

TC Today

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TEACHERS COLLEGE,
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Hometown Hero Makes Good

Jane Ellen McAllister was the nation's first black woman to earn an education Ph.D. Now Mississippi has celebrated her achievement.



A black professor brings students of color to campus during the summer to prepare them for college. The program wins federal funding and backing from the Ford Foundation. It's a nice story, though not unheard of nowadays.

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HOUSEWARMING Vicksburg, Mississippi, has placed a historical marker outside McAllister's home. Far left: Her cousin, Bettye Gardner, is fourth from left; Vicksburg Mayor George Flaggs is at far right.

Hometown Hero Makes Good

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But it happened in the mid-1950s — in Mississippi, at historically black Jackson State University.

Of course, the professor, Jane Ellen McAllister, was always ahead of her time.

In 1929, at Teachers College, McAllister became the nation's first black woman to earn an Education Ph.D. Her advisor, Mabel Carney, subsequently wrote that “the real history of the study of American Negro education on the advanced level” began with McAllister's thesis, “The Training of Negro Teachers in Louisiana.”

This past August, Vicksburg, Mississippi,

the historic Civil War city and McAllister's hometown, unveiled a state historical marker outside her former home. A TC proclamation declared McAllister “a Teachers College hero who embodied the College's values, beliefs and aspirations.”

McAllister improved the teaching and prospects of people of color. She published journal articles on teacher education and mentored generations of students. At her death in 1996, Jackson State had named a dorm and lecture series after her, and the Mississippi Encyclopedia had enshrined her in its pages.

“She was always interested in education for African Americans, because in that period, many Southern black public schools were not the best,” says McAllister's cousin Bettye Gardner, a historian and Professor Emerita at Coppin State University. “And that's why she ultimately chose to go to Teachers College. Its reputation was so strong.” — **JOE LEVINE**

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