



## HBCU INNOVATION FUND

### RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ UNCF supports **H.R. 4857, the HBCU Innovation Fund Act**. By establishing a new **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Innovation Fund**, this legislation would build capacity at HBCUs to develop, test and implement innovative solutions to help HBCUs surmount current challenges and meet the nation's need for skilled college graduates.
- ✓ The HBCU Innovation Fund is authorized for fiscal year 2017 at \$250 million and at such sums as may be necessary thereafter.

### NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

HBCUs have long played a critical role in American higher education. Over much of the country's history, they provided almost the only option for African Americans seeking a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Today, HBCUs represent just 3 percent of the nation's four- and two-year nonprofit colleges and universities. However, they enroll 10 percent of African American undergraduates, produce 18 percent of all African American bachelor degree recipients and generate 25 percent of all bachelor's degrees in STEM fields earned by African Americans annually.

HBCUs can be a source of innovative approaches and strategies that both can help HBCUs surmount current challenges and be adopted by other colleges and universities.

### BACKGROUND

The HBCU Innovation Fund would provide planning and implementation grants, on a competitive basis, that incentivize HBCUs to develop critical innovations for meeting

current and emerging needs. Priority consideration would be given to proposals addressing national needs, such as innovations designed to:

- increase the number of African American males who attain postsecondary degrees;
- increase the successful college completion of historically underrepresented populations;
- increase the number of students who are members of historically underrepresented populations in STEM fields;
- support the development of 'innovation ecosystems' on HBCU campuses;
- enhance the quality and number of traditional and alternative route teacher preparation programs at HBCUs; and
- strengthen postgraduate employment outcomes through comprehensive career pathways for students.

HBCUs could apply for innovation grants with outside partners, including nonprofit organizations, school districts or other colleges for collaborative projects.

HBCUs would describe the evidence base supporting the proposed innovation and performance measures that would track progress. In addition, grantees would provide for an independent evaluation of their projects. Through these actions, program accountability and a focus on doing what works would be maintained.