or close. The aforementioned seven institutions were those that the Board found worthy of sustaining. The Board’s strategy proved successful, as the institutions supported by the GEB grew, and those that failed to secure the Board’s seal of approval continued to suffer financially.

At a conference held in 1915 at its New York City headquarters, the Board invited various players in African American education to provide feedback on funding philosophy. The meeting was significant because it represented the first interracial gathering of the GEB. Two African American educational leaders—John Hope, president of Morehouse College, and Robert R. Moton, who would soon become the president of Tuskegee—joined white presidents Hollis B. Frissell of Hampton and Fayette McKenzie of Fisk to discuss the future of black education with the officers of the Board. Assistant Secretary Abraham Flexner emphasized the Board’s view that there were too many black private schools masquerading as colleges. Flexner stated the Board’s philosophy of funding the strongest of these schools and leaving the others to consolidate, convert, or close. He also noted that the classical curriculum was not practical and that he thought it should be abolished in black schools as well as white. Although he agreed that some of the subjects taught at black private schools were impractical, John Hope cautioned the Board that a strictly industrial curriculum was also problematic. R.R. Moton and W.T.B. Williams, a field agent for the Slater Fund, seconded Hope’s concerns. These graduates of the Hampton Institute added that the industrial training offered at some of the GEB’s chosen institutions was outmoded; their alma mater did not produce skilled black laborers but rather undereducated black laborers with no skills. Academic training, they emphasized, was critical to train African Americans to become effective leaders in their own communities. Thus, they thought, industrial training should be supplementary.\textsuperscript{15}

The Board’s policy did not shift significantly after the meeting. It remained an advocate of public high schools for African Americans but vowed to act with caution in this area so as not to draw ire from white Southerners. The Board appropriated $8,000 for summer institutes for black teachers and pledged to fund industrial education equipment for three state-sponsored black normal schools. Moreover, the GEB contributed money to the Slater Fund’s county training
schools project, which promoted secondary education for African Americans in the rural South. (The county training schools centered on industrial education and domestic training, but many of them were later converted to academically oriented public high schools.) As long as the South’s public schools for African Americans were lacking, the Board would continue to fund what it considered to be the best private high schools and colleges, indirectly putting the “superfluous” institutions out of business.\textsuperscript{16}

It was not until 1924 that the Board began to dramatically increase its appropriations for black education and focus on higher education. Theories abound on why the Board increased its donations in the mid-1920s, but the most convincing is that southern states were finally supporting public high schools for African Americans. By 1925, there were 143 black public high schools across the South, as compared to just 21 in 1915. Thus, state spending at the secondary level triggered the GEB to appropriate money for black postsecondary education. The Board believed that funding additional black colleges was the next logical step, since black high schools needed college-trained teachers. Furthermore, in the aftermath of World War I, African Americans increasingly demanded collegiate education as a means to remedy social and economic inequality.\textsuperscript{17} Between 1924 and 1931, the Board appropriated $25 million for African American education, the vast majority of which supported institutions of higher education.\textsuperscript{18}

At the same time, the Board began to respond to criticisms of industrial education. While the critiques offered by Hope, Moton, and Williams at the 1915 conference did not appear to change the Board’s attitude immediately, two factors arising in the mid-1920s convinced the officers that a strictly industrial curriculum was outdated. First, southern states raised the standards for high school teaching certificates to require a college degree, which entailed an academic curriculum.\textsuperscript{19} Second, student rebellions, notably at the Hampton Institute, targeted insufficient academic standards in industrial schools. Students issued complaints that their teachers were unqualified to teach and cared more about “manners and morals” than academic subject matter.\textsuperscript{20} While the Board had not actively discouraged academic instruction in black schools, it had also not advocated it openly for fear of backlash from southern whites. Once the southern states began to support public education and the Hampton-Tuskegee model fell out of favor, the GEB supported academically oriented colleges over industrial institutes.\textsuperscript{21}

**The Case of North Carolina College for Negroes**
It is in this context that the North Carolina College for Negroes sought funding from the General Education Board. Opened in 1909 as the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua, the school was designed to educate black ministers, who were believed to be the future leaders of the race. James E. Shepard, the school’s founder and first president, believed the institution was filling a void in black education and proclaimed that no such school for black ministers existed in the country. Just ten percent of African American ministers were educated, he emphasized, leaving a significant portion illiterate and making the school’s work essential. Moreover, the National Religious Training School’s graduates would become apostles for education in black communities. The school would reach “the masses” through its extension work, which would focus on industrial training. But the primary students would receive a combination of religious, industrial, and literary training.22

