



HIGHER EDUCATION ACT LISTENING SESSION FORUM

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Congressman Scott, and other Committee Members who are here today. Thank you for hosting this Congressional forum and for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) on a subject of critical importance to those of us who are working every day to enable more minority and low-income students to reach their full potential.

I am Dr. Henry Tisdale, President of Claflin University and Chair of the Government Affairs Committee of the UNCF. Best known by its iconic (updated) motto: “A mind is a terrible thing to waste but a wonderful thing to invest in®,” UNCF advocates for increasing the number of African-American college graduates, to ensure that these young people have the skills they need to excel in the 21st century economy.

Since its inception in 1944, UNCF has raised more than \$4.5 billion and have evolved into the nation’s largest private scholarship provider to students of color – including students who are African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian Pacific Islander and Hispanic American. UNCF currently administers more than \$100 million a year in scholarships to over 10,000 students at over 1,000 colleges across the country, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

THE HBCU VALUE PROPOSITION

However, UNCF's core mission remains its 72-year partnership with Claflin University and the other 36 private HBCUs on whose behalf UNCF raises private funds. Collectively, these institutions enroll over 50,000 undergraduate students, primarily first-generation, low-income and African-American students, and are part of the larger network of 106 private and public HBCUs.

HBCUs play a unique role in our postsecondary education system, preparing the next generation of African-American professional and civic leaders needed by communities, employers and the nation, especially as the country trends toward a population and workforce in which the combined minorities are actually in the majority.

In many ways, HBCUs are a "best buy" for students, families and taxpayers. HBCUs represent 3 percent of all four- and two-year colleges and universities, enroll 10 percent of all African-American undergraduates, confer 18 percent of all African-American bachelor's degrees, and generate 25 percent of African-American undergraduate degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – the STEM fields. When the National Science Foundation ranked all colleges based on the number of African-American graduates who went on to earn doctoral degrees in science and engineering, HBCUs took the top ten places, ahead of elite private universities. HBCUs attain these results at an affordable price for students – 30 percent less, on average, than other institutions, with fewer resources available to them.

DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND EQUITY

I want to start my testimony by applauding your commitment to educational opportunity and equity, and your leadership in pushing for progress toward these goals in the *Every Student Succeeds Act*. Now that this bipartisan legislation has been signed into law, we must all work to ensure that every state and community steps up to the plate to close opportunity gaps that remain for low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities and other at-risk students who now make up the majority of our school-age population.

The stakes could not be higher. America is facing a growing gap between the education and skills our young people have and the jobs that our businesses need done. Demand for highly skilled workers – particularly those trained in critical STEM fields – is quickly outpacing supply. And in a society rapidly trending to majority-minority, the gap is most acute, and our effort to close it is most wanting, when it comes to African Americans and other students of color.

That is why the subject of today's forum – the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) – is so important. With this HEA reauthorization, you have a unique opportunity to reshape federal postsecondary education policies with enormous impact for decades to come. We hope that this can be done in a bipartisan process, where both political parties come together on the solutions we so desperately need to advance educational opportunity and equity in higher education. This is no time to tinker around the edges.

While we have made progress in opening the doors to college since the initial, 1965 Higher Education Act, students of color today face increasingly tough odds in enrolling, persisting and completing college. It's not that they don't want to go to college. Indeed, they have high hopes. UNCF research indicates that the college aspirations of African-American families are high; a substantial proportion (77 percent) of low-income, African-American parents believe it is important for their children to attend and graduate from college, which counters the prevailing narrative about the educational aspirations of these families.¹ Nonetheless, too many academic, financial, social and other barriers stand in their way.

