



HBCUS/STIMULUS FUNDING

THURGOOD MARSHALL COLLEGE FUND

Dwayne Ashley

President and CEO, Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf)

& Marybeth Gasman

Associate Professor of Higher Education, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania



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INVESTING IN EDUCATION:

How Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Can Help the Obama Administration Meet Its Higher Education Goals

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

• **Pell Grants**

Expand Pell grants and similar loan and tax-credit programs to lower college costs and raise attendance, retention, and graduation rates. By expanding Pell grants for low-income students and making them an educational benefit similar to Medicare and Social Security, the United States will finally be able to come through on its promise of making college available to every qualified individual – and lift an enormous financial burden from thousands of African American and other students attending HBCUs.

• **Student Loans**

Develop an alternative, or “safe harbor” provision for those HBCUs and minority-serving institutions lacking the resources to administer a campus-based Direct Loan program as a replacement for the current bank-run Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). In addition, restore HBCUs’ access to a new Federal Perkins Public Service Loan Program, which would provide low-interest loans to students who commit to public service after graduation.

• **Teacher Training**

Increase funding for HBCU teacher training and retention programs. Research shows that the single most important factor in improving any student’s performance is the quality of the teacher. The impact of a skilled and caring teacher is particularly significant for low-performing, minority students.

• **Science and Technology**

Provide greater resources for HBCU facilities, equipment, and training in the critical fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. A number of recent reports have highlighted the compelling need to educate more scientists, researchers, and engineers to ensure America’s economic well-being and leadership position in the world.

HIGHLIGHTS

President Obama's call for access to a college education

for every qualified student, regardless of income has enormous implications for African American and minority students in the United States.

By virtue of their mission and role in society, HBCUs are ideally positioned

to play a critical role in advancing the cause of educational opportunity for all Americans.

In many cases, the HBCU community already has programs up and running

that directly address the President's educational priorities, often in strategic partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies as well as the private sector.

HBCUs have long been at the forefront of the core issues

that the Obama administration seeks to address – preparation of students for college-level work, access for racial and ethnic minorities, attention to college costs, effective teacher training, an emphasis on student retention and graduation rates, as well as science and technology education.

President Obama's vision for transforming American education

will mean a dramatic expansion in the number of minority students pursuing college degrees. HBCUs are uniquely qualified to provide a supportive, yet academically rigorous environment that can yield enhanced academic and degree attainment success for a new generation of learners.

INTRODUCTION

If the saying “never let a crisis go to waste” has any validity,

our current economic and educational challenges offer an unprecedented opportunity for us as a nation to strengthen our system of higher education in dramatic and fundamental ways. The Obama administration’s initiatives for greater access to college and improved levels of academic achievement, however, cannot succeed without a sustained effort to recruit, inspire, and educate minority students in far greater numbers than ever before. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as well as other minority serving institutions, are ideally positioned by virtue of their mission and expertise to play an essential role in advancing the nation’s agenda for higher education.

From a broader perspective, we must recognize that better educating

all of our children is a massive and complex enterprise that can only succeed as a collective, national enterprise. In the words of John Adams, “The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people, and must be willing to bear the expense of it.”

THE EDUCATION CHALLENGE

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the Obama Administration’s fiscal stimulus bill) provides for \$100 billion in funding devoted to education – from Head Start programs to college access and affordability.¹ It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform American higher