

*UNCF Press Briefing Transcript*

## **Punching Above Their Weight: A State-Level Analysis of Historically Black College and University Enrollment and Graduation**

The following is a transcript of the press briefing on the report, held Tuesday, June 25, at 11:00 a.m. EST.

### **HBCUs Punching Above Their Weight**

**MODERATOR:** Hello everyone, I'm Khalilah Long, marketing manager here at UNCF (United Negro College Fund). Welcome to this media briefing on UNCF's latest research report, *HBCUs Punching Above Their Weight, a State-Level Analysis of Historically Black Colleges & University Enrollment & Graduation*. I want to briefly introduce everyone to the nature of this report. For those of you who haven't joined us on one of these briefings before, UNCF is the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization. We support students' education and development through scholarships and development programs. Our member institutions include historically black colleges and universities and we advocate for the importance of minority education and college readiness. Our research division, the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute focuses on the educational issues facing African-Americans from preschool to adulthood.

We're committed to understanding and explaining the pathways that lead to educational attainment – so we conduct research intended to inform policymakers, educators, philanthropists, and journalists on how to best improve educational opportunities **for** and outcomes **of** African Americans and other underrepresented minorities. The premise of the call today is to give reporters more evidence and results into your stories that cover higher education or HBCUs.

Before we dive into the research findings, I want to extend to reporters, opportunities for UNCF's higher education and HBCU research to make it into your stories. Send us a quick email, tell us what your story is about, your deadlines – we have a large database

of researchers and data that can meet the needs of your story. We've produced fact sheets, white papers and full statistical reports on all things HBCUs.

Now today we're focusing on – despite the limited funding and resources and ratio of HBCUs compared to non-HBCUs, historically black institutions of higher learning enroll and graduate African Americans at alarming rates – far more than what would be expected.

We've got four very knowledgeable people to lead the discussion on findings in the report.

You will hear first from Dr. Brian Bridges, who is the Vice President of Research and Member Engagement with UUNCF and leads both the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute and the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building. He serves as UNCF's chief research officer, principal editor and contributor for all of our research reports. He will give you an overview of this latest report and some examples from UNCF's member institutions.

You will also hear from Dr. Barry Nagle, UNCF Senior Research Associate and author on this report. He will briefly go over the methodology used and how the data builds on our recently released UNCF report, the "HBCU Economic Impact Report."

Following Dr. Nagle, you will hear from Lodriguez Murray, UNCF Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs, who will discuss how the data in this report is driving advocacy and how that data affects Federal decision-makers and students.

And lastly, you will hear from Dr. Roderick Smothers, President of Philander Smith College, an HBCU in Little Rock, Arkansas, who will discuss how his college has implemented initiatives resulting in impressive enrollment growth, and his take on how HBCUs serve as engines of economic impact in their states and beyond.

So, without further delay, let me turn the call over to Dr. Brian Bridges to get us started.

**BRIAN BRIDGES, PhD:** Good morning. I am Brian Bridges, Vice President for Research and Member Engagement at UNCF, and I lead the organization's Frederick

D. Patterson Research Institute and the Institute for Capacity Building, two entities that are driving institutional performance in the HBCU space unlike any other organization presently. We provide research and capacity building in support of our member institutions and the entire network of HBCUs. We also make the case for HBCUs using data to inform Federal and State policy and campus-based practice.

HBCUs have been the primary driver of the black middle class in America. UNCF and FDPRI, the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, work to counter the narrative that HBCUs are not necessary in today's society or that they are dying on the vine. In fact, HBCU enrollments have somewhat steadily increased over the past 50 years, and except for the dip since the parent PLUS loan crisis in 2011-12, enrollments have since begun to rebound.

This report is a companion to our previous publication, "HBCUs Make America Strong: The Economic Impact of America's Historically Black College and Universities," which demonstrated that in 2014 HBCUs had an almost \$15 billion economic impact on the nation's economy, provided over 134,000 jobs, and 50,000 graduates in that year will continue to feed the economy for decades to come and can expect to earn an estimate of over \$130 billion in their lifetimes.