Shepard spent many months cobbling together a budget from private philanthropic sources, including the GEB. On the fundraising letters he sent out, Shepard listed the school’s needs: an auditorium, costing $15,000; two dormitories at $20,000 each; a hotel; and, an endowment of $100,000. “The money you invest in this institution WILL SHOW RESULTS AT ONCE, and become a permanent investment,” the letter promised. As proof of the school’s worthiness, Shepard enclosed testimonials from the school’s white supporters, including the Vice President of the United States.23 Shepard had already raised significant funds for the school, demonstrating its appeal among Durham’s black and white populations—a fact that must have impressed the Board’s officers. Brodie Duke, the eldest child of Durham’s tobacco baron, had donated $3,000 in cash for land, an amount that was matched by the white merchants of the city. As a result, Shepard was able to purchase 35 acres for the school.24 By the fall of 1909, he had raised an additional $6,000 for buildings and had received pledges for future donations totaling $11,000. Significantly, members of Durham’s black business elite were among the major donors, including the executives of the black-owned North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company. By June of its first year, the school was incorporated, and in October, construction on the buildings began.25

Significantly, Shepard also had support from white state officials in Raleigh, North Carolina. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, J.Y. Joyner, wrote a letter of recommendation in which he attested to the character of President Shepard.26 Likewise, the
The president of neighboring Trinity College (later, Duke University) spoke of Shepard as “a man of unquestioned integrity of character, excellent mental endowments, and worthy of the confidence and esteem of all good persons.” The mayor of Durham referred to the school’s objectives as “meritorious” and said there was no one better equipped to lead the school than Shepard. The school’s fundraising campaign even reached a national audience, as evidenced by a letter from President Roosevelt, applauding Shepard’s intention to combine industrial, literary, and religious training.

To calm any anxieties among whites that the school would follow a liberal arts curriculum, the National Religious Training School’s Advisory Board made clear that literary courses would be offered but that the focus of the school would be on changing the moral life of each individual, instilling noble traits and teaching each one to become “a useful citizen.” Moreover, the school’s charter indicated that all matters of school policy and the spending of money would be approved by the Advisory Committee.

All things considered, the National Religious Training School should have been a logical beneficiary of the GEB. Its backing from local white industrialists as well as white bureaucrats in the state government fit well with the Board’s philosophy of conditional giving. Moreover, its commitment to industrial education and practical training evoked the Progressive educational tenets valued by the Board’s officers. Nevertheless, the Board rejected Shepard’s initial request, citing the fact that it was “not permitted to make contributions to institutions for the teaching of religion or theology.”

According to a report filed by E.C. Sage, the Board had also concluded that the National Religious Training School was practically indistinguishable from other schools in the area, reflecting the Board’s antipathy for what it saw as an overabundance of private black institutions. With one state-supported agricultural and mechanical college in Greensboro and two private colleges in Raleigh, Sage commented, “It would seem inadvisable to establish another institution in that portion of the state already so well provided.” Despite these criticisms, Sage concluded that “no objection can be raised” where “Southern men of means have invested.” The fact that Shepard had acquired the financial backing of local white industrialists and the support of white men in the state government indicated that the school was on sound footing.

Hoping that he would change their minds, Shepard stayed in touch with the Board’s officers. He wrote every few months, informing them of his school’s progress and asking for further donations. In October of 1910, the school opened its doors as planned. There were five complete buildings on the campus: an assembly hall, two dormitories, a dining hall, and a
residence, which had cost $33,000, indicating that Shepard had been successful in raising money for the plant from other sources. By 1916, Shepard and his Board of Trustees had appealed to the GEB at least three times for contributions to building costs or the school’s endowment. On all occasions, the Board did not “find it practicable” to make a contribution. Several factors explain the lack of interest on the part of the Board, chiefly among them that the Board received far more requests than it could adequately fund. But the Board’s rejections also reflect the fact that it was not yet contributing significantly to African American education in the pre-World War I period. Moreover, the National Religious Training School did not follow the Board’s preferred Hampton-Tuskegee model. The Board’s failure to contribute to Shepard’s school did indicate that the support and interest of white Southerners in a black school was not enough to merit a donation.

Shepard, like other black principals whose institutions were struggling financially, did not give up hope on the GEB. Sometimes he was direct in his correspondence: “I am writing to ask in what way we could qualify so as to come under the notice of your Board for a conditional offer? I would be very glad of this information,” he wrote in a two-line note to Wallace Buttrick. The officers’ typical responses employed vague but definitive phrases: The applications submitted on behalf of the National Religious Training School had been “fully considered,” but the Board did not “find it practicable” to make a contribution. What the officers did not reveal to Shepard was that they had received word that he was a poor financial manager. By the summer of 1913, the school was in significant debt of $25,000, only recently having reduced its debt by $50,000. Booker T. Washington, who had received substantial contributions from the Board for the Tuskegee Institute, alerted the officers that Shepard’s school was approaching insolvency for reasons of poor management. Washington suggested that the school’s property was very valuable, however, and that the Board might wish to purchase the plant for the future education of African Americans.

