



FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FEDERAL HBCU COMPETITIVENESS STRATEGY

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Framework for the Development of a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy

Since the founding in 1837 of the first college dedicated to serving the needs of African American students to the present, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played an important role in helping our country fulfill its promise to hold true that all Americans are created equal. Building on a proud history of serving the educational needs of African Americans and other Americans who would otherwise have been denied access to education, these institutions have provided—and continue to provide—their students the education necessary to be informed citizens and the skills necessary to succeed in a competitive global economy. While HBCUs now attract students from all over the world, their historic nature is reflected in their distinct legal standing. HBCUs continue to play an essential role in the education of lower income Americans and those seeking to become the first in their families to achieve the dream of a college education regardless of race.

President Trump recognizes the value of HBCUs to their students, the American economy, and the country and issued Executive Order 13779, the White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at HBCUs (Executive Order) shortly after taking office. HBCUs comprise only 2 percent of all postsecondary degree-granting institutions but provide first-generation, low-income, and minority students the opportunity to earn college degrees and other credentials.¹ HBCUs primarily, but far from exclusively, enroll African Americans; in 2014, HBCUs enrolled 10 percent of African American college students, accounted for 17 percent of African American bachelor's degree holders, and 24 percent of African Americans with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.²

¹ Richards, D. A. R., & J.T. Awokoya, "Understanding HBCU retention and completion." 2012, UNCF. https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/Understanding_HBCU_Retention_and_Completion.pdf

² UNCF. "HBCUs Make America Strong: The Positive Economic Impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities." 2017. https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/HBCU_Consumer_Brochure_FINAL_APPROVED.pdf

In serving the needs of low-income, first-generation, and minority students, HBCUs help meet the education needs of the urban and rural communities in which they are located and develop pedagogical techniques that help define national learning priorities. Nearly one in four students enrolled at four-year HBCUs are from families in the lowest income quintile—more than three times that of non-HBCUs.³ HBCUs have demonstrated outsized results in facilitating upward and intergenerational income mobility.⁴ Additionally, these institutions are also important economic generators and employers in their communities. In 2014, the nation’s 102 accredited HBCUs generated \$14.8 billion in economic impact across the national economy including more than 134,000 on- and off-campus jobs.⁵ HBCUs provide important investments in both their students and their communities; improved HBCU competitiveness and fiscal health better ensures their continued growth, evolution, and service to future generations.

For at least the past several decades, as a Federal policy priority, the United States has intensely focused on global economic competition. Despite Americans’ growing appreciation of the challenges of competing in the global economy, use of the term “competitiveness” has frequently been constrained to business, government, elite research institutions and leading economic organizations. It has not yet found its way into the vernacular of HBCUs, resulting in institutional misalignment with, and disconnection from, the best opportunities the American economy and Federal sector have to offer.

The Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy Framework (Framework), for the first time, recognizes the potential of HBCUs in meeting the missions and objectives of Federal agencies; it presents the Administration’s vision for helping HBCUs better align with, contribute to and realize value from agency strategic goals. It establishes a Government-wide exercise with the

³ American Council on Education. “Minority Serving Institutions as Engines of Upward Mobility.” 2018.
<https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/MSIs-as-Engines-of-Upward-Mobility.pdf>

⁴ Chetty, Rag, John Friedman, Emmanuel Saex, Nicholas Turner, Danny Yagan. “Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility.” NBER Working Paper No. 23618, July 2017.
<https://www.nber.org/papers/w23618>

Nathenson, Robert, Andres Castro Samayoa. “Moving Upward and Onward: Income Mobility at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” Rutgers Graduate School of Education Center for MSIs. 2019.
https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/EMreport_R4_0.pdf

⁵ UNCF, HBCUs Make America Strong.

overarching goal of improving conditions under which HBCUs compete for Federal opportunities in order to foster improved education opportunities and better realize America's full human potential. This Framework will help HBCUs grow their networks of employer partners who can provide more opportunities for students to participate in research and development, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities that lead to career success. Further, this Framework ignites the creation and aggregation of individual agency HBCU competitiveness plans, informed by the goals and practices described herein, to help build and strengthen a Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem.

