January 2015, Normal, AL---In 2015, 1890 institutions of higher learning will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Morrill Act of 1890 that established Black Land-Grant Colleges and Universities.

Vermont Senator Justin Smith Morrill introduced a revised bill in 1861 that would make it possible for each state to receive federal funds to establish a state college or university. These institutions would teach agriculture, military tactics, mechanical arts, home economics, and other traditional studies to working class citizens. With a country enthralled in Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill into law on July 2, 1862, and the rest is history.

The name "land-grant" was coined because the institutions were established with funds from the sale of land granted to each state by the federal government; but there was one major problem. When the 1862 Morrill legislation was enacted, slavery still existed in the United States and it was considered a criminal offense to educate Blacks in the South. Yet Morrill was determined to see that the doors of educational opportunities would open wide for both Black and White citizens.

During the years following the signing of the Morrill Act of 1862, the federal government was unable to secure cooperation from Southern and Border States. Therefore, Morrill presented another bill to Congress, which was passed in support of black educational institutions, the Morrill Act of 1890 signed on August 30, 1890. Ironically, in order for states to receive 1890 funding, race or color could not be a factor in regard to admission or the state had to designate a separate land-grant college for African Americans. Thus, the foundation was laid for the creation of many Historically Black Colleges and Universities given the social and political climate of the 1890s.

Today, there are 19 Black Land-Grant Colleges and Universities in the United States. Eighteen of those universities were the direct result of the Second Morrill Act, and Tuskegee University, which is a private institution that also benefits from federal funds. Under the theme “Providing Access and Enhancing Opportunities,” these 1890 land-grant institutions have begun a year-long celebration of the Morrill Act of 1890; marking the 125th anniversary of its passage and their existence.

Throughout 2015, the public is invited to join AAMU faculty, students, and staff in the following activities:

- **Open Convocation**: March 17 – 12:30-1:45 p.m.
  T. M. Elmore Gymnasium, AAMU Campus

- **1890 Day with 1890 Wellness Walk-Run**: April 23 – 12:00-4:00 p.m.
  The national goal is for each university to strive for 1890 participants who will register for $1.89 (students), $18.90, $189.00, $1,890.00, or more. Registration fees will go to establish the Justin Smith Morrill student scholarship fund. Music and refreshments will be provided on the Quad.

- **Capitol Hill Activities**: July 15-16
  A two-day event featuring 1890 exhibits, receptions, visits with senators and representatives, congressional testimonials on agriculture with a proclamation honoring the 1890s, and a convocation in the Library of Congress.

For more information, please visit www.aamu.edu or call K. Renée Johnson at 256-372-5783. For national 1890 information, please visit http://www.1890universities.org/.