

Bishop College may find new life

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DALLAS (ABP)—Georgetown College President [Bill Crouch](#) has announced plans to revive the spirit of [Bishop College](#), a historically black school that closed in Dallas in 1988.

Crouch's plans, centered in the proposed Bishop Center for African-American Ministry, aim to re-establish the once-thriving Bishop community while at the same time to diversify the predominantly white Georgetown, Ky., school. Both schools have a Baptist heritage.

Crouch made contact with Bishop College alumni with the help of [Joel Gregory](#), a former Southern Baptist pastor and teacher at Georgetown College, who has become a popular preacher in African-American churches and conferences. Gregory, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, now teaches at Baylor University's [Truett Theological Seminary](#).

Roughly 200 Bishop alumni and supporters met with Crouch Nov. 2 at Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas to discuss the proposal and form a committee to raise funds for the \$50 million vision.

Founded in 1881 in Marshall, Bishop College moved to Dallas in 1961. It

was a nonsectarian liberal arts school that emphasized Baptist theology and religion.

Bishop frequently hosted notable speakers such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Jesse Jackson. By the mid-'70s, it had more than 100 faculty and nearly 1,300 students.

Unfortunately for Bishop students, a financial scandal and a scuffle with the American Association of University Professors resulted in the school losing its accreditation and eventually filing Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

[Paul Quinn College](#), an African Methodist Episcopal school, now occupies the Dallas campus.

But Crouch wants to see Bishop have a physical presence again, this time in Kentucky. His reasons, he said, are both personal and professional.

“I can no longer raise my head high in pride at an institution that is focused on educating only one race,” he said. “I can no longer be a part of an educational enterprise that’s not multicultural. Because that’s the world we live in. And I’m trying to balance this educational philosophy. How can a person be truly educated if they live on a college campus for four years and their roommate is just like them?”

The vision will take careful planning and support—not to mention faith—from both Georgetown and Bishop constituencies, supporters acknowledge. Some reports list 2008 as a target year to break ground on the memorial building, called the Bishop College Center for Academics, but no specific timeline has yet emerged for the building or the scholarship program.

Georgetown College, founded in 1829 by the Kentucky Baptist Convention, has roughly 1,400 students and offers 39 majors. Officials at Georgetown have no plan to alter its curriculum; the school is in the process of gaining

Phi Beta Kappa recognition. School representatives did not return phone calls regarding the current number of African-American faculty members, although Crouch said he plans to increase the number of minority staff.

In the meantime, Crouch has signed a contract to stay at Georgetown for the next 10 years. He and his committee plan to begin a national search for and recruitment of the brightest African-American students in the nation, and they will contact the top 100 companies in the Fortune 500 list to ask for financial partnerships for the endeavor.

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