HBCU Competitiveness Defined

The Framework defines HBCU competitiveness as:

The ability of HBCUs to successfully compete for public and private investments to meet the needs of students and promote community prosperity.

This Framework adopts an inclusive definition of investment, including both financial investments such as grant-making, contracting and cooperative agreements, and nonfinancial investments such as partnerships with public or private sector employers, expanded internship or work-based learning opportunities, and more proactive Federal agency engagement and capacity building with HBCUs and local community stakeholders.

Following the development of initial agency HBCU competitiveness plans in the spring 2020, future plans will be developed every 4 years in tandem with agency strategic plans developed in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA). Importantly, while HBCUs have established traditions and programs as reflected in their statutory definition, they are race-neutral institutions providing agencies considerable latitude for purposes of developing competitiveness plans. Together, these agency plans – reflecting the guidance provided in this Framework – comprise the *Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy*.

Federal HBCU Competitiveness Strategy

This Framework will guide Federal agencies in the development of their 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plans. To achieve the goal of improving the conditions under which HBCUs compete for Federal opportunities, the Framework calls for the adoption of four practices to assist agencies in fulfilling their missions through collaboration with HBCUs.

Practice 1: Improving Alignment with Government Performance and Results Act Planning and Reporting

Agency HBCU competitiveness plans should be developed synergistically with current agency strategic plans, prior to being updated as part of future GPRAMA processes; competitiveness plans should not be relegated to standalone status with ancillary or collateral objectives. Significantly, since this Framework will issue in the middle of current agency 4-year strategic planning cycle, the first iteration of 4-year agency HBCU competitiveness plans will substantively cover only FY2021 and FY2022. Following the completion of agency strategic plans in FY2022, agency HBCU competitiveness planning will take place within the regular GPRAMA process.

Agency HBCU competitiveness plans will establish overall goals, including clearly defined quantitative goals, for the 4-year period they cover. Agencies are encouraged to consider goals that are agency-specific, align with discrete Federal objectives, and encompass the process for engaging and partnering with HBCUs. The Federal HBCU Competitiveness Priority Areas (Priority Areas) set forth in this Framework will ensure harmonization among agency plans and goals, fostering an interconnected Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem designed to improve the opportunities for students, communities, and institutions. The Priority Areas should be firmly embedded in agency HBCU competitiveness plans and are integral to successfully implementing agency competitiveness plans.

For purposes of measuring and reporting substantial program expenditures under agency HBCU competitiveness plans, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will request data

on an annual basis through a budget data request (BDR). Agency progress towards meeting HBCU goals not covered by the BDR from OMB will be submitted to the White House Initiative on HBCUs (White House Initiative).

Practice 2: Developing Action-Oriented Plans Aligned with Agency Mission and Objectives

For purposes of this Framework, agencies should establish goals and implement strategies aimed at improving the conditions under which HBCUs compete. This includes adopting high-leverage policies, practices, programs and projects that support HBCU competitiveness in a way that positively impacts agency mission and objectives. Importantly, this Framework does not alter agency mission and objectives but calls on agencies to consider how execution of mission and objectives can be more fully realized in partnership with HBCUs. Once successfully implemented, these collaborative efforts should enable HBCUs and agencies to work in a more coordinated, efficient and effective manner to advance both HBCU competitiveness and the competitiveness of the nation.

Agency HBCU competitiveness plans should reflect relevant agency actions already taking place, actions that may be scaled to greater effect, and anticipated future actions. Agency HBCU competitiveness plans should reflect relevant agency goals and priorities, and focus on specific actions the agency will take to leverage the talent of HBCU students and faculty in meeting the agency's goals. Agencies are encouraged to consider how HBCUs can make valuable contributions through contracts, cooperative agreements or research partnerships. Plans should incorporate agency efforts to promote outreach, connectivity, capacity building or the provision of technical assistance; these capacity building opportunities are essential to the success of the Federal HBCU competitiveness strategy. In addition, agency HBCU competitiveness plans should include strategies for ensuring that HBCUs will be aware of the needs an agency has and the opportunities an agency will offer to better submit competitive proposals based on a clear understanding of agency requirements and goals. Agency competitiveness plans should encompass potential opportunities to foster partnerships between HBCUs and non-government partners that will continue to support economic growth.

