



January 8, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

As former living presidents of Bennett College*, **We stand with Bennett.** We write to each of you with the urgent request that you join us. **We stand with Bennett College** because this historically Black college for women, only one of two in the United States, desperately needs our financial help if she is to survive and carry on her critical mission of educating women who not only understand the world, but carry out their responsibility to help change the world. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges has placed Bennett College on probation for fiscal instability. The College must raise \$5M by February 1, 2019, or she will lose her accreditation.

At first thought, this may seem an overwhelming amount of money to raise in such a short time, but it can be quite enough time, and we can raise that amount of money—and more— if enough of us will be persuaded of the urgency to act. Indeed, we can and we must provide the lifeline that will save what Dr. David Dallas Jones, Bennett College’s first president, referred to as “this small but important college.”

In this season of reflections on the past year and resolutions for the new one that is just now upon us, our thoughts —indeed, our hearts—have been fixed on the College’s current students, whose winter vacations must surely have been spent in deep anxiety over their academic futures. This has doubled our resolve first to make our own contributions, and, secondly to make the argument that we hope will convince you to give as well.

We stand with Bennett because we know the College is worthy of support. One of the ironies of our time is that as a nation we continue to spend more money on prisons than on education. The message that all in the College’s community must embrace is that Bennett’s current predicament —rooted as it is in finances only— is not unique to Bennett and does not take anything away from the quality, indeed, the worthiness, of its curriculum.

We stand with Bennett because it is one of only two four-year colleges in our nation that was created specifically to educate the daughters of former enslaved people and therefore captures the lessons learned from that experience in its educational traditions. How fortunate for us that its early leaders actively encouraged the students to bring their lived experiences to bear on the study of the College’s Liberal Arts Curriculum. At Bennett, recognizing and acting to rectify injustice wherever it is encountered is an accepted part of student life and leadership responsibility. From picketing the Carolina Theatre in protest of the negative images of African Americans in “Gone with the Wind” in 1939, to planning and participating in the Sit-Ins at Woolworth’s Lunch Counter and Operation Door Knock, the largest citywide voter registration drive in the history of the city of Greensboro in 1960, to meeting the College’s requirement for Community Service hours, Bennett’s students carry out the College’s philosophy that a useful education is one that not only





prepares the student to live a fuller life, but calls her to use that education in the service of others. “Bennett Belles are Voting Bells” is the rallying call to civic duty.

We stand with Bennett College because we do not believe that our society has outgrown the need for the contributions that the College and its graduates are prepared to make. In this matter, we are guided by the wisdom of Dr. Willa B. Player, the College’s tenth and first woman president, one of whose many examples of courage was to invite Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak in the College’s chapel when he came to Greensboro in 1958 to find that not one of the city’s other colleges or public venues (all of whose leaders were men) would allow him a podium. On the importance of Bennett, and other historically Black colleges and universities, she once said, “The campus of the Negro college may yet be the crucial testing laboratory for democracy and Christianity.”

We stand with Bennett because we believe in our hearts that it is the right thing to do. She is worthy to be saved. We hope you will stand with us. Attached you will find the Case for Support that details the purpose for our appeal.

Contributions can be made at:

<http://www.bennett.edu/standwithbennett/>

Text the word Belles to 444999

Send a check to: Bennett College
Office of the President
900 E. Washington Street
Greensboro, NC 27401

With grateful hearts for any contribution you will make to Bennett,

Gloria Randle Scott

Gloria Randle Scott 1987 – 2001

Johannetta Betsch Cole

Johannetta Betsch Cole 2002 - 2007

Julianne Malveaux

Julianne Malveaux 2007 – 2012

Esther M.A. Terry

Esther M.A. Terry 2012 – 2013

**We did not ask President Fuse-Hall (2013 – 2016) to sign this letter because she is currently on the staff of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.*

