

Black woman to lead AME seminary in Ohio: Leah Gaskin Fitchue at Payne Theological Seminary

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In yet another first for female seminary executives, Leah Gaskin Fitchue has been inaugurated as the head of Payne Theological Seminary, making her the first African-American woman president of a seminary affiliated with the Association of Theological Schools.

Fitchue, an ordained minister, also is the first woman president of the 160-year-old seminary aligned with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Wilberforce, Ohio, school announced. She previously served as professor of religious studies at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, and president of the Gaskin Fitchue Group, a consulting firm specializing in leadership and development for faith-based organizations.

When two other recently appointed women presidents assume their positions, the 251-member Association of Theological Schools will have 17 women in such posts—the most in its history, according to ATS spokeswoman Nancy Merrill. Other women recently selected are Molly Marshall, who becomes president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kansas, on January 1, and Phyllis Anderson, who a month later begins leading Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California.

Fitchue, whose inauguration took place November 10, comes to her post at a time when the historically black school is facing financial and enrollment challenges. But she told the *Dayton Daily News* she is confident about the future: “If you look historically at the institution, it has managed to keep itself alive for 160 years. That’s a pretty significant track record. Something right has to be operating in an institution that can stay alive that long.” *-Religion News Service*