Please consider the following:

- At a time when college degrees are more essential than ever, in 2014, only 22 percent of young African Americans between the ages of 25 and 29 had earned a college degree – about half the rate (41 percent) for white Americans.ⁱⁱ
- A record high percentage (73 percent) of African-American students are graduating from high school.ⁱⁱⁱ Nonetheless, just five percent of them are graduating college-ready across all of the core subjects of English, reading, math and science.^{iv} Students who are not college-ready must spend valuable time and money taking remedial coursework and struggling in college, often in ways that they have never faced before, because of the low level of rigor in their K-12 experience.^v The additional time and money heightens the likelihood that these students will never complete their degree and fulfill their educational goals.
- While more African-American students are completing high school, only about half (57 percent) will continue on immediately to college, compared to two-thirds of Hispanic and White students and 81 percent of Asian students.^{vi}
- While the number (2.9 million) of African-American students enrolled in college has doubled since 1990, progress has slipped in recent years – with fewer black students enrolled in 2013 than in 2010.^{vii}
- More than 1 million, or 37 percent, of all African-American college students attend a two-year institution, where their average graduation rates within six years are only 22.9 percent – the lowest percentage for any racial group. For *low-income* African-American students, the graduation rate is even lower at 13 percent.^{viii} In our view, too many African-American students begin and end their college studies at two-year institutions, when a four-year degree offers the greatest return on investment.
- For the 1.8 million, or 63 percent, of all African-American college students who attend 4-year institutions, graduation rates are just 40.9 percent – again the lowest percentage for any racial group.^{ix}
- Nearly half (46 percent) of all African-American students – the highest proportion of any minority group^x – receive Pell Grants based on financial need. Yet, the maximum Pell Grant now pays the lowest share of college costs (30 percent at a four-year public college and 13 percent at a four-year private college) *in the history of the program*^{xi} – leaving a significant number of students with unmet financial need even after borrowing federal loans.
- African-American students are much more likely to borrow for college than their White, Hispanic and Asian counterparts and, typically, borrow larger amounts. Thus, student loan debt represents a much larger fraction of black students' current family income and their future earnings.^{xii}
- With relatively lower family income, and fewer financial assets and wealth – hit hard by the Great Recession^{xiii} – African-American students are much more likely to leave college without a degree due to financial issues. Many African- American students simply do not have the financial cushion needed to weather even modest financial setbacks in order to persist and stay in school. This is one reason why UNCF initiated the Campaign for Emergency Student Aid – emergency grants of about \$1,500 per student – to help students who are close to graduating to cross the finish line.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION

UNCF-member colleges have a fierce urgency to improve college access and success for African-American and other students of color. We appreciate many of the significant initiatives to improve college access, affordability and value advanced by the Obama Administration; however, much remain to be done to reduce barriers to higher education for first-generation, low-income and minority students. Federal student financial aid grant and loan programs are under-funded and overly complex – for students, families, educators and administrators, and even the U.S. Department of Education, which has failed to fix student loan servicing issues.

Moreover, HBCUs, which for over 100 years have played an outsized role in helping greater numbers of African-American youth obtain college degrees, remain an untapped asset in the federal arsenal to reach the President's 2020 goal that America be first in the world in college attainment. At a time when African-American students across the country are challenging campus climates that they claim demean and harass them, HBCUs provide not only strong academics but also caring faculty and culturally sensitive campuses. These results were recently validated in a 2015 study by the Gallup Organization based on interviews with nearly 60,000 college graduates.^{xiv} The [study](#) concluded that black graduates of HBCUs are significantly more likely to be better off financially and socially than black graduates of other institutions of higher education, and that HBCU graduates have a more supportive educational experience while attending college.

I would like to turn to UNCF's policy recommendations for renewing the HEA.

America's College Promise Act

Congressman Scott, we applaud your strong leadership (and that of Senator Tammy Baldwin) in introducing the *America's College Promise Act* (H.R. 2962/S 1716) last July. Securing Congressional support and passage of this game-changing legislation is a top priority for UNCF and our member HBCUs. As you know, under the *America's College Promise Act*, more than 9 million students at 1,300 community colleges and nearly 300,000 students at approximately 280 4-year HBCUs and MSIs stand to benefit each year.

We are deeply grateful for your steadfast support of HBCUs and appreciated the opportunity to work with you and your staff on the inclusion of the **Pathways to Student Success for HBCUs and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)** initiative in the bill. By significantly reducing the cost of up two years of college for first-time, low-income students at HBCUs and MSIs, **Pathways to Student Success for HBCUs and MSIs** would bring higher educational opportunities to minority students who have the ability and desire to continue their education past high school, but lack the resources to achieve their college dreams.

