

IMPACT

The Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute: A 'Force Multiplier' Expanding for Greater Impact

To remedy this, UNCF created the UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute (FDPRI)—named for the founder of UNCF and former Tuskegee University president—in 1996, producing significant outcomes during its 20-plus years of work.

From its early signature publication—the African American Data Book Series—to recent landmark reports, *HBCUs Make America Strong: The Economic Impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and HBCUs Punching Above Their Weight*, FDPRI has been the “force multiplier” providing data to help numerous UNCF operations powerfully make the case for the organization’s work and to clearly enunciate the HBCU value proposition.

“We believed that UNCF needed to have its own research authority,” said Dr. Michael L. Lomax, UNCF’s president and CEO. “When I arrived here in 1994, I made establishing the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute a top priority because having our own team of dedicated researchers to understand and author the data on how African American students and our HBCUs perform is vital to improving the problems for our community and constituents.”

While FDPRI has produced analysis, reports and other publications that have helped to shift the HBCU narrative and convey UNCF’s impact on its students and other stakeholders, it has always been limited in what it could do and more work remains. The Institute, relying on a small, highly focused staff, has had to punch above its weight, much like the HBCUs it works to defend, never having more than four employees at any one time.

But thanks to funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and partnering internally with UNCF’s Institute for Capacity Building (ICB), FDPRI’s staff has expanded over the past year. This partnership, via a major grant program, has deeply integrated the work of FDPRI and ICB in a complimentary manner that allows each team to provide source material for the other. The partnership has also provided grant support—literally a force multiplier—that allowed FDPRI to expand its staff and, subsequently, its impact across UNCF. This was evidenced through the launch of a major research initiative entitled, “The HBCU Effect,” a website platform and framework to convey the HBCU value proposition more powerfully through research and evidence.

Dr. Lomax, seeing the progress of this landmark and looking to its future, sums up the FDPRI mantra. “As the 25th anniversary of the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute nears, the team has never been stronger and

has great plans ahead. We wanted to be THE authority for African American higher education data, and I think we've certainly moved the needle in that direction."