



UNCF

A mind is a terrible
thing to waste®

THE HBCU EFFECT™



AN EXPLORATION OF HBCU ALUMNI'S PEER
NETWORKS AND WORKFORCE OUTCOMES

#HBCUEffect

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OVERVIEW

The HBCU Effect™ research series seeks to understand, validate and promote the success of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to develop a counter-narrative that fully illustrates the value and competitiveness of our institutions. By uncovering HBCU truth through data and research, the HBCU Effect™ will illuminate how HBCUs yield a high return on investment by equipping their students, in particular first-generation students, with resources to close education and wealth gaps—transforming generations.

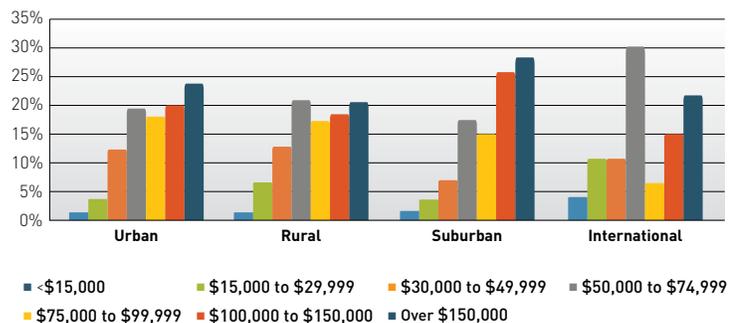
HBCUs are top producers of Black STEM graduates, Black medical doctors, veterinarians, and graduate low-income students at higher rates than PWIs (Lee & Keys, 2013; Richards & Awokoya, 2012), while their students also report greater academic and social gains. Yet, limited data exist regarding workforce outcomes for Black HBCU alumni. This mixed-methods study adds to UNCF's ongoing effort to create a counter-narrative through our HBCU Effect™ research agenda. This brief, consisting of our early quantitative findings, and the collective study adds to our knowledge of the HBCU Effect™ by addressing gaps in knowledge about workforce outcomes at HBCUs, and how social experiences and networks affect the academic and workforce experiences of Black HBCU alumni.

STUDY SAMPLE

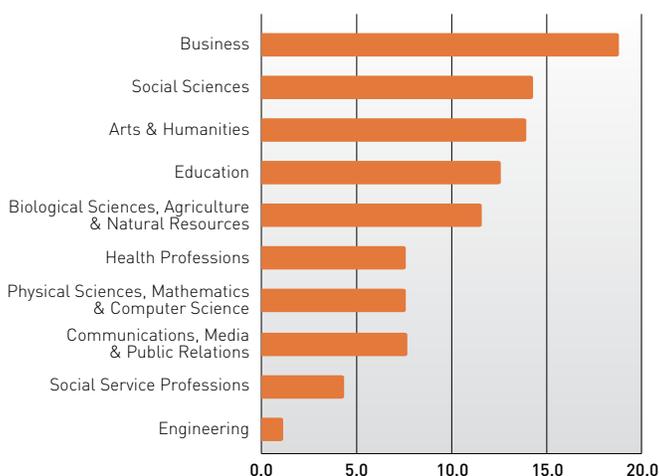
- **1,761** total participants:
 - **81%** female; **19%** male
- Communities of origin:
 - Urban (**54%**)
 - Suburban (**32%**)
 - Rural (**18%**)
 - International (**3%**)
- **75** HBCUs represented:
 - **37** private HBCUs
 - **38** public HBCUs
- Highest level of completed education:
 - Master's degree (**45%**)
 - Bachelor's degree (**32%**)
 - Doctorate degree (**12%**)
 - Professional degree (**8%**)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY COMMUNITY