This new initiative would provide a landmark \$10 billion investment over ten years in HBCUs and MSIs – which were hit hard by recent federal student aid restrictions and budget reductions – and enable them to continue to deliver affordable, high-quality education to prepare their students for careers of success and service. President Obama has embraced this initiative and we hope it will be a priority for the HEA reauthorization.

Re-invest in and Modernize Pell Grants

While the *America's College Promise Act* is particularly important in providing a pathway for students enrolling in community college and minority-serving institutions to a four-year degree, Pell Grants remain the

cornerstone of our national commitment to make higher education accessible and affordable for all, irrespective of the type of postsecondary education.

UNCF believes that Pell Grants are an investment in Better Futures™ for African-American students, and this investment must be strengthened if we want to bring higher education into the reach of additional underrepresented students. We urge you to reinvest in and modernize Pell Grants to meet 21st century needs.

First, there is a critical need to restore the purchasing power of Pell Grants, which has fallen by two-thirds in real terms since 1979.^{xv} Congressman Hinojosa, the bill that you and Senator Mazie Hirono have introduced, H.R. 1957, the *Pell Grant Cost of Tuition Adjustment Act*, would restore the purchasing power of Pell, by raising the maximum award to approximately \$9,000 and indexing it to inflation thereafter. A strong Pell program is essential and UNCF wants to work with you to make this bill a reality.

Second, UNCF and our member institutions believe in continuous improvement and we support thoughtful proposals to enhance Pell's already significant impact. Thus, we are delighted that the Obama Administration is proposing in its FY 2017 budget two new Pell Grant initiatives to help students stay on track – and even accelerate – toward earning a bachelor's degree in four years. These initiatives include the restoration of the year-round Pell Grant, which would enable 700,000 students to earn their degrees faster and at a lower cost, as well as a new Pell Grant bonus of \$300 for students who take 15 credits per semester. These significant proposals will help boost college completion for African-American students at HBCUs, the vast majority of whose students receive Pell awards, and other colleges and universities. We urge your full support of these proposals, as well as the President's proposal to lift the existing restriction on Pell Grants to persons who are incarcerated.

Third, there is a critical need to help students and families access federal student financial aid earlier and easier. The eligibility and application rules for Pell Grants are too complex and burdensome for students and families. Approximately two million financially needy students miss out on Pell Grants because their families do not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). We are encouraged by the bipartisan interest in the House and the Senate (and the Administration) to simplify the FAFSA by greatly reducing its 108 questions and using “prior, prior” income tax data so that families can start the process sooner.

We also ask that you to consider other ways to streamline Pell Grants, such as restoring the income threshold to \$32,000 for an automatic Pell Grant (an improvement made in the 2008 HEA reauthorization and subsequently reversed to achieve budgetary savings) and establishing eligibility for more than one year to eliminate the need for qualified students to reapply each year. Further, the Congress should make an early Pell Grant eligibility commitment to low-income high school students to increase college-going rates and improve K-12 academic outcomes by motivating these young people to believe that college is possible.

Redesign and Improve Federal Student Loans

Even with tuition support from the *America's College Promise Act* and Pell Grants, student loans will remain a critical component of college financing for some students. Accordingly, the HEA reauthorization should also focus on redesigning and improving federal Direct Loans and loan repayment options to reduce borrowing costs and student debt, make loan repayment more manageable and eliminate student defaults.

UNCF recommends reducing federal education loan interest rates and eliminating origination fees (a back-door interest rate hike) for student and parent borrowers, so that the federal government does not generate revenue at the expense of those seeking a higher education. In addition, we support expanding refinancing

options so that existing borrowers can refinance their student loans at lower interest rates. These reforms should apply to federal undergraduate, graduate and parent loans.

While some regulatory reforms were put into place in 2015, UNCF believes that several statutory improvements could be made to Parent PLUS Loans in order to make this important college financing option more flexible for parents who decide to incur loan debt to assist with their child's college expenses. When the U.S. Department of Education unilaterally tightened the Parent PLUS Loan credit requirements in October 2011, we learned just how critical these loans are to college access for thousands of students across the country, and especially to students at HBCUs. In addition to lowering interest rates and eliminating origination fees, Parent PLUS Loans should be “mended, not ended” by: (1) providing an income-driven repayment option that will not only benefit parents, but also will reduce complexity in the federal education loan programs by aligning repayment options across loan programs; and (2) incorporating robust loan counseling into the program so that all participants borrow only what is needed, know the loan terms and conditions, and fully understand their repayment obligations.

