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The Road to Howard

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The Road to Howard

Before coming to Howard, Dr. Cheek served for six years as president of Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C. He took over the job at Shaw in 1963 at a time when that school was on the verge of bankruptcy. Enrollment was down, financial support was meager and educational standards were so low as to jeopardize accreditation. Shaw faced a \$280,000 debt, including its food bill. Dr. Cheek appealed directly to community and business leaders and in six months was able to raise \$325,000.

Total expenditures of Shaw in 1962-1963 amounted to \$705,133, compared with a budgeted total of \$5,931,236 in 1969.

Shaw completed more than \$4,000,000 in capital construction and development projects from 1964 to 1969. Its total assets increased from \$2,685,000 in 1963 to \$9,712,740 in 1969.

During the six years under Dr. Cheek, new construction at the university included an administration building, faculty apartments, a women's residence hall, a student union, a library-learning resources center, and other improvements.

Enrollment in 1969 reached 1,078 students from 20 states and four foreign countries, compared to 598 in 1963.

Dr. Cheek's administration at Shaw has been highlighted by a "Renaissance Program" which had as its major goals redevelopment of the physical plant, complete reorganization of the institution's internal organization and the development of a new curriculum for an educational program based on the concept of "meeting students where they are, but graduating them only after they have developed to where they ought to be" as graduates.

Born in Roanoke Rapids, N.C., Dr. Cheek received his elementary and secondary education in Greensboro, N.C. He graduated from Shaw University in 1955; received the Bachelor of Divinity degree at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in 1958, and the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Drew University in 1962. Prior to becoming president of Shaw University, Dr. Cheek taught at Virginia Union University, Upsala College, Union Junior College, and Drew Theological School.

A New Era

On assuming the position at Howard, Dr. Cheek stated:

"On the 102nd year of its existence, Howard University is confronted with the imperatives of a new era. What we begin and do this year will be done not only on behalf of this generation, but also on behalf of those generations yet unborn.

"Our work in this university this year and in the years to come will be devoted to national problems in an effort to provide national leadership for both our people and our country.

"We shall seek and find creative and imaginative ways to bring solutions to the problems of the cities, the problems of human relations, the problems of educational disadvantages, the problems of economic insufficiency, the problems of inadequate health care, and to the problems related to overcoming the lack of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Black Americans and Black people throughout the world.

"If all of the different groups at Howard work together with a spirit of mutual trust and confidence, we can then build at this university an eternal monument to man's ability to serve that which is good, that which is noble and that which is true." □