Intrigued, perhaps in part by Washington’s letter, the GEB solicited the opinion of Thomas Jesse Jones, who was in the process of publishing a study on “Negro Education” for the Phelps-Stokes Fund and the U.S. Bureau of Education. Jones had visited the school in 1914 and 1915, finding that “the present bookkeeping system is unsatisfactory.” He also mentioned that the college and religious training departments had just a handful of students, indicating that the school was mostly a provider of elementary and secondary education. This meant that it was not
functioning as a teacher training institute either. Jones also reported that industrial training, a matter of particular interest to the Board, was given short shrift at Shepard’s school. Repeating an earlier criticism of the school that had been made by the Board, Jones concluded that there was no need for the National Religious Training School to persist as a college, given the number of collegiate institutions for African Americans in the area.  

Perhaps most pressing for the Board was that Shepard’s school had experienced repeated indebtedness, which was not uncommon for an African American school unaffiliated with any denominational or publicly funded entities. The officers were concerned that Shepard’s school did not show signs of what they considered to be proper financial management. The GEB commissioned a second investigation of the school that revealed similar problems. An accountant sent by the Board reported that the school’s financial records prior to May 1916 had been destroyed. The only record available was an informal summary written from Shepard’s personal checkbook receipts and memos. Just a handful of receipts for payments made by students were kept. It appeared as though Shepard had been doing his own bookkeeping, which made sense given that school did not have the wherewithal to hire a business manager, let alone pay its debt. It is unclear whether the GEB considered purchasing the school as Washington had suggested. Regardless of the Board’s concerns, the National Religious Training School was rescued from debt by philanthropist Olivia Slocum Sage with smaller contributions from S.P. Avery and local white citizens of Durham, including the Duke brothers.  

The Board’s correspondence records also reveal that the officers were surprised by the degree to which Shepard had autonomy over the institution. In comparison to the many denominational schools and industrial institutes run by white presidents, Shepard’s school was managed to a significant extent by black men. Shepard served as president and ran the school in close consultation with his brother, Charles, a physician, and friend, W.G. Pearson, a fellow educator and businessman in Durham. Nine out of twenty-five members of the school’s first Board of Advisors were black professionals—school presidents, pastors, physicians, and businessmen. After being rescued from debt in 1916, the school’s Board of Trustees was narrowed to 15 members, of which just two—Shepard and Pearson—were African Americans. Still, Thomas Jesse Jones commented on the presence of black trustees in his report. Subsequent documentation by the Board described Shepard as having “a perfectly free hand” in the management of the school. “While the school has been re-organized with a strong group of
trustees with unusually good local and southern support, it is still very largely a one-man enterprise,” Jackson Davis wrote upon a visit in 1921. He explained that Shepard was president as well as treasurer for all intents and purposes.

While the officers of the Board did not object to black leadership in principle, they found the arrangement at the National Training School to be unusual and therefore suspicious. Moreover, the officers were taken aback by Shepard’s boldness and persistence in pursuing contributions for the school. In 1913, after several of his applications for funding had been turned down, Shepard called on his white supporters to write to the GEB on the National Training School’s behalf. An exasperated Wallace Buttrick wrote back to one supporter, hoping to put an end to the requests: “[This school] has repeatedly applied to this Board for aid and the Board has declined the requests. I do not think that the Board would reverse its action if other requests were to be presented. We are thoroughly informed about the school.”

In 1916, Shepard wrote to the GEB to address what was rumored to be an unsatisfactory report on his school written by Thomas Jesse Jones. Shepard charged that Jones had “ulterior motives” and “in his zeal to kill our school [he] goes farther than he should.” Shepard explained that Jones had asked him to step down as president, claiming that he would never raise enough money to dig the school out from under its debt. When he refused to step aside, Shepard said that Jones vowed to keep his philanthropic friends from contributing a penny to the institution. In essence, Shepard suggested that Jones’ negative report on the school reflected a personal vendetta he held and asked for a fair investigation to be carried out. Shepard refused to stay silent in the face of what he believed to be an unfair investigation of his school. Of course, he was not alone in criticizing Jones’ study. W.E.B. Du Bois had accused Jones of trying to restrict higher education for African Americans and put private black institutions in the hands of white public officials. Upon Jones’ death, historian Carter G. Woodson wrote that he was considered “an evil in the life of the Negro.” Shepard, like many black educators, had enormous pride in the institution he had built from the ground up, and he was not going to let somebody else misrepresent his school.