While the Obama Administration has made important progress through its PAYE and REPAYE student loan repayment initiatives, we believe Congress should move forward with a bolder effort to streamline the confusing and complicated menu of repayment options by authorizing a single income-based student loan repayment program as the default for all borrowers – with an opt-out option for those borrowers who wish to pay on a standard ten-year schedule. Such a program would benefit taxpayers by eliminating defaults, serve as an insurance mechanism to protect borrowers during periods of unemployment, and lift the burden of student loan collection from institutions that are face sanctions if defaults are too high. While implementation details would need to be studied, and perhaps piloted, such a system could be implemented through a payroll withholding system.

Unfortunately, under our current system, the federal government holds colleges accountable for student repayment of federal education loans, when the loans are issued by the federal government, terms are fixed by the federal government, and institutions do not control whether students repay their loans. Ensuring that students repay their loans is a distraction for UNCF member institutions and a drain on their limited resources because schools must hire consultants to identify and track students who become delinquent on their loan repayments.

Australia, the United Kingdom and other countries have implemented successful systems for the government to collect on student loans through automatic, income-based repayment. In these countries, there is no student loan default problem. This is a solution that is a streamlined and sensible way to support students who must take out loans to finance their futures, without burdening institutions with the role of debt collector.

Invest in HBCUs

- ***Establish an HBCU Innovation Fund.*** HBCUs could be important engines of innovation – generating and testing new ways of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population; addressing the current completion challenges faced by higher education in providing quality education anytime, anywhere, any place; preparing students for a changing economy; and moving research ideas out of the laboratory and classroom into the marketplace. The HEA provides basic formula support to HBCUs through the Title III, Part B program, which supports basic operating needs. But, HBCUs could do so much more, if they only had the opportunities and resources.

A new venture capital fund – an HBCU Innovation Fund – similar to that proposed by the Administration in its FY 2017 budget – should be authorized within HEA to provide competitive grants and incentives for HBCUs to experiment, pilot, evaluate and scale up promising best practices for student success and to catalyze centers of innovation where the best minds can integrate education and research in exciting and new ways to drive innovation. The possibilities are almost limitless.

We look forward to working with Congresswoman Alma Adams and other supporters to move this initiative through the HEA reauthorization process, and we ask for your support.

- ***Invest in and Modernize Title III Formula Grants.*** Title III, Part B discretionary and mandatory grants are the bedrock of federal financial support to HBCUs under the HEA. The Title III program provides essential formula-based aid for academic programs, fiscal and management improvements, and technology. UNCF supports continuation of the annual authorization of \$375 million for the discretionary program and, in particular, extension of the \$85 million annual mandatory appropriation through the period of the HEA reauthorization. In addition, we recommend permanent provisions to lower the matching rate to 50 percent for the portion of Title III grants used to build institutional endowments and allow endowment income to support scholarships. Title III “uses of funds” should be expanded to permit funds for the creation and expansion of distance education programs and to expressly permit student support services, similar to the provisions in Title V.
- ***Expand the HBCU Capital Financing Program.*** The HBCU Capital Financing Program provides HBCUs with access to low-interest loans not available elsewhere to support physical infrastructure and facility improvements. This program is a good news story for both HBCUs and taxpayers. As a result of previous investments, HBCUs have provided students with enhanced learning and living environments, rebuilt and restored historic buildings, and provided jobs in their communities, with little risk to the government since each borrowing institution must contribute 5 percent of loan proceeds to a pooled escrow fund to cover any potential delinquencies or defaults.

UNCF recommends an increase in cumulative loan authority from the \$1.1 billion set in 2008 to at least \$3 billion to accommodate institutional infrastructure needs through 2022, the period covered by the HEA reauthorization. In addition, several program improvements are needed: create a flexible alternative for institutions to the pooled escrow requirement through a new Secretarial waiver authority; reduce excess collateralization requirements imposed by the Department of Education by limiting required collateral to the amount of the loan; and lower interest rates for loans financing STEM-related facilities to 1 percent in order to facilitate an expansion of the capacity of HBCUs to produce STEM graduates.