For every action included in the competitiveness plan, agencies should include concrete deliverables, milestones, and rationale for action. Finally, agencies should ensure that appropriate reporting mechanisms are in place to measure progress toward the achievement of the goals identified in their plans.

Practice 3: Fostering a Federal HBCU Competitiveness Ecosystem

Sustaining and improving the competitiveness of HBCUs and the students and communities they serve depends on the formation of well-functioning ecosystems—that is, the ability of multiple disparate and disconnected parts forming mutually complementary connections to produce the desired results. For HBCU competitiveness this means creating the scaffolding that brings together and supports HBCUs and Federal Agencies to build a Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem that facilitates shared learning, development, and collaboration to drive reciprocal gain among all participants.

The holistic focus on building and strengthening the Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem distinguishes this Framework from past Federal approaches to support and advance the mission of HBCUs. This stark departure from past practices recognizes that mere collections of disparate HBCU-specific programs and projects that are disconnected from national education and economic priorities will fail to develop the ability of HBCUs to contribute to national priorities in a sustainable way. Rather, a resilient Federal ecosystem including institutions, agencies, programs, and projects aligned with national priorities, is essential to improve the conditions under which HBCUs compete for the full range of Federal opportunities.

The White House Initiative will continue to lead the way in fostering this ecosystem. Working with and through the HBCU Interagency Working Group established by the Executive Order, the White House Initiative will continue to be the keystone that guides and stewards this Framework, providing both centralized and shared leadership, creating and strengthening the interconnections among agencies and HBCUs, and helping agency partners publicly measure and report their progress in fulfilling the goals established through their HBCU competitiveness plans.

Practice 4: Ensuring Government-wide Alignment via Four Priority Areas

The White House Initiative, in collaboration with the HBCU Interagency Working Group, has identified four Priority Areas designed to encourage alignment across the Federal government. Collectively, the Priority Areas fulfil the mandate of the Executive Order to enhance the ability of HBCUs to serve our nation's young adults and to collaborate with HBCUs to facilitate the development of deeper and more collaborative partnerships with employers, educational associations, philanthropic organizations, and other community stakeholders. Through the development and fulfillment of agency HBCU competitiveness plans, agencies are encouraged to identify how their actions will improve the conditions under which HBCUs compete in order to further the education experience of students, facilitate the improvement of institutional infrastructure, leverage HBCUs to advance community economic development, or improve the academic science and technology research enterprise to the benefit of the students and communities they serve. While all agency actions need not align with these priorities, the Trump Administration has identified these areas as high-leverage areas of opportunity for promoting and encouraging HBCU competitiveness.

Education: The principle mission of HBCUs is education and the foundational mission of the White House Initiative is to realize America's full human potential by harnessing HBCUs to provide more and better educational opportunities for the students they serve. Education forms the foundation on which citizens build the capacity and creativity to support civil society and strengthen local economies. This Framework encourages agencies to identify in their competitiveness plans opportunities to partner with HBCUs to improve the education experience of their students and to better prepare students for career success in a competitive global economy. Where appropriate, agencies should build on the Trump Administration's 5-year strategic plan for STEM education – *Charting a Course for Success: America's Strategy for STEM Education*. This plan articulates a vision for a future where all Americans will have lifelong access to high-quality STEM education, ensuring that the United States will remain the global leader in STEM literacy, innovation, and employment.

Examples: Reflecting the opportunity of Federal agencies to serve as employer partners with HBCUs, the United States Secret Service (USSS) has increased its outreach and engagement with HBCUs, successfully achieving its goal of establishing partnerships with faculty at 35 percent of the nation's HBCUs. Partnerships such as these educate students and faculty about agency mission and the skills and education needed for a USSS career. The Central Intelligence Agency has developed a model partnership with the Southern University System to benefit students and faculty through classroom workshops, shared curriculum development, and sustained recruitment.