This report, "HBCUs Punching Above Their Weight," shows that HBCUs not only have a significant impact economically but they have a comparable impact in enrolling and graduating African American students in their states.

The impetus for this report was the thinking that the national impact of HBCUs was not fully accurate, given the location of these 100 institutions in 21 states and territories. We often say that all politics are local, but we believe that examining the local or State-based impacts in this regard of HBCUs is a bit more apropos than a national comparison, appropriately demonstrating their impact where they reside.

The high-level, key findings that we found across these 21 states and territories where HBCUs are located are that HBCUs comprise 9 percent of the 4-year institutions in these states and territories. However, they enroll 24 percent of all black undergraduates pursuing a bachelor's degree and awarded 26 percent of all black bachelor's degrees in

those states, and even more awarded 32 percent, fully a third, of the STEM degrees earned by black students in these states.

And then there are some key findings that stand out at the state level as well. For instance, one of the ones that we point out often is that in the District of Columbia, HBCUs are 25 percent of the 4-year institutions but enroll and graduate over 70 percent of all black undergraduates and award 71 percent of the black baccalaureate degrees in Washington, D.C. In other states, such as Mississippi, HBCUs are 31 percent of the 4-year institutions but enroll 48 percent of all black undergrads and award 42 percent of all black bachelor's degrees in the state. And in a state like North Carolina, for instance, HBCUs are 16 percent of the 4-year institutions but enroll 45 percent of all black undergraduates and award 43 percent of all black bachelor's degrees in the state.

So, our intention is that this data, paired with the data from "HBCUs Make America Strong" fully demonstrates not only the economic but also the educational impact of these venerable institutions and demonstrates what would be lost if they did not exist in today's society.

And at this time, that concludes my opening remarks, and I will turn things over to Dr. Nagle, who is the co-author on this report, to talk a little bit about the methodology and high-level data and impact.

**BARRY NAGLE, Ed.D.:** Thank you, Brian. As Brian knows, I am Barry Nagle. The other author of the report was Katherine Saunders, formerly of the Patterson Institute, and still does work such as this report with us.

I want to first discuss a little bit about the methodology on how we approached the report. Primarily, this is a secondary analysis, meaning that we used data available from the National Center of Education Statistics through their IPEDS database, and we either used the statistics directly from that database or derived some statistics from the database. We looked at the fall enrollment figures because they were the particularly the most complete and the most recent within IPEDS that we could get in this report reflect 2016 fall enrollment data. We also looked at the bachelor's degree completion rates for students that earned degrees in June of 2016. And the way we approached the

report is we wanted to compare the HBCUs within these 21 states and territories that Brian noted to the results of the HBCUs within those states.

Now Brian mentioned some specific examples. However overall examples, as well, such as that within these 21 states, HBCUs represent 9 percent of the institutions but enroll 23.9 percent of the black undergraduate students. We serve a greater percentage of students than the institutions represented within each of those states.

What is interesting is, even in the large states such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, which only have two HBCUs each, we are still seeing that our HBCU institutions serve a greater percent of black or African American students than the rest of the institutions within those states, and that is also true in D.C., West Virginia, and Missouri. Even in states where there is only HBCU, such as Oklahoma, our institutions serve more black or African American students than the remaining non-HBCUs within the state. Also, with enrollment, in fall of 2016, our institutions enrolled 175,000 undergraduate students, and 27,000 of the degrees awarded to black or African American students were awarded by our institutions, and there is a consistency among the percentage differences. As I said a moment ago, HBCUs enroll 23.9 percent of the black or African American students across these 21 states and we award 25.5 percent of the undergraduate bachelor's degrees in that universe.

So, these are the kind of impacts that lead to the economic impacts as far as the contribution our institutions make in equipping the students to contribute to society.

