

**DR. HENRY N. TISDALE, PRESIDENT, CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY
AND CHAIR, UNCF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**WHITE HOUSE “LISTENING SESSION” WITH HBCU PRESIDENTS
COMMENTS ON HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN BE A
BETTER PARTNER WITH HBCUs**

Good afternoon. I am Dr. Henry Tisdale, president of Claflin University, located in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Claflin was founded 148 years ago and is the oldest HBCU in South Carolina.

Thank you for hosting this “Listening Session.” We greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss how the federal government can partner with HBCUs to expand our significant contributions to the country and leverage our deep roots in our communities to bring about positive change.

I want to bring your attention to Title III of the Higher Education Act, which was intended to be an equalizing source of federal funding to offset years of neglect. It is the lifeblood of federal support to HBCUs and extremely important to the entire network of HBCUs.

Title III, Part B provides operating support for both undergraduate and graduate programs, helping HBCUs to provide strong academic programs, strengthen faculty, offer well-equipped science labs, provide student services, and improve institutional management among other things. The program is authorized at \$375 million annually in discretionary funds for undergraduate and \$125 million for graduate programs, but funded in FY 2017 at only \$245 million and \$63 million, respectively – well below the amounts promised.

While a stream of \$85 million in annual mandatory funding was put into place in 2010; these funds run out in two years, leaving a potential funding cliff that would be devastating to HBCUs.

The Title III Part C Endowment Challenge Fund has not been funded in many years. Authorized at \$10 million annually, it was intended to help HBCUs become more self-sufficient by building up our endowments, which are woefully undercapitalized. The median HBCU endowment is only \$14 million – about half of the median endowment for other colleges and universities. If one were to add all HBCU

endowments together, that amount would come out to \$3.4 billion – one-tenth of the size of Harvard’s endowment. Small endowments mean that HBCUs have no cushion against financial downturns.

Finally, **the Title III, Part D, HBCU Capital Financing** program provides essential low-interest financing for capital improvements on both public and private HBCU campuses, enabling us to undertake vital projects to renovate and construct academic buildings, update dormitories for modern technology, and provide students with adequate learning and living environments. These projects also create jobs in communities that all too often are economically depressed. A \$25 million interest subsidy appropriation would leverage approximately \$400 million in new loans – a cost-effective investment by any measure.

Thus, we hope you will agree that these programs have yet to receive the attention they deserve.

HBCUs pull above their weight – graduating students who come to college with the greatest financial needs and academic issues to overcome. And, we achieve these results despite limited resources. Fully funding Title III programs would provide critical benefits to our institutions and the country, by expanding our capacity to produce the African American professionals – teachers, scientists, doctors, businessmen, and civic leaders – that the country needs.

Again, thank you for listening.