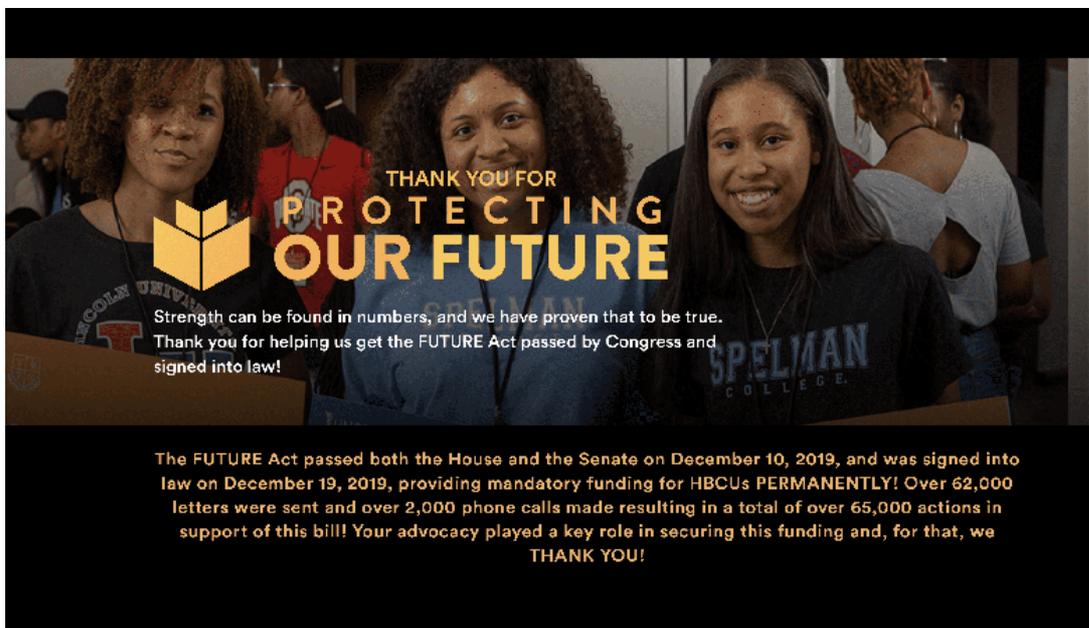


IMPACT

Seeing the FUTURE and Making it Pass: UNCF Leads the Way to Permanent Federal Government STEM Funding for HBCUs



Thursday, Dec. 19, 2019, delivered a victory for UNCF and many of its students like no other. President Donald Trump signed a first-of-its kind federal law, the FUTURE Act, extending mandatory federal funding for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) to increase their science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs and abilities.

This victory was long in coming, as UNCF and several partner organizations had mounted a months-long campaign to urge Congress to ensure federal funding for STEM-related programs—programs at these smaller institutions that attract students and produce degrees that earn high-dollar jobs later in life. STEM programs also help attract additional research

funding which brings further investment to institutions that have STEM programs—so having federal funding is crucial to smaller colleges and universities like HBCUs.

What led the way to that victory was a small investment from a donor to UNCF, earmarked specifically for this purpose, that allowed the organization to begin an email letter-writing campaign to Congress. After creating a website with the proper tools for people to use and some social media exposure, the campaign quickly took off and soon letters were pouring in.

“We were really surprised at the responses we were getting,” said Lodriguez Murray, UNCF’s senior vice president for public policy and government affairs. “It was just a deluge of letters. We quickly found out that people really cared about this issue.”

The campaign began in September 2019 with emails sent to lists gathered by UNCF and several coalition partners. Press releases were sent out alerting users to a website where they could send emails and sign-up for more information about the campaign. As they joined the email list, more requests to activate and contact Congress were sent out based on the actions of the week, day or even the hour.

Marshalling the forces who had joined the email campaign, UNCF ensured the pressure on and the contacts to Congress continued to grow. Within four months, more than 65,000 emails had been sent to Capitol Hill alerting federal Representatives and Senators just how much HBCUs truly needed to get their support and to get federal funding for STEM programs.

“This was a success like no other. They just don’t pass standalone bills like this very often,” Murray explained. “The last time they did this for something related to HBCUs was in 2000, so this was something special. Standalone bills like the FUTURE Act that focus solely on minority populations and have a substantial benefit to HBCUs rarely pass Congress. They usually become part of larger, must-pass pieces of legislation; however, the FUTURE Act stood on its own two feet. This is a once-in-a-generation occurrence, and UNCF couldn’t be prouder to make a difference for HBCUs and our students.”

And, that UNCF success is the kind of victory that ensures a better FUTURE for all of us.