Issues of misrepresentation arose again when the state of North Carolina accepted the General Education Board’s offer to subsidize a “State Supervisor for Negro Education.” Nathan Carter Newbold, a progressive white Southerner, had worked in the North Carolina State Superintendent’s Office since 1913, financed in part by GEB money. In this capacity he had
managed the Jeanes Teachers Program. But in 1921, the state created a Division of Negro Education and selected Newbold as its first director, placing him in charge of all state projects dedicated to education for African Americans. That same year the National Training School entered into a relationship with the state of North Carolina to provide a two-year training course for teachers beyond the high school level. The school, in exchange, received $1800 annually. As a result, the school was now connected to the state educational system—though not officially a part of it—and as a result, Shepard was expected to make certain decisions in consultation with Newbold.

Shepard and Newbold did not always see eye to eye on the future of black education in the state. While Newbold believed in public education for black Southerners, he also thought there were limits as to what kind of education the state should provide. So when Shepard proposed a collegiate liberal arts curriculum for students at his institution, Newbold balked that such courses were not appropriate for black students, many of whom had not completed high school. Reflecting North Carolina’s needs for black public school teachers, Newbold believed that teacher-training programs should be the focus of state institutions. For Shepard, Newbold’s position as an intermediary between the GEB and the North Carolina state bureaucracy was a blessing and a curse. On one hand, Newbold had the ear of the Board, given their vested interest in his position. If Newbold applied for funds on behalf of the National Training School, he would be heard. On the other hand, any reluctance on the part of Newbold to support Shepard’s institution could doom its future, in terms of both private and public funding.

Fortunately for Shepard, the Board began paying more attention to the National Training School in the early 1920s. It is unclear if Newbold’s new position made Shepard’s school more attractive to the Board or if the Board was simply paying more attention to schools that could produce teachers, given its changing priorities in the postwar era. Regardless, in Newbold’s first year on the job, Jackson Davis conducted a visit of the National Training School on behalf of the GEB. His report reveals a thorough investigation of Shepard and his school dating back to its founding. According to Davis, the National Training School’s campus was “desirable,” with numerous buildings in good condition. The support for the school from local community members, both white and black, impressed the field agent. In 1920, Shepard had raised approximately $15,000, of which at least $1,000 came from African Americans. Davis did have concerns about the institution’s curriculum, however, in addition to his qualms with Shepard’s
management style. Davis found the academic classes to be “pretentious” and of the “old line classical type.” Nevertheless, the vast majority of the school’s students were in the secondary school program, he reported, with a handful taking college-level and theological classes. After Davis had completed his visit, Shepard wrote to the GEB asking for a donation. But the Board had decided that funding Shepard’s institution would be taking too great a risk. As Jackson Davis explained, “The school has no organization or denomination to back of it and it is entirely dependent upon its appeal to the public for support.” With no third-party organization through which the Board could channel its funds, Shepard’s request was yet again rejected. An internal GEB memo indicates that the Board did not find “any prospect…of cooperation with prominent agencies which could justify our Board in cooperating.”

The state’s acquisition of the National Training School in early 1923 changed its financial fate. In search of an additional institution to produce African American teachers, the North Carolina General Assembly purchased Shepard’s school, making it the fourth normal in the state system. Shepard remained president of the newly renamed Durham State Normal School, but now that it was a formal part of the public system, N.C. Newbold held greater sway. Accordingly, the GEB revisited the matter of making a contribution and sent Jackson Davis for another investigation in 1924. Of particular concern to Davis was the school’s ability to train teachers. He found 17 students in the state-sponsored normal department, a two-year program for students beyond high school, but there was no practice school established for these teachers in training. Moreover, the school needed tables and books for its library; equipment for science classes; materials for sewing and cooking; and plumbing repairs, all of which Davis estimated would cost approximately $5,000. The GEB had already contributed a total of $125,000 to equip North Carolina’s other three normal schools at Winston-Salem, Elizabeth City, and Fayetteville. Thus, Newbold asked the GEB to contribute between $10,000 and $15,000 to the new Normal at Durham—a much smaller amount than had been given to the others. One month later, the GEB made its first appropriation to Shepard’s school: $5,000 for the purchase of equipment. Reflecting the new relationship between Shepard’s institution and the state, the Board directed this money to the Superintendent’s Office at the State Board of Education.

