



BlackEconomics.org®

# Black Churches and College Scholarships

A Report Brief

October 1, 2013

©BlackEconomics.org

P.O. Box 75592  
Seattle, WA 98175

[www.BlackEconomics.org](http://www.BlackEconomics.org)  
[BlackEconomics@BlackEconomics.org](mailto:BlackEconomics@BlackEconomics.org)  
+1.808.232.7363

## Black Churches and College Scholarships

Ask young and old Black Americans about the importance of education, and most will state that education can be a fruitful avenue to an improved quality of life.

Those same Black Americans will tell you that, second to the family, the Black Church is the most important Black American institution.

It is well known that certain Black churches provide direct financial support to certain colleges and universities; i.e., to compensate administrators, faculty, and staff and to acquire new, or maintain existing, structures and equipment.

However, what is much less clear is the answer to the question, “What role are Black American Churches playing in fostering the acquisition of higher education through scholarships?”

We asked that question at BlackEconomics.org, and posed the same question to the top eight Black Christian Church denominations by population size. On a combined basis, these eight denominations reported membership exceeding 24 million of Black America’s 42 million population in 2010.

Here’s what the four reporting denominations told us:

- The central authority of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) church extended over 1,900 scholarships in 2012. Local churches extended approximately 1,300 scholarships. The AMEZ Church has about 1,500 churches and 1.4 million members.
- The central authority of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) issued about 50 scholarships in 2012. The church’s auxiliaries and local churches extended an untold number of scholarships. COGIC has 12,000 churches and 5.5 million members.
- The 3,000 churches in the National Baptist Convention USA (NBC USA) extended about 800 scholarships in 2012. NBC USA has 5.0 million members.
- About 80 percent (3,200) of the 4,000 churches in the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) issued scholarships in 2012. The PNBC has 2.5 million members.

If we exclude COGIC, which had no count of the scholarships issued by auxiliaries and local churches, we surmise that the remaining three denominations averaged just under one (0.8) scholarship per church. The AMEZ Church appears to be the leader; averaging about 2.1 scholarships per church.

What we were unable to glean from our correspondence with these denomination in a precise fashion was the average dollar size of the scholarships that were given.

The remaining four denominations that were included in the inquiry did not report on their scholarship operations: The African Methodist Episcopal Church (2.5 million members); Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1.2 million members); National Baptist Convention of

America (3.5 million members); and the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America (2.5 million members).

How do the foregoing results compare with White denominations? It is difficult to say.

We inquired at the Southern Baptist Convention (over 46,000 churches and nearly 16.0 million members). They had no record of scholarships issued by local churches, but various state conventions' headquarters reported issuing scholarship. For example:

- The Georgia Convention reported administering \$450,000 in college scholarship funds in 2012. The convention has 3,300 churches and 1.4 million members.
- The North Carolina Convention reported issuing 594 scholarships last year. The convention has 4,200 churches and 1.2 million members.
- The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention reported that about 25 scholarships were issued in 2012. The convention has about 2,200 churches and 1.1 million members.

Each of these state conventions indicated that they had no count of the number of scholarships that were issued by their autonomous local churches.

The United Methodist Church, with nearly 8.0 million members, also had no record of scholarships offered at the local level. However, the national headquarters reported managing over 50 scholarship programs, which issued over 2,000 scholarships during 2012. In addition, the church has a low-interest educational loan program, which issues over 500 new loans each year to college enrollees.

Clearly, without a count of scholarships issued by local churches within the White denominations, it is difficult to compare Black and White churches on their giving of college scholarships.

An important point to remember is that, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, just over 3.0 million Black students were enrolled in colleges and universities during 2010 (12.7 million Whites were enrolled). What we continue to hear is that many Black students are denied an opportunity to go to college because they lack the funds. Therefore, the more scholarships that Black churches extend, the more Black students will be able to enroll in, and complete, college.

Probably the most striking insight gained from this brief analysis is that, given the importance of Black American Churches giving of college scholarships, it seems that the various denominations would have better statistics on the number and size of the scholarships that are given to college students. Better statistics would facilitate efforts to manage and expand college scholarship giving by the churches.

In addition, despite the competition for membership that must exist between these denominations, it seems a "no brainer" that they could and should coordinate their efforts to increase the number and size of college scholarships that are given each year.