21st Century Infrastructure: HBCUs play an important role in their communities and represent a strategic resource for supporting the development of safe, healthy, and vibrant communities. Their ability to fully deliver on this role relies on modern institutional infrastructure—the physical and organizational resources required to facilitate the student educational experience. A safe, well-designed, and sufficiently resourced campus is critical to an HBCU's ability to safely and effectively deliver on its educational, community service and research mission. While the Historically Black College and University Capital Financing Program supports the repair, renovation, and construction of campus buildings, this physical infrastructure does not reflect the full needs of the 21st century learning environment or the institutional infrastructure necessary to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive higher education marketplace.

Example: Information and communication technologies and broadband play an increasing role the competitiveness of our country, which is reflected by the importance of such infrastructure for institutional competitiveness. In 2019, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) launched the Minority Broadband Initiative (MBI) to leverage the networks and location of HBCUs to expand broadband coverage to underserved communities, particularly in the rural South.

Economic Development and Competitiveness: HBCUs produce the talent and technology that fuel economic growth and expanding the links between these schools and their local and

regional economic competitiveness ecosystems will benefit both students and community members. HBCUs that have specialized research, technology transfer, and commercialization capabilities, faculty expertise and sophisticated laboratories, expand the reach of HBCUs and the contributions that HBCUs make to national competitiveness. These campus-based resources can support job creation, the development of high-skilled regional talent pools, entrepreneurship and business development in local innovation clusters. HBCUs serve as anchor institutions for local economies and agencies should identify opportunities to leverage HBCUs to serve broader community economic needs. Expanded innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities will by necessity expand local and regional economic opportunity.

Examples: The Small Business Administration has recognized the potential of HBCUs to serve as community economic engines by expanding HBCU-specific outreach and engagement through the Small Business Development Centers and Women Business Centers. The Department of Commerce, General Services Administration and Department of the Treasury have established initiatives designed to improve the ability of HBCUs to compete for Federal investment opportunities including contracts and discretionary grant programs.

Academic Research Enterprise: Colleges and universities with research capacity are better able to attract research-active faculty, develop and implement programs to train students in basic and advanced research techniques, and actively engage in research partnerships and collaborations. Institutions that establish themselves as research centers attract additional financial investments, create intellectual property that solves national problems, support economic growth, and generate revenue for the campus. Increasing the competitiveness and capabilities of HBCU students and faculty by improving their awareness of and ability to compete for opportunities in America's academic research enterprise will also enhance the ability of faculty to develop sustainable expertise and long-term plans for their research program and career trajectories. This Framework encourages Federal agencies to explore how their goals and objectives might also assist HBCUs in their abilities to develop long-term plans for their research programs and faculty career trajectories.

Examples: Federal agencies are already acting to implement the Administration’s guidance on the research and development (R&D) budget priorities for FY 2021, which calls on relevant agencies to “identify and implement strategies to help build R&D capacity” at HBCUs and other institutions that serve high proportions of underrepresented or underserved groups.⁶ The Department of Defense (DOD) has demonstrated such intentionality through the recognition of HBCU centers of excellence and summer learning opportunities at DOD laboratory facilities. The National Science Foundation continues to facilitate the professional development of junior faculty across the sector by supporting the development of more robust professional research networks. The Department of Housing and Urban Development recognized the potential for HBCUs to contribute to the agency’s mission through the inclusion of HBCU preference points in the most recent grant solicitation for the Research and Evaluation, Demonstrations and Data Analysis and Utilization Program.

Conclusion

The Trump Administration seeks to unite agencies into a new, dynamic Federal HBCU competitiveness ecosystem, catalyzing new activities and driving outcomes that create more robust connectivity between agencies and the Nation’s HBCUs. This Federal ecosystem should advance the national objective to increase HBCU competitiveness, thus both enhancing student outcomes and promoting community prosperity. Importantly, this Framework will serve as a valuable North Star for non-Federal, public and private sectors to improve the competitiveness, capacity and contributions of HBCUs to the states and locales where they are situated. Diverse and inclusive education and economic competitiveness in the United States is a foundational goal of the Trump Administration. Together with Federal agency partners, the Trump Administration is excited to join with HBCUs, as well as non-Federal, public and private sector partners, to ensure HBCUs are connected to and successfully competing for the best opportunities our nation has to offer.

⁶ Executive Office of the President. “Fiscal Year 2021 Administrative Research and Development Budget Priorities.” 2019. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/FY-21-RD-Budget-Priorities.pdf>