In the meantime, state officials led by Newbold had been trying to promote one of North Carolina’s black normal schools to a four-year college that could provide sufficient training for high school teachers. Standards for teachers were changing across the South to require a four-
year college degree for teaching high school. Accordingly, North Carolina required an institution that could produce sufficiently qualified teachers. With the assistance of the GEB’s Frank Bachman, Newbold prepared two pieces of companion legislation for the General Assembly’s consideration to elevate the normals at Winston-Salem and Durham to four-year teachers’ colleges. In February 1925, the legislature passed both bills, creating a college at Winston-Salem for the purpose of training elementary school teachers and a college at Durham for the purpose of training high school teachers. Although he was pleased with the outcome, Newbold objected to the way in which the bills became law. Apparently, Shepard had hired a lawyer to submit his own piece of legislation, elevating his school to a four-year college for training high school teachers but also a liberal arts college. When the bill passed, Shepard’s institution became the first four-year liberal arts college for African Americans in the South. “This [bill] went thro the General Assembly partly by default and partly because of good scheming,” Newbold complained to Bachman. “So now we have two colleges,” he continued, adding, “The one at Durham, however, is more or less of a misfit.” Demonstrating the influence that the GEB had in matters of public education, Newbold asked for Bachman’s assistance in crafting a course of study for the new colleges. He provided further evidence that he was displeased with the way that things had gone down in the General Assembly by remarking, “There are many details about the situation on which I shall be glad to talk with you personally. I might want to say some things which should not be committed to type.”

Shepard had no intention of relying on Newbold to secure his school’s place in the state system as a four-year liberal arts college. But he certainly won no accolades by proceeding in the way he did before the legislature. A few months later when it came time to choose the president of the newly chartered North Carolina College for Negroes at Durham, Shepard faced an uphill climb. The institution’s new Board of Trustees, appointed by the Governor and the State Superintendent, met to consider the logical choice. According to Newbold, the trustees appointed a committee to investigate Shepard’s activities outside of the college, for some of the Board members suspected that they might be interfering with his ability to manage the institution. The committee subsequently invited Newbold to join them to discuss Shepard’s involvement in the Masonic fraternity. The committee members objected to the fact that Shepard’s job as college president was full-time, thus he should not have taken on additional work—in this case the position of Grand Master of the lodge for which he was paid a salary of
several thousand dollars. Concluding that the shaky financial situation at the college was at least partially the result of Shepard’s overcommitment, the committee informed the full Board of Trustees that Shepard would have to give up his position as Grand Master if he desired to remain president of the college.\textsuperscript{57}

After communicating his reservations about Shepard to the officers of the GEB, Newbold informed them that the Board of Trustees had decided to retain Shepard as president so long as he “give up the things which he has been doing heretofore outside the educational field.” Newbold then proposed a new funding scheme for the college and solicited the Board’s support.\textsuperscript{58} Durham’s J.B. Duke had pledged $50,000 to North Carolina College for Negroes, provided that the GEB match his donation.\textsuperscript{59} Evidently, Newbold had resolved to be an advocate for the school, despite his problems with its leader. But the officers of the Board had not forgotten Newbold’s criticisms of Shepard. An internal memo indicated, “There is a widespread feeling among those most interested in North Carolina Negro education that Mr. Shepard is not altogether reliable, or the man who can really make this a genuine state college for Negroes.”\textsuperscript{60}

By 1926, the North Carolina College for Negroes sorely needed funds—at least $200,000—to erect a classroom building and a dormitory to accommodate additional students. The state legislature met on a biennial schedule, meaning it would not gather again until January of 1927. Moreover, the state had provided an annual appropriation of just $30,000 for North Carolina College.\textsuperscript{61} Shepard, his Board of Trustees, and state officials such as Newbold and Superintendent Allen, thus called upon private sources to keep the institution afloat. With Duke’s $50,000 and an additional $5,000 from the state, Shepard was able to add a temporary classroom building and purchase some 15 additional acres of land. But the GEB declined to offer a matching grant, suggesting that the state institution should look to the state of North Carolina for support.\textsuperscript{62} R.L. Flowers, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for North Carolina College heeded the GEB’s advice and asked for a contribution of $100,000 provided that he could secure $200,000 from the state of North Carolina. Flowers indicated that he had the support of the state’s governor, who was willing to press the legislature for funds if there were also outside funds available.\textsuperscript{63} North Carolina College’s dual dependence on public and private funds trapped it in a vicious cycle. The GEB’s conditional funding philosophy meant that it was unwilling to make additional contributions to the school unless it was supplementing a substantial
appropriation on the part of the state. Meanwhile, the state was unlikely to budge without the promise of a private donation.