What I would like to do now is introduce Lodriguez Murray. He is the UNCF Vice President for Federal Policy and Government Affairs, and he is going to be discussing how we work with policymakers to impact decision-making across this universe.

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** Good morning to everyone, and I hope everyone is doing well. My name is Lodriguez Murray. I am Vice President for Public Policy and Government Affairs here at UNCF. I want to talk to you a little bit about how we are using this data, both the November 2017 Economic Impact Study as well as our brand new report that

we are proud of, HBCUs Punching Above their Weight, the state analysis of the HBCUs' enrollment and graduation, to impact policy both at the Federal and State levels. Now it is important to note that since the Economic Impact Report of November of 2017, Congress has followed suit and done some things that they had not done before, and that is invest more in the institutions and invest more in the students, and by the students we mean the students that could easily be the HBCU population, being first-generation college graduates, and students from underserved backgrounds, which HBCUs tend to enroll in higher percentages.

But let's talk about how much more Congress has invested in HBCU-related spending since the Economic Impact Report of 2017. Fiscal year '18, which was passed 4 months after the Economic Impact Report was released, on March 23, 2018, when the bill was passed and signed into law, represented a \$78.4 million increase for HBCU-related spending. That is 11.43 percent of the Federal budget that we call HBCU-related spending. And then, 6 months later, when Congress passed fiscal year 2019, in the waning days of September 2018, there was another \$25.59 million, or 3.36 percent increase in HBCU-related spending. And so, all told, in the span of about 6 months, Congress increased federal spending for HBCUs by upwards of \$109 million.

Now that is important because one of the ways we were able to get in the door and introduce the concept of increased spending for HBCUs was because we were able to tell, at a national level, at a statewide level, and at a city and locale level, the Economic Impact Report that each individual institution, or all institutions put together, were having on the state, and then all 100-plus institutions were having on the nation. And then we were able to do what you see here in this current report, and make the case that the institutions were so important on that statewide and local level that that Member of Congress, whether they be Democrat or Republican, should understand why we want to increase the funding there, because all politics are local.

And so we were able to in doors and to have the conversation about the importance of HBCUs being so much more palatable to important decision-makers for our nation, and especially decision-makers for fiscal policy of our nation, because we were able to show the Economic Impact Report and able to show the stats, as you see in Punching Above

Their Weight, on how many students in that locale that that institution is actually educating. We were able to show HBCUs, through the data, in a light to policymakers that they had not seen our institutions previously.

And if you look in the new House bill for fiscal year 2020, that was just passed last week—and it was only passed in the House and hasn't moved to the Senate yet—that bill, by itself, represents a 24 percent increase on fiscal year 2019, or nearly a \$200 million increase for fiscal year 2020 HBCU-related spending. Of course, it hasn't passed the Senate yet. It is only on the 50-yard line in terms of where we are in the appropriations process, but you see this growing trend of HBCU-related spending, and it all goes back, in large part, to us, on the Federal level, being able to showcase that the schools are viable, the schools are growing economic enterprises, and that the schools punch above their weight in terms of graduating and producing African American talent.

And then you also see some of the states following suit. There has been a commission that the state of Georgia has put forward because of this data, because Georgia's economic impact report of their HBCUs is over \$1 billion—with a B—every year, and then you see some movement in the state of Arkansas as well.

And so there is a lot of activity happening and it's all because we are able to showcase to policymakers the schools have a strong economic impact, and we are able to show them the amount of black scholars that are coming through those schools at a disproportionately higher rate, that will impact that state and that locale in the future.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you, Lodriguez. I would like to turn the call over to Dr. Smothers from Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas.