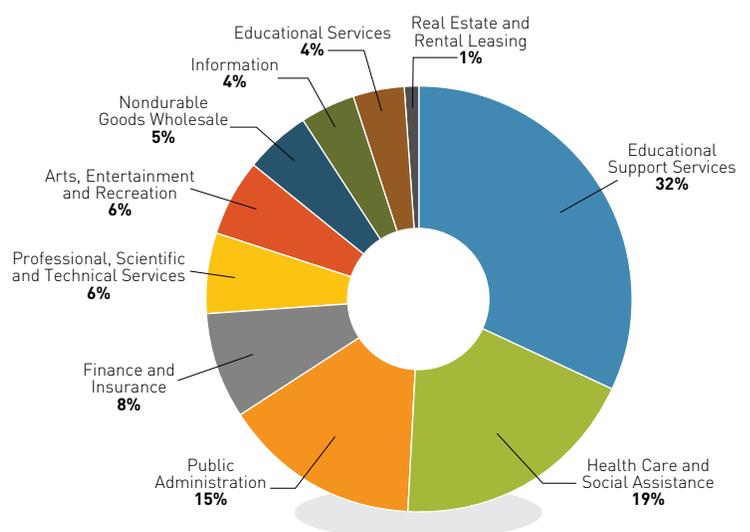
The majority of respondents (30%) from international communities are currently earning a salary between \$50,000 and \$74,000. Majority of respondents who come from suburban communities (29%) reported currently earning a salary over \$150,000 while around 22% of rural and international students reported earning the same salary.



TOP 10 MAJORS



TOP 10 INDUSTRIES



THE HBCU NETWORK: IMPACT OF RECEIVING MENTORSHIP FROM ALUMNI ACROSS HBCU INSTITUTIONS

- “The HBCU Network” refers to the widespread support network available to HBCU students and alumni that spans across the 101 HBCUs.
- Some examples of these networks include the opportunities provided by organizations that support numerous HBCUs, like UNCF and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.
- Participants described The HBCU Network as a bond that exists between HBCU alumni “because you attended an HBCU regardless of which HBCU.”
- 43% of participants reported that they received help from “someone from an HBCU” in securing employment after college, but not necessarily someone from their respective institution.

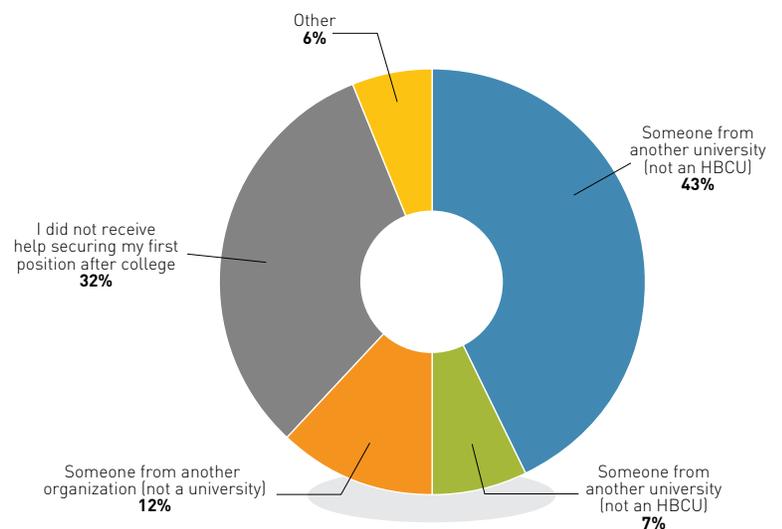
GREEK NETWORKS MAY OFFER UNIQUE SUPPORT

- The impact of undergraduate students’ participation in campus organizations, including Greek life has long been documented as an important example of socialization at HBCUs (Cooper, 2018; Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; Farmer et al., 2019).
- Participation in Greek life was ‘most impactful’ for a larger percent of HBCU alumni who did not use HBCU networks for employment and graduate school.

