**Payne Theological Seminary**

**Project’s name and key objectives:**

*The Payne Debt Triangle: Viable Alternatives for Institutional Sustainability*is a three-year research initiative addressing the critical question:

How can we sustain our future growth, which is heavily tuition driven, while ensuring that student educational indebtedness is not the driving force of our institutional growth and development?

Payne has a sense of urgency about student indebtedness because currently 60 percent of our institutional revenue is being generated from tuition and fees, and it is projected to be 66 percent in 2017. Payne will identify viable alternatives for institutional sustainability ensuring that student indebtedness is not at the forefront of our model. Our research methodology includes exploration of two areas: (1) AME Church Support and (2) Financial Aid Infrastructure.

Payne’s goal is to help seminary students effectively manage and decrease theological education debt. Payne will conduct institutional and field research identifying alternative tuition financing options, including denominational support, and assess Payne’s current financial-aid student support infrastructure.

**The most significant activities of your project to date:**

* Payne has recruited for a project evaluator and research assistant;
* Payne is developing a comprehensive evaluation methodology;
* Payne has refined research methodology and started the information-gathering process;
* Payne has shared the announcement of the award with the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff in order to engage the total community as we move forward; and
* Members of the administration shared the announcement at the monthly meeting with the Student Government Association (SGA) and look forward to the cooperation of the SGA as a vehicle of communication with the student body.

**Two or three of the most important resources you have discovered or produced:**

* The African Methodist Episcopal Church Commission on Higher Education is conducting an evaluative process of AME schools, which will provide critical information to inform Payne’s information-gathering process on AME student indebtedness.
* The African Methodist Episcopal Church Bishops Council’s most recent appointment of Bishop Jeffery Leath as Acting President will provide Payne much-needed access and advocacy as the AME Church addresses student indebtedness. Bishop Leath is a member of the Payne Board of Trustees.

**Contact information for the project director:**

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