Institutional Risk Sharing

Finally, as the Congress considers accountability measures aimed at providing incentives for colleges to lower costs and improve outcomes, we urge you to seriously consider whether proposals for institutional risk sharing will accomplish these goals. Importantly, we believe that institutional risk-sharing proposals introduced to date^{xvi} would have the unfortunate unintended consequence of driving some colleges and universities to accept fewer at-risk students. Students identified by them to be high risk – e.g. underrepresented minorities, first-generation students, academically underprepared students, and students with the least financial means – would see the door to college opportunity close.

Moreover, risk-sharing proposals would place additional financial strain on low-resourced HBCUs, while failing to recognize the existing “skin-in-the-game” that HBCUs have by historically keeping tuition low for

their students to provide an affordable higher education. Thus, we ask you to oppose any risk-sharing federal regulatory scheme that is likely to have unintended, negative consequences HBCUs and the students we serve. Our nation can ill afford to *lower* access to postsecondary education at a time when *greater* access is key to our economic prosperity.

APPENDIX

UNCF INITIATIVES TO INCREASE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE GRADUATES

Addressing College Readiness

UNCF is working to address the college readiness gap by making the case that the nation must invest in students earlier in the educational pipeline. The pre-K through college pipeline is broken for communities of color, and particularly for African Americans. Through our local community engagement efforts in key cities across the country, UNCF is actively working to build support for effective school reform, and to make students and families aware that the high school diploma is no longer a ticket to the middle class.

Addressing Student Financial Need

UNCF is working hard to meet the strong demand by young African Americans for an education at our member colleges, but donations have not kept pace with the demand. In all, UNCF awards \$100 million in college scholarships each year to over 10,000 students, with a significant share attending HBCUs. However, the ratio of applications to available scholarships is approaching ten to one.

UNCF knows that investing in students through UNCF works. UNCF's Patterson Research Institute examined the effectiveness of our scholarships (excluding Gates Millennium Scholarships) and found that an African-American freshman who receives a \$5,000 UNCF scholarship returns for her sophomore year at a 94 percent rate, graduates in six years at a 70 percent rate – which is considerably higher than the 57 percent six-year graduation rate at all four-year institutions – and sees her likelihood of graduating increase by over seven percentage points.^{xvii} In contrast, the national six-year graduation rate for African Americans is 41 percent. If we could increase that rate by over seven percentage points, we would graduate close to 16,000 additional African Americans with bachelor's degrees each year. That is an investment that pays dividends not only to those students, but also to the entire country.

- ***Gates Millennium Scholars Program.*** The Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program, established in 1999, is funded by a \$1.6 billion grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and administered by UNCF. The goal of GMS Program is to promote academic excellence and to provide an opportunity for outstanding minority students with significant financial need to reach their highest potential by reducing financial barriers for African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian Pacific Islander American and Hispanic American students with high academic and leadership promise. A signature programmatic goal is to increase the representation of these target groups in the disciplines of computer science, education, engineering, library science, mathematics, public health and the sciences, where these groups are severely underrepresented. Over 19,000 Gates Millennium Scholars have been funded since 2000 at nearly 1,900 colleges and universities, with a six-year graduation rate of almost 90 percent.
- ***UNCF Achievement Capstone Scholarship Program.*** UNCF and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) have partnered to create the UNCF Achievement Capstone Scholarship to recognize the accomplishments and invest in the top academic achievers among graduating seniors at the nation's HBCUs and predominantly black institutions (PBIs). This new award, a legacy of NMSC's 50-year National Achievement® Scholarship Program, will provide high-achieving students with financial awards ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 each, which can be used to retire the balance of

educational expenses for undergraduate study at the recipient's institution or for graduate studies. Capstone scholarship recipients will participate in a learning community that features peer networking, graduate and professional school opportunities and career opportunities. The first awards under the UNCF Achievement Capstone Scholarship will be made to seniors who will graduate in 2016.