Over the next year, Shepard eagerly awaited positive news from either party. With Flowers, he lobbied the state legislature and tried to convince lawmakers that if they authorized an appropriation for the college, the philanthropists would follow suit. In early 1927, the legislature moved. It authorized a $200,000 appropriation, under the assumption that the GEB would grant $100,000. Shepard pleaded with the GEB, asking them to contribute the remainder of the money. “This leaves us all at sea,” he wrote, indicating that he was fully dependent upon action from the Board. But Shepard was unaware that the officers of the GEB had additional reservations about contributing to his school, and the appropriation of public funds was not likely to change their mind. While N.C. Newbold had initially advocated for North Carolina College in this fundraising campaign, he withdrew his support for the appropriation when he discovered that Shepard had not resigned his post as Grand Master of the Masons. Newbold also told Jackson Davis of the GEB that there was growing resentment among black North Carolinians to Shepard’s leadership.

Despite Flowers’ statements to the contrary—indicating that Shepard was a good leader and had the support of his fellow African Americans—the Board took no action on the application. North Carolina’s Governor and State Superintendent grew frustrated with the GEB, feeling that they had been misled into thinking the philanthropists would match the state’s contribution. Soon letters poured into the GEB’s New York office, testifying to Shepard’s good character and the worthiness of the school. But these statements of support did not sway the Board. In June 1928, a year and a half after the legislature had offered its conditional contribution, the GEB rejected the application of North Carolina College. In a panic, the college’s Board of Trustees drafted a form letter to send to various philanthropic sources, whomever might help them to raise the remaining $100,000 necessary to secure the state’s pledge of $200,000. After raising the first $50,000 rather quickly from Durham citizens, the trustees forwarded their letter to the GEB, hoping that the officers might be inclined to grant a reduced amount.

The Board’s rejection had frustrated not only the advocates of Shepard’s institution but also a philanthropist who had close ties to the GEB. James Dillard, an agent for the Slater Fund, wrote to Frank Bachman, stating, “We all know, to speak out plainly, that Mr. Newbold’s
opposition to the president of the institution was the real cause for turning down one of the most encouraging and notable propositions ever put before the General Education Board in the cause of Negro education.” For Dillard, it was foolish for the Board should turn down the opportunity to assist the only southern state government that had offered to make a donation to a “regular college for Negroes” with an endorsement from the governor. Moreover, Dillard added that the conditions for which Newbold opposed Shepard no longer existed, as Shepard had stepped down from his position in the Masons.70

Newbold, realizing that he was responsible for embarrassing his bosses—the Superintendent of Public Education and the Governor of North Carolina—tried to clear things up with the GEB: “I have tried to make it clear at all times in the past that I have been in favor of this appropriation,” Newbold insisted. Referring to his opposition to Shepard’s Masonic leadership, Newbold clarified, “The conditions of which I complained in the [previous] letter do not now exist.”71 This declaration, however, was not enough to convince the officers of the GEB that Newbold had changed his mind. A letter from Bachman to James Dillard indicated that he was still under the impression that “relations between the two men [Shepard and Newbold] were by no means satisfactory.”72 Likewise, Jackson Davis told his fellow Board members that opposition to Shepard remained. Davis called the situation “perplexing,” noting that on one hand, state officials and influential white Durhamites supported a liberal arts college for African Americans. On the other hand, he continued, there was “quite a division of opinion” toward Shepard. Davis emphasized that Newbold had taken back his criticism of the president, but this reassurance was not enough for other members of the Board who concluded that the matter should be “thoroughly looked into from all angles.”73

Without the assistance of the GEB, North Carolina College for Negroes had nearly completed its building campaign by the spring of 1929. In its biennial meeting, the state legislature agreed to appropriate a total of $245,000 unconditionally, which was added to the $50,000 raised from Durham citizens. The total of $295,000 would be used to build an administration building, a dormitory for female students, and a dining room. Although the state had increased its contribution, the total amount raised was insufficient to equip the buildings. On a whim, Shepard wrote to the GEB to see if the officers would be willing to contribute funds to equip the administration building and dining hall.74 Much to his surprise, the GEB responded within two months and agreed to grant $45,000 for this purpose.75 It is not entirely clear why the
GEB responded favorably this time, when it had rejected the college’s application just one year prior. Perhaps the Board felt as though the situation between Shepard and Newbold had been resolved. Or, perhaps the state’s increased appropriation changed the minds of the officers. Regardless, the building campaign had been largely completed by the autumn of 1930. After visiting the campus of North Carolina College for Negroes, Jackson Davis reported back to the GEB that the funds “have been wisely and faithfully expended.”