**RODERICK SMOTHERS, Ph.D.:** Thank you very much and good morning—I think it is good morning where you all are. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to chime in this morning. I am Roderick Smothers and I have the honored privilege of serving as the President of Philander Smith College. Philander Smith College is a United Methodist-affiliated HBCU in Little Rock, Arkansas, founded in 1977, liberal arts in nature, and we are moving Philander forward, as I often like to say in Little Rock, but we are moving

forward because we have aligned ourselves with the priorities of the State of Arkansas. And you see some of those priorities coming to light, really, the data before you. Before I share with you a couple of examples of how we have grown our enrollment and how beneficial this report is, I want to say thank you to Dr. Brian Bridges at his team at Patterson Institute for producing for us another tool that we can use. I am a metaphor type guy, but I love this metaphor of "punching above their weight." So, metaphorically, on the daily battle field for justice and equality for the students who attend our institutions, we are oftentimes in need of new weapons to fight this battle, and so this report provides for us another weapon of education and awareness that we can use to continue telling the story of our HBCUs, and, at the end of the day, provide evidence that proves that they are relevant, more relevant than ever before, and no doubt, thank you to Dr. Lomax for his leadership as well with UNCF, for working with Dr. Bridges to produce such a report.

I want to share with you just a couple of examples of how this report really hits home for us in Arkansas. As you know, Arkansas is one of the delta states, and so there is a suggestion that it is economically challenged, probably more so than many of the states on that list. We probably fall in the bottom sphere. When I arrived at Philander 5 years ago, I noticed that there were a couple of things that needed to be done, but in doing so I noted that the new Governor of Arkansas, Asa Hutchinson, had declared that he wanted Arkansas to move more aggressively to accomplish some of the goals that actually had been set forth under the Obama administration, with respect to moving the United States of America back to becoming or being one of the top 10 countries in the world where it had more citizens educated at the college level, and that Arkansas percentage of that was one that had to be realized if indeed Arkansas was going to move forward.

And so, I tapped into that and saw where Philander Smith College had a great opportunity to help the state of Arkansas move forward and therein lied, if you would, the plan that we set forth to grow our enrollment. So, when I arrived at Philander Smith College in 2014-15, the school's enrollment had dwindled for a number of reasons to around 540-550 students. Now, 5 years later, we are at 1,005 students, and growing.



And I want to talk real briefly about how we got there. Obviously, we had an enrollment management plan, and that enrollment management plan was tied to our long-range plan for the future of the college. And in that plan, we did three things that I think really spoke to, if you would, some of the issues going on in Arkansas. The first thing we did was that we developed some local relationships. We were in the city of Little Rock, where there weren't strong relationships with the eight high schools there, and so we literally went to those schools and said, "We want to provide opportunities for your students." Those schools say, "Hey, look, we didn't really think our students could go to Philander Smith College." And so, we opened that door there and we were amazed at the outcome of those relationships. Obviously, you see those outcomes now, 5 years later.

We also did something that was in direct response to a challenge that was given to me from philanthropic Arkansas, which was, why would we help you, a private institution in the state of Arkansas that is educating more students from outside of Arkansas? Why would we help you? And so, when I looked at our demographics I said, "Well, we need to shift that trend." In shifting that trend, we discovered that those students coming from Arkansas presented with more challenges than some of our out-of-state students, academically. So we developed the Summer Bridge Program, and that Summer Bridge Program, now in its fifth year, has actually become one of the keys to our success, where we bring students in who come from challenging environments, we enroll them in a 6-week intensive bridge program, and we get them ready for college. And so, resultively, that bridge program has been the key to our success, and as a result of that we have realized more philanthropic support.

The third thing that we have done, we have done targeted pipelines. So, we have formed relationships with charter schools. We have formed relationships with border states. We have formed relationships with communities with Promise Programs where the funding can follow the students, so that when they get to Philander Smith College the affordability gap is not the issue.

I bring all of these things up because at the end of the day it is exactly what Mr. Murray said, that in Arkansas we have a legislature and a group of policymakers who are not

aware of the impact of HBCUs, and so the Economic Impact Study and now this study, *Punching Above Their Weight*, gives me the tools that I need to continue to educate policymakers and others in the state of Arkansas around the impacts of what HBCUs bring to the table, but more importantly, how working with those HBCUs can help to move Arkansas' broader educational agenda forward.