- ***UNCF/Koch Scholarship Program.*** In 2014, UNCF partnered with Koch Industries, Inc. and the Charles Koch Foundation to support educational opportunities for African-American students and HBCUs through the UNCF/Koch Scholarship Program. The \$25 million initiative will continue through 2021, supporting two programmatic areas:
 - \$18.5 million for the UNCF/Koch Scholarship Program and its administration. Funds support scholarships for exemplary students with demonstrated financial need and an interest in entrepreneurship, economics, and innovation and their contributions to individual, community and societal well-being. Funds also support an annual summit, mentorship opportunities and school programs; and
 - \$6.5 million for general support to HBCUs and UNCF, with \$4 million set aside to partially offset cutbacks in the federal Parent PLUS Loans at UNCF member institutions.
- ***Campaign for Emergency Student Aid.*** UNCF's just-in-time scholarship program, the Campaign for Emergency Student Aid, has raised over \$20 million and helped over 8,000 students pay outstanding tuition and dormitory bills so students could graduate and begin their careers. Indeed, this relatively small scholarship averaging \$1,500 has made the difference between a college dropout and a college graduate.

Creating Stronger Pathways From College to Careers, the UNCF Career Pathways Initiative

Possibly the most exciting recent development for UNCF's capacity-building work at HBCUs is the UNCF Career Pathways Initiative, made possible by a \$50 million investment from the Eli Lilly Endowment. This project is designed to support approximately 30 HBCUs and PBIs over seven years to facilitate the immediate transition of their graduates into meaningful careers to combat the unemployment and underemployment crisis faced by so many in the African-American community. This initiative will demonstrate HBCUs and PBIs as models for more effectively connecting the college experience to career placement and delivering significant returns on investment.

Through a competitive grant process, the new initiative will help these colleges to intentionally and innovatively create pathways from college to careers, through strengthening career guidance and enhancing the liberal arts experience of students by adding – where needed – certain skills, experiences and knowledge required by employers. Programmatic success will be measured through rigorous accountability and evaluation metrics that will be assessed periodically throughout the program and at its conclusion to determine impact, effectiveness and replicability.

Promoting STEM and Innovation

African Americans represent 12 percent of the nation's total population, but only five percent of the nation's science and engineering workforce^{xviii} and less than one percent of our technology innovators and entrepreneurs – both of which are essential to drive the innovation and technology economy. Despite the

bleak numbers, however, there are bright, talented and motivated African-American students who are hungry for opportunity and seek better futures through pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering or math – the STEM disciplines.

- ***UNCF Stem Scholars Program.*** In order to grow a more robust STEM pipeline of next generation of African-American scholars, innovators and technology entrepreneurs, in 2015, the Fund II Foundation and UNCF launched the UNCF STEM Scholars Program. The UNCF STEM Scholars Program is a ten-year initiative designed to provide scholarship and academic support for 500 talented African-American high school students. The program will enable these highly capable young people to pursue undergraduate STEM majors at HBCUs and other colleges and universities and prepare them for successful careers in a variety of STEM professions. The program will support first-time freshmen who begin college in 2016.
- ***HBCU Innovation Summit.*** Since 2013, the UNCF has partnered with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Stanford University and nearly a dozen Silicon Valley technology companies to produce an annual HBCU Innovation, Commercialization and Entrepreneurship (I.C.E.) Summit in Silicon Valley. The goal of the summit is to empower African-American students to compete in the technology workforce, and to consider technology-related entrepreneurship. Our third annual summit in November 2015 enabled 65 students majoring in computer science and engineering at 21 HBCUs to visit Silicon Valley corporations, participate in technology forums, and attend workshops designed to support their career development.
- ***UNCF/Merck Science Initiative (UMSI).*** For the past 20 years, the UNCF and Merck partnership has invested over \$40 million to diversify the STEM pipeline, producing over 700 African-American life science professionals – many of whom are leading research scientists in academia, government and industry. In addition, the UMSI STEM capacity-building program has enabled a culture of scientific inquiry on HBCU campuses.

Enhancing HBCU Institutional Capacity

Presidents of UNCF member colleges understand that building internal capacity in all aspects of their academic enterprise is key to both educational excellence and the long-term viability of their institutions. In response to this need, UNCF launched the Institute for Capacity Building (ICB) with support from the Kresge Foundation – whose visionary work on HBCU institutional advancement programs provided a model for ICB. Since 2006, UNCF has raised more than \$31 million for ICB, which provides grants, technical assistance, consultative services and professional development opportunities to strengthen the ability of all UNCF member institutions, as well as other minority-serving institutions, to meet 21st century challenges. The convergence of financial, technical and “on the ground” support has brought about new capacities that in some cases are unprecedented among UNCF campuses.