Conclusion

Few generalizations can be drawn from a single story, but the case of North Carolina College for Negroes both confirms what previous scholars have suggested and offers new lines of inquiry into the relationship between philanthropy and black higher education. The records of the GEB provided a detailed account of Shepard’s quest to acquire public and private funds for his institution. While this report covers the years 1909 to 1930, the GEB records on this school go far beyond this time period and offer far more than could be included here. Thus, for scholars researching historically black colleges and universities, the Rockefeller Archive Center is a logical place to start, particularly for institutions with few archival resources. Moreover, the correspondence records between Shepard, North Carolina state officials, and the GEB officers demonstrate the sheer financial need of educational institutions for African Americans during this period. Despite repeated rejections from the Board, Shepard and his trustees kept submitting applications, hoping that one or two would succeed. Also apparent is the interconnectedness between public and private sources of funding for education at this time. Particularly with the establishment of State Supervisors of Negro Education—like N.C. Newbold—northern philanthropists had an ear to the ground regarding public education in the South. State agents like Newbold could be important advocates for black schools, but they could also succeed in effectively blacklisting a school from receiving GEB funding. The philanthropists thoroughly investigated African American educators and their schools and considered factors such as one’s personal character and extracurricular activities as relevant in their decisionmaking. Shepard’s initial refusal to adjust his involvements outside of the college and his unwillingness to channel all requests through white state officials earned him a reputation among the Board’s officers.
Ultimately, the GEB’s contributions to North Carolina College for Negroes represented both a blessing and a curse for the institution. The Board’s two contributions totaling $50,000 during this period were hardly insignificant, but they must be weighed against the numerous and frequent contributions from local people in Durham, both black and white, that kept the school afloat in its early years. Moreover, the Board’s contributions were aimed at securing a place for Shepard’s school in the state system. Becoming the first state-sponsored four-year liberal arts college for African Americans in the South was quite an accomplishment, but becoming part of the public system also placed Shepard under the supervision of white state bureaucrats, who did not necessarily value African American higher education. To stand on firmer financial ground, Shepard paid the high price of black autonomy.

Notes

2 A select group of institutions for African American education received a disproportionate share of GEB funds, among them: Fisk University, Atlanta University, Tuskegee Institute, and Spelman College. For a breakdown of the institutions that received funding from the GEB, see Raymond B. Fosdick, Adventure in Giving: The Story of the General Education Board, a Foundation Established by John D. Rockefeller (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).
3 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, p. 81.
5 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, pp. 84-85. The Board contributed to private industrial schools that followed the Hampton-Tuskegee model, such as the Americus Institute in Georgia, the Snow Hill School in Alabama, and the Penn School on St. Helena Island in South Carolina.
6 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, pp. 86-87.
8 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, pp. 99-100.
11 Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, p. 9.
12 Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, p. 100.
13 Ibid., pp. 191-193, 203-209.
14 Ibid., pp. 101-102; Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, pp. 86-94.
15 Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, pp. 9, 93-94; Fosdick, Adventure in Giving, pp. 101-107.
16 Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, pp. 95-97, 99-100. James Anderson suggested that the Board began to increase its appropriations for black education after World War I in response to the upheaval that had occurred during the Red Summer of 1919. Anderson theorizes that the Board thought that the “right kind of
education” would act as an antidote to the militant influences of the New Negro movement. See The Education of Blacks in the South, pp. 261-263.

18 Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, p. 95. In fiscal year 1927-1928, for example, the GEB appropriated $3,244,000 to African American colleges and schools. Specific appropriations included in this total were: $332,000 in aid to state agricultural and normal schools; $100,000 to Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Mississippi; $100,000 to Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College in Texas; $132,000 to Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute; $30,000 to Morehouse College in Georgia; $135,000 to Spelman College in Georgia; $30,000 to Talladega College in Alabama; and, $30,000 to Wiley College in Texas. The GEB also pledged the following toward black college endowments: $300,000 to Morehouse College; $1,500,000 to Spelman College; $500,000 to Talladega College; 50,000 to Virginia Union University; and, 300,000 to Wiley College. The General Education Board, Annual Report of the General Education Board, 1927-1928 (New York: The General Education Board, 1929).

19 James Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, p. 273

20 Ibid.

21 Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donations, p. 95.

22 “An Appeal to the Public,” by the Advisory Committee of the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race, 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, General Education Board Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York; hereafter, GEB Archives. Interview notes from E.C. Sage re: the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua, 22 September 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

23 Shepard to Wallace Buttrick, 23 January 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

24 A report from E.C. Sage in 1910 indicates that the Merchant Association of Durham (white) gave 25 acres of land to Shepard’s school, which was worth approximately $4500. The Duke family gave $3000 toward the cost of this land. See, E.C. Sage, Report on the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua, 26 January 1910, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

25 Interview notes from E.C. Sage of the GEB re: the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua, 22 September 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

26 J.Y. Joyner, “To whom it may concern,” 27 September 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

27 Letter of recommendation from John C. Kilgo, 29 July 1908, in Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

28 Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Shepard, 18 December 1908, in Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

29 “An Appeal to the Public,” by the Advisory Committee of the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race, 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

30 Wallace Buttrick to Mr. J.V. Loveless of Chicago re: the National Religious Training School, 14 December 1909, in Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.


