WASHINGTON, DC – CIC today announced the selection of seven colleges and universities to serve as Regional Collaboration Partners for the multiyear project, “Legacies of American Slavery: Reckoning with the Past.” This initiative is designed to help CIC member institutions, their students, and their communities explore the continuing impact of slavery on American life and culture. The project will support campus-based research, teaching, and learning as well as community-based programs about the multiple legacies of slavery.

The Partners will serve as the primary hubs of a national network that will expand to embrace many additional CIC member colleges and universities and community organizations across the United States. Each Partner will focus on a specific theme that has both local and national significance, organizing regional activities while contributing to a national conversation about race, equity, freedom, political power, and cultural resilience.

The new Partners and their organizing themes include the following:

- Austin College (TX): “Racial Violence and Resistance”;
- Centenary College of Louisiana (LA) and Huston-Tillotson University (TX), in partnership: “Race, Health, and Medicine”;
- Dillard University (LA): “Cultural Creativity”;
- Lewis University (IL): “Race, Place, and Migration,” with “Mass Incarceration” as a secondary theme;
- Meredith College (NC): “Contested Citizenship,” with “Economic Disparities” as a secondary theme; and
- Sewanee: The University of the South (TN): “Commemoration and Memory.”
Legacies of American Slavery is directed by Pulitzer-Prize winning historian David W. Blight, Sterling Professor of American History at Yale University and executive director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition (GLC) at Yale’s MacMillan Center. Blight describes the relevance of the project in a special essay commissioned by CIC: “Because slavery is so central to the history of the United States—its origins, economic development, society, culture, politics, and law—it has left in its wake a wide array of legacies that seem ever-present yet ever-changing in our world.” (The essay can be downloaded from the CIC website at www.cic.edu/LegaciesofSlavery.) The entire project is generously supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with supplemental funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Richard Ekman, president of CIC, said it was very difficult to choose just seven Regional Collaboration Partners from a pool of strong institutional applicants. “The selection process highlighted the depth and breadth of scholarship, teaching, and public engagement that many CIC members have already devoted to exploring the pervasive legacies of slavery,” says Ekman. “This augurs well for the success of the national initiative.”

In addition to the seven Partners, CIC has designated a dozen colleges and universities as Institutional Affiliates, which will continue to play a foundational role in developing regional and national networks: Bloomfield College (NJ), Columbia College Chicago (IL), Drury University (MO), Fisk University (TN), Fontbonne University (MO), Johnson C. Smith University (NC), Messiah University (PA), Roanoke College (VA), Shenandoah University (VA), Tougaloo College (MS), Ursuline College (OH), and Wofford College (SC). The Partners and Affiliates announced today represent a diversity of institutional types and sizes, including two women’s colleges and five HBCUs. Several of the institutions located in Confederate states have historical links to slavery as former sites of plantations; others were founded or influenced by abolitionists.

Programmatic activities will begin this spring and build toward a series of regional conferences hosted by the Regional Collaboration Partners during the 2021–2022 academic year.

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The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of 765 nonprofit independent colleges and universities, state-based councils of independent colleges, and other higher education affiliates, that works to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on services to leaders of independent colleges and universities and state-based councils. CIC offers conferences, seminars, publications, and other programs and services that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, student outcomes, and institutional visibility. It conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers in the United
States. Founded in 1956, CIC is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit www.cic.edu.