- Through the ***Institutional Advancement Program***, Claflin University in South Carolina more than doubled its first-time alumni donors, achieving an alumni participation rate of over 50 percent, which exceeds the participation rate at some elite universities.

- Through the *Enrollment Management Program*, four pilot institutions (Clark Atlanta University in Georgia, Oakwood University in Alabama, Texas College and Voorhees College in South Carolina) increased their applicant pools by at least 25 percent and first-time student retention by 13 percent.
- ICB's *Curriculum and Faculty Enhancement Program* helped Virginia Union University prepare undergraduate students to become math and science teachers in the Richmond, VA public school system.
- Through the *Fiscal and Strategic Technical Assistance Program*, Shaw University in North Carolina developed an institution-wide student loan default prevention and management initiative that led to a nearly 40 percent reduction in its cohort default rate in three years.
- Through the *Facilities and Infrastructure Enhancement Program*, UNCF launched a Building Green at Minority-Serving Institutions Initiative, which serves as a coordinating collective for sustainability efforts at historically black, tribal, Hispanic-serving and Asian American/Pacific Islander-serving institutions. The initiative identifies barriers to building green and incorporates principles of sustainable design and energy efficiency into campus building projects. As a result, the number of buildings and structures on MSI campuses that are registered for LEED certification has increased 30 percent.

Over the next three years, UNCF will provide technical assistance to 12 of our 37 member colleges and universities to support best practices in the core areas of institutional advancement, enrollment and fiscal management.

Using Research, Data and Analysis for Continuous Improvement and to Drive Results

UNCF is supporting the national conversation about how to provide a quality education to all by developing and using data, research, evaluation and assessment to inform our work on minority education and to drive results. Since its founding in 1996, UNCF's Patterson Research Institute has conducted research on the educational status and progress of African Americans.

The first publication in a growing body of research on K-12 education, Patterson's study, "[Done to Us, Not With Us: African American Perceptions of K-12 Education](#)" is helping to inform UNCF's work in target cities focused on increasing parental involvement for students of color and low-income backgrounds. Patterson is documenting the [impact of UNCF scholarships](#) on the students who receive them, and also analyzing the performance and progress of UNCF member institutions along key dimensions, such as access, affordability, persistence and completion.^{xix} [One such study, just completed, examined the affordability of the 37 UNCF member institutions benchmarked against peer institutions.](#) It concluded that our institutions offer African Americans a viable, affordable avenue toward a college degree – with average total prices that are 26 percent lower than at comparison institutions.^{xx} Another recent study, "Counting Every Graduate: Comprehensive Completion Rates at UNCF-Member HBCUs," demonstrates that, when using more inclusive data, the graduation rate for UNCF-member institutions actually exceeds 56 percent—considerably stronger than what is calculated using the U.S. Department of Education's current definition and available data. These studies are part of an ongoing series exploring how African Americans pay for college; policies and regulations that influence their ability to finance college attendance; and various institutional and individual factors that play a role in how money facilitates college access, retention and completion.

Endnotes

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- ⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. The Condition of Education.
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- ^{iv} ACT, Inc. (2014). [The Condition of College and Career Readiness: African American Students 2014](#).
- ^v Ibid.
- ^{vi} National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. The Condition of Education.
- ^{vii} National Center for Education Statistics. 2015. The Condition of Education.
- ^{viii} Ibid.
- ^{ix} Ibid.
- ^x Kantrowitz, Mark. 2011. “[The Distribution of Grants and Scholarships By Race](#).”
- ^{xi} UNCF calculation based on a \$5,775 maximum Pell award, and average charges of tuition, fees, room and board of \$19,548 for in-state students enrolled at a public four-year university and \$43,921 for students enrolled at a private, nonprofit four-year university in the 2014-2015 academic year from [Trends in College Pricing 2014](#) published by The College Board.
- ^{xii} UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute analysis of data in the U.S. Department of Education’s [College Scorecard](#).
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