I will share this last element of my story and then I'll hush. As I look at this report, I note that in 2016, 504 students received a baccalaureate degree at HBCUs. That's 504. And that year, Philander Smith College graduated 115 students. And when I can go to a policymaker, to someone in philanthropic Arkansas, and say that in 2016, of the 504 black kids who received bachelor's degrees in the state of Arkansas, Philander Smith College educated close to 25 percent of those students, it makes them step up and sit up at the table in a different way. And not only can I say that but I can call the names of students who come from their communities in the delta and other places, and it really makes this story real for them.

These types of reports provide our HBCU presidents with the tools and the arsenal that they need to really continue to push an agenda that we know, and we have realized, as HBCUs presidents, is a real agenda, and that is that our HBCUs are not only important, not only are they relevant, not only do they need to be around, but that they must be around. They must be here if, indeed, we are going to move this country forward to becoming one of the top 10 countries in the world who have citizens who are educated beyond their high school diploma.

And so with that, I will pause, and I just want to thank you all again for giving me the opportunity to chime in today and talk about the value of this important weapon that we need to use in the battle of fighting for justice and equality for our HBCUs.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you, Dr. Smothers. Thank you all for the rich discussion and points that you've covered in your individual talking points. We have about 10 or 15 minutes left for a brief Q&A, but before we do the Q&A, I would like to do a brief reporter roll call. So, if you would like to state your name and your publication that you are affiliated with, now is your time.

**ATTENDEE:** [Unclear] Jones, *Diverse Issues for Higher Education*.

**PETER WHITE:** Peter White, *Tennessee Tribune* in Nashville, Tennessee.

**ERIC STIRGUS:** Eric Stirgus, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

**BUTTERFLY ANDERSON:** Butterfly Anderson, *HBCU Pride Nation*.

**JOHN X. MILLER:** John X. Miller, *The Undefeated*.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you all. If there are any questions from those participants on the phone we would love to take those questions and provide it to our panelists to answer.

**ERIC STIRGUS:** Hi. This is Eric Stirgus in Atlanta. One question I was going to ask you is there has been a lot of conversation in recent days about student loan debt, and I was wondering if there are any solutions or anything that you would like to see on the Federal level, as far as ways the Federal Government or others can help to reduce the amount of student loan debt.

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** That is a good question about student loan debt. I think it is important to note that UNCF is the second-largest private provider of scholarships in the country, period, that we award some \$100 million in scholarships to 10,000 students, at 1,100 different colleges and universities, so not just to 37 UNCF members or not just to 101 HBCUs, but to 1,100 different colleges and universities. So that allows us to have a footprint, not just in HBCUs but we have a footprint touching underserved and minority and first-generation college students, wherever they go to college in the country. So, the first line of defense at UNCF, to making sure that student loan debt is as low as possible, is awarding scholarships that help make sure students won't have to take out loans. So that's the first work we do in that area. We are the largest provider of scholarships to minorities in the country, period, and the second-largest provider of scholarships in the country, period. So that is the number one thing we do to help in that regard.

But on the Federal policy basis, there are number of initiatives that have been introduced, and as a matter of fact, UNCF is finalizing our own plan that we are putting forth to Federal policymakers so that we can help lead the way. I mentioned all we do to help make sure students don't have to take out loans. So, because we touch those students in a way that hardly no one else does, we understand their circumstances in a unique way, and we are coming up with our own policy called PASS. And we will have more details about that in coming days.

But we are following closely every single policy that comes out, in terms of student loan debt ratios and how to make that better, how to jump-start the economy because of it, and we are coming up with our own, and you will hear a lot more about it. But in terms of numbers or other perspectives, I want to see if one of my colleagues has anything to say.

**BRIAN BRIDGES, PhD:** Well, you know, a lot of the recent narrative about—

**ERIC STIRGUS:** Could you identify yourselves?

**BRIAN BRIDGES, PhD:** Oh, yes. This is Brian Bridges.

**ERIC STIRGUS:** Who was just speaking?

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** Hi. The first speaker was Lodriguez Murray, and I'm the Vice President for Public Policy and Government Affairs at UNCF.