32 Ibid.

33 Wallace Buttrick to James Shepard, 28 October 1911, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

34 James Shepard to Wallace Buttrick, 14 March 1912, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

35 Letter of recommendation from J.S. Carr, 31 July 1913, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

36 Booker T. Washington to Wallace Buttrick, 17 November 1914, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

E.C. Sage to Dr. Charles W. Eliot, 7 December 1916, in Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Report of Jackson Davis on the National Training School at Durham, 9 July 1921, visited 6 July 1921 with Mr. N.C. Newbold, Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

“An Appeal to the Public,” by the Advisory Committee of the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race, 1909, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives. In the fall of 1911, the National Religious Training School had a Board of Trustees with four members, three of whom were black: James B. Dudley, the president of the Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, served as Chairman, and John Merrick and A.M. Moore of the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company served as Vice President and Secretary, respectively. Letter from Shepard to Wallace Buttrick of the GEB, 16 September 1911, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.


Wallace Buttrick to William Y. Chapman, 9 July 1913, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Shepard to E.C. Sage, 23 October 1916, Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Anderson and Moss, *Dangerous Donations*, p. 204.


Report of Jackson Davis on the National Training School at Durham, 9 July 1921, visited 6 July 1921 with Mr. N.C. Newbold, Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

E.C. Sage, Memo on the National Training School, 12 May 1922, Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Report by Jackson Davis of State Normal School in Durham, 16 January 1924 in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Ibid.

N.C. Newbold to Jackson Davis, 7 February 1924, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

W.W. Brierley to Supt. A.T. Allen, 3 March 1924, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

By 1925, North Carolina required a degree from a four-year “standard A Grade college in academic or scientific courses, embracing 120 semester hours” for a high school teacher’s certificate. James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, p. 273.

N.C. Newbold to Frank P. Bachman, GEB, 11 March 1925, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Ibid.

Charter of North Carolina College for Negroes, ratified on 20 February 1925 in Folder 1030, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives; Statement by N.C. Newbold, June 1925, Folder S, Box 9, Correspondence of the Director of the Director of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina; hereafter, NCSDAH.

Statement by N.C. Newbold, June 1925, Folder S, Box 9, Correspondence of the Director of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, NCSDAH.

N.C. Newbold to Frank P. Bachman, GEB, 5 June 1925, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

N.C. Newbold to Frank P. Bachman, 6 July 1925, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

F.P. Bachman for the GEB, Memo on the Durham (North Carolina) State College for Negroes, 10 July 1925, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

J.B. Mason of The Citizens National Bank in Durham to E.C. Sage, 26 October 1925, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives; Report of the GEB on the North Carolina College for Negroes, 1926, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.

Report of the GEB on the North Carolina College for Negroes, 1926, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series
1.1, GEB Archives.  
63. R.L. Flowers to Dr. Wickliffe Rose, 16 December 1926, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
64. Shepard to Bachman, 11 April 1927, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
65. Jackson Davis, Memorandum on North Carolina College for Negroes-Durham, Governor's Office, Raleigh, 19 May 1927, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
66. A.T. Allen to Frank P. Bachman, 4 October 1927, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
67. J Stanley Durkee to Dr. Wyckliffe Rose [sic], 21 November 1927, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives; C.C. Spaulding to Wyckliffe Ross [sic], 30 December 1927, in Folder 1031, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
68. W.W. Brierley to Mr. Flowers, 4 June 1928, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
69. A.T. Allen to Frank P. Bachman, 11 July 1928, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
70. Dillard to Bachman, 18 October 1928, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
71. Letter from N.C. Newbold to Frank P. Bachman, 23 July 1928, Box 9, Correspondence of the Director of the Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, NCSDAH.  
72. Bachman to Dillard, 20 October 1928, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
73. Jackson Davis to Trevor Arnett, 16 November 1928, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives; Trevor Arnett to Jackson Davis, 12 November 1928, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
74. Shepard to Jackson Davis, 18 April 1929, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
75. W.W. Brierley to Supt. A.T. Allen, 3 June 1929, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.  
76. Jackson Davis to W.W. Brierley, 1 October 1930, in Folder 1032, Box 114, Series 1.1, GEB Archives.