HBCU ALUMNI SATISFIED WITH THE SUPPORT FROM THEIR HBCU TOWARDS THE WORKFORCE

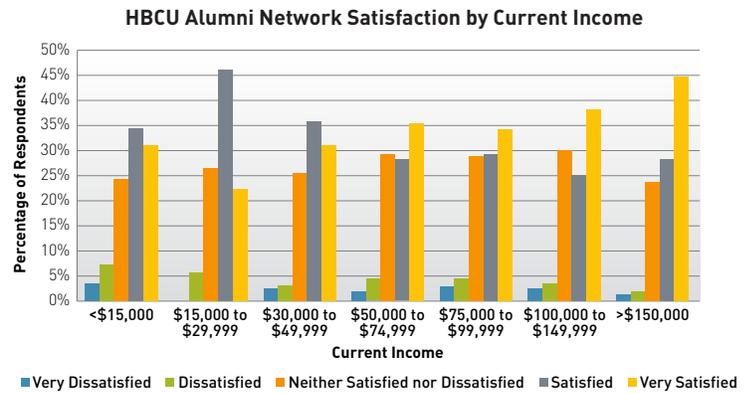
- HBCU alumni reported overwhelming satisfaction with their HBCU networks and experiences overall.
- HBCU alumni networks consisted of interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, advisors and involvement in academic, social and Greek organizations.
- Participants were significantly more likely to be more satisfied with their networks if they used their networks compared to alumni who did not use the networks.
- These results demonstrated the power of the networks available to HBCU students, distinguishing HBCUs as support systems for Black students above and beyond other higher education institutions.

Alumni Help with Employment



CONTRIBUTION OF HBCUS TO HBCU ALUMNI'S CULTURAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

- HBCU alumni who reported higher income brackets also reported higher satisfaction with their HBCU networks. This demonstrates a positive relationship between their current income bracket and HBCU network satisfaction.
- Considering the impact of HBCUs on HBCU students and alumni, in addition to their tendency to serve a population that other institutions deem unworthy and unvaluable, HBCUs should be lauded for how they allow Black students access to cultural capital that they otherwise would not have at PWIs or other institution types.



RECOMMENDATIONS & STRATEGIES

- HBCU alumni participants reported overall satisfaction when recalling their HBCU experience and support networks. They acknowledged the impact of support from campus constituents, involvement in campus organizations and activities, peer and alumni support, and the broader HBCU Network.
- Overall, the findings from this study support previous research, which has demonstrated the unique support networks available at HBCUs, the ways HBCUs go above and beyond to support Black low-income students, and their contribution to workforce outcomes and the contribution of HBCUs to student and alumni's social and cultural capital (Hammond et al., 2021; Lee & Keys, 2013; Richards & Awokoya, 2012).

FOR PRACTICE

- The field of higher education must acknowledge HBCUs' expertise in properly supporting Black students. Higher education institutions can use the information from the study to develop programs and policies that demonstrate a genuine care and investment in Black students and the Black community.
- Practitioners at PWIs should draw upon the existing research and narratives about the ways that HBCUs properly support Black students and replicate those support practices and networks on their campuses as much as possible.
- HBCUs can draw upon the early experiences alumni describe to develop early-intervention programming for first-year students that will equip them with

the knowledge and connections they need to navigate campus and establish the connections they need early in their college experiences.

FOR RESEARCH

- More research is needed that draws upon the perspectives of alumni to understand how specific factors like faculty and staff support, peer mentorship, guidance from alumni, and networks contribute to students' on-campus experiences and at different time points after graduation.
- More mixed methods research is needed to understand the collective HBCU experience and specific factors that contribute to students' success while enrolled and after college to support accurate narratives about The HBCU Effect™.

THE HBCU EFFECT'S FUTURE RESEARCH ►

We seek to build upon the findings from this study through deeper inquiry on some of the following research questions:

- How does the HBCU experience and workforce outcomes vary between private HBCUs and public HBCUs?
- Which campus constituents, organizations and activities are most useful for supporting first-generation students who may arrive to their HBCU with limited knowledge about the importance of networking on their workforce outcomes?
- How can HBCUs serve as possibility models for other institutional types?
- What other ways do HBCUs contribute to social mobility and increased capital for HBCU students and alumni?