**ERIC STIRGUS:** Thank you, Lodriguez. Thank you.

**BRIAN BRIDGES, PhD:** And this is Brian Bridges, Vice President for Research and Member Engagement at UNCF. And to echo my colleague's comments, I would also say that a lot of the narrative around student loan debt often is a little too simplistic and doesn't look at the nuance because it is often used, or how it is often characterized is that it is an issue of the institutions, and that is less the case. It is more about the students who choose to attend the institutions.

These are institutions that their mission is to serve underserved students. So, they dedicate themselves to disproportionately serving low-income, academically underserved, low SES students. And, as a result, those students bring more challenges that they have to overcome, and so it takes them longer to graduate and they require more resources to be successful. And, as a result, it's more difficult for them to persist. So, as a result, many of those students end up having to sit out or drop out of school, and they have to start paying back their student loans. For those students, Federal financial aid is often not enough to help them persist through to completion.

And so I say all these things to basically say that the student loan issue, especially affiliated with HBCUs, and other institutions that enroll large numbers of low-income students, is a lot more complex than what is often characterized in the media. And so we welcome, if anyone is interested in writing a story, a more complex story about student loan debt that revolves around HBCU students, not just the institutions, we are more than happy to provide a resource for that information.

Any other questions?

**PETER WHITE:** This is Peter White in Nashville. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

**MODERATOR:** You can go ahead, Peter.

**PETER WHITE:** I have two things. One, can you send me a head shot of Dr. Bridges? We normally have a photo with our stories. You have my email address. Can you send me a head shot?

**MODERATOR:** Certainly.

**PETER WHITE:** That is not my question. That is a request.

Okay. Here is my question. It's along the lines of the student loan. It's sort of a hypothetical, but this is what it is. Imagine that, say, in 2020, Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren becomes President, and they have both called for the cancellation of student debt and free college tuition at state colleges. I would like to know your

thoughts, how that would impact the UNCF's historical role to provide financial resources. Would it affect your endowment, your fundraising, your scholarships?

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** Well, let's take a moment and pause. I think there is a little bit of corrective notion that we want to take with the premise of your question. First of all, both of the candidates that you mentioned, when you examine their most recent proposals, not only include public schools of higher education, they also include the private ones, which are the UNCF member schools. And part of that is because those candidates had to learn the value of all of our institutions.

For instance, if you look at higher education say, well, higher education may be like K-12, so I want to treat public schools different from private schools, that is a little intellectually dishonest. If your goal is to decrease the racial wealth gap in the country then you want to help impact where students, who come from underserved communities, are going to school. Those are HBCUs, both public and private. So you don't treat those institutions differently.

And through some level of education, which UNCF is happy to provide to every public official—and we do do it on an aggressive basis—those candidates that you named, they started out in one space and they have moved to another space that includes adding private HBCUs and making those tuitions more affordable or free. They have added that into their proposals. Mr. Sanders' original proposal a few years ago did not do that. Dr. Warren's original proposal did not do that, but in her latest post on Blavity.com she has added private HBCUs, because we have worked to make sure that they are sensitive to that issue.

Now in terms of what that would mean for us, there is so much to do to make sure that students who look like those that are getting their scholarships currently from UNCF, get a seat at the table and get a level playing field. So there is a role for public policy and decision-makers, and they need to be in this space. But in addition to that, there is a role for the scholarships and for the other services—career services, internships, professional services—that UNCF provides to the community, and that we have provided for 75 years, and will continue to strengthen. There is a role for all of that.

It takes all of this in our community, and more, to make sure that our students are strong, and we intend to be involved in this work, in the research area, to make sure that you guys get the right stats and policymakers have it, make sure that advocacy is strong so policymakers make the right decisions, now and in the future, and that our students are strong, by giving them the direct resources to get the education that they need for a brighter future.

