

INTRODUCTION

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The State of America's Black Colleges: Expanding Access, Ensuring Success, Promoting Global Competitiveness

Earlier this year, an article in Howard University's *Hilltop* student newspaper reported that black college students from around the country drove to South Carolina to support Senator Barack Obama's campaign to become the Democratic nominee for president. As the students prepared to canvas neighborhoods, they chanted, "Fired up and ready to go!"

Regardless of which candidate wins the election in November, this slogan echoes a sentiment that has existed on black college campuses for almost two centuries. Black colleges—their students, faculty, and presidents—have always been driven by their knowledge of the connection between scholarship and service.

NAFEO is pleased to release *The State of America's Black Colleges* at this time in which a movement for change is sweeping our nation, fuelled by young Americans, mostly students, whose discontent is being channeled into making a difference at ballot boxes across the country. This movement for change has brought the nation closer to realizing its egalitarian ideal, as we head toward the 2008 Party conventions this summer with an African-American male and a woman as the contenders for the Democratic nomination for the President of the United States—leader of the free world.

This movement for change has brought to the fore issues of poverty, health care, education access and success. It has brought the tremendous contributions of, continuing need for, and needs of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to the center of the national public debate. The movement spurred at least one candidate for the presidency of the United

States of America to include in his or her platform a comprehensive plan for strengthening (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and for financially rewarding institutions like HBCUs and MSIs that enroll and graduate disproportionate numbers of students of fewer financial means.

We dedicate this publication to the unprecedented numbers of students who are participating in a presidential campaign this year, especially those among the more than 300,000 enrolled at one of the nation's 103 HBCUs who are following in the tradition of the students of the Civil Rights Movement, those of the Voting Rights Movement, those of the Silver Rights Movement, students of the Black Power Movement, the Women's Rights Movement, the Anti-War Movement, the Free South Africa Movement, the Environmental Justice Movement, the Judicial Justice Movement, and all of the student-generated movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, who are helping to move American closer to a more perfect union.

The State of America's Black Colleges is designed to provide the data that will dictate greater investments in HBCUs and in HBCU students like today's debating heroes, the progeny of the likes of Wiley College's debating heroes celebrated in the film, *The Great Debaters*; and like those who won the Ford Motor Company HBCU Business Classic, the Sallie Mae Fund Writers of Passage Writing Competition; the Honda All Star Academic Challenge, and those who protested racial injustice in Jena, Louisiana last year. The data herein demonstrate beyond peradventure that America's Black Colleges are producing graduates who are critical thinkers, civically engaged, prepared and ready to lead.

The state of America's black colleges is that they are strong and poised to get stronger with today's diverse cohort of black college presidents, administrators and faculty, and with greater investments by states, the federal government, corporations, foundations, and by the more than five million HBCU alumni. Black colleges are the nation's premiere equal educational opportunity institutions, graduating disproportionate numbers of black and low-income students each year. Although they represent approximately 3 percent of all institutions, HBCUs graduate approximately 30 percent of all African-American students and 40 percent of African-American students receiving a four-year degree in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and 50 percent of African-American teachers.

Despite these successes, in 2008 HBCUs will realize only modest increases in federal funding. In addition, black colleges continue to receive significantly less funding for research, facilities, and programs than their historically white counterparts. According to data from the National Science Foundation, for example, six of the top 20 predominantly white universities received more federal funds for research than 79 HBCUs combined.¹ The NSF report shows that despite a quantifiable record of success at educating African-American

scientists and engineers, HBCUs continue receiving disproportionately fewer federal dollars. This pattern has created a barrier to black colleges remaining comparable and competitive with historically white institutions and must be reversed.

The State of America's Black Colleges provides a snapshot of the strengths, capabilities, and proposed growth areas of each of the nation's historically and predominantly black institutions. This year's theme is "Expanding Access, Ensuring Success, Promoting Global Competitiveness." In this inaugural edition of NAFEO's signature publication, you will see what our institutions are doing in each of these areas to guarantee that students at black colleges thrive.

The first section includes essays written by a distinguished group of NAFEO member presidents and faculty. These essays address some of the most important issues facing America's black colleges in 2008. William Spriggs, chair of the economics department at Howard University, opens with an analysis of the current trends in HBCU enrollment and graduation rates. William R. Harvey, president of Hampton University, reflects on his successful capital campaigns and the president's role in the crucial task of endowment building at black colleges. In her essay on strategic planning, Trudie Kibbe Reed, president of Bethune-Cookman University, provides strategies and best practices to guide college presidents in securing their institution's long-term stability. At a time when 50 percent of black men do not graduate from high school, Everette Freeman, president of Albany State University in Albany, Georgia, describes his institution's successful initiative to improve recruitment and retention rates among black males. Julianne Malveaux, president of Bennett College for Women, analyzes the crucial role that historically black women's colleges play in cultivating the next generation of black women leaders. In the wake of an increasing number of both natural disasters and man-made emergencies affecting college campuses, Wayne Watson, chancellor of the City Colleges of Chicago, discusses how community colleges play an essential role in supporting and rebuilding communities affected by disaster. Finally, George T. French, Jr. president of Miles College, writes about how he is preparing students on his campus to be competitive in the global economy.

As a resource for increasing academic/corporate/community partnerships and aiding foundations in providing funding for HBCUs and PBIs, *The State of America's Black Colleges* will be an invaluable reference tool. The appendices provide data and information on black colleges' tremendous value to their students, their communities, the nation, and the world. You will find one of the most comprehensive lists of majors and degrees offered by NAFEO members as well as listings of Centers of Excellence, data on faculty diversity at NAFEO institutions, special collections, distance learning courses offered,

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and the unique goods and services that black colleges produce for their communities and beyond.

As our nation confronts a host of political, social, and economic challenges at home and abroad, the need for America's black colleges has never been more acute. The United States is becoming more diverse, more technologically advanced, and more global in its outlook. Today's students must be trained to succeed as leaders. Building on their tradition of excellence in education, passion through service, and leadership through activism, America's black colleges continue to produce graduates who have proved that, against all odds, they are fired up and ready to go.

I invite you to learn more about NAFEO's members through *The State of America's Black Colleges*.