**PETER WHITE:** And that was Lodriguez, right?

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** That was Lodriguez. It depends. Only if the answer was good.

**PETER WHITE:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much for your response and thank you all for doing this call. That's all I have.

**MODERATOR:** Absolutely. We've got about 2 more minutes on the line, if anyone else had a question.

**ATTENDEE:** Yes. This is Sonora Sanders [ph], HBCU Pride Nation intern. I had a question.

**MODERATOR:** Absolutely.

**ATTENDEE:** I read a success story on UNCF's website about giving scholarships to students to help remove financial burdens. But has UNCF taken initiative to remove other financial burdens that students may experience, for example, students that are interested in international experiences, studying abroad, enriching experiences? Has UNCF taken the initiative to help the percentage of African American international students, because we are currently at 6.1 percent? So that was my question.

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** I think you asked a couple of questions there. This is Lodriguez Murray. I think you have asked a couple of questions there, and I think the answer to all your questions are yes. You know, we mentioned that we distribute about \$100 million a year to students. In that \$100 million, it is distributed through 400 different

programs. And so, we have a number of avenues, and each of the programs are a little different. And so, some of them are specifically for international students, and there is some study abroad assistance for domestic students to help them get international experiences.

So, the answer to all your questions are yes. All of our different programs are not always open at the same time, so each month different programs are open. And if Dr. Smothers is still on the line, Dr. Smothers, I know that you have done a lot of work outside the continental 48 states and in some other countries and territories of the U.S., to make sure that international students get the right to come to institutions like HBCUs. Dr. Smothers?

**RODERICK SMOTHERS, Ph.D.:** Yes, Mr. Murray, I am still here, and you are absolutely right. Just here recently, Philander Smith College partnered with several of the stateside HBCUs with the Bahamas to create one of those targeted pipelines that I referenced earlier. And one of the main challenges that the Bahamian students have, obviously, is the affordability issue. And so, working with Dr. Lomax and with UNCF, we are working to identify a source of funds that we can also use to provide to international students.

But I think this ties us back to the initial premise of this report, is that HBCU, especially our private ones, are historically under-resourced, but yet even in that under-resourced scenario we are able to do amazing work that someone else would not believe that we could not do based on our resource level, with students, no matter where they are from. And our international students certainly are some of our best and brightest students, but they are also some of our most economically challenged students. And so, working with UNCF to identify those resources is a top priority, because we also understand the importance of what I call the global impact imperative of our historically black colleges and universities.

**ATTENDEE:** I have a question [unclear] Walker. I saw that HBCUs awarded about 32 percent of the STEM degrees earned by black students in their study. So, I just wanted



to ask, what are some of the lessons that other institutions might learn from these HBCUs to further help African Americans in both STEM enrollment and completion?

**LODRIGUEZ MURRAY:** Well, I think that—thank you for that question. I think this stat alone is an example of how HBCUs can serve as best practice models for the rest of higher education. That often is not the case. But HBCUs, and some of the previous research from the Patterson Research Institute, that I invite you all to peruse our website, we found that HBCUs perform at an unexpected level in retaining and graduating low-income, first-generation, under-represented students, and this report just reinforces that HBCUs do demonstrable work for their students in trying to get more minority students into and through the STEM pipeline, which is an issue that all higher education is concerned with.

So, I think that if anything else, this study demonstrates that HBCUs should be a rich proving ground, or a rich resource for other higher education institutions, not HBCUs, to learn from in how to recruit and retain and help students persist through to completion within the STEM fields.

**MODERATOR:** Awesome. Well, thank you all for your contributions today. I want to remind everyone that the report is online at [UNCF.org/PATW](https://unconf.org/patw). This media briefing transcript will be available on our website probably by next week. And we encourage you to check out our other higher education and HBCU reports on [UNCF.org](https://unconf.org). Finally, I hope that those in the reportorial community will continue to follow us at UNCF on social media, and until our next briefing thank you very much, and so long.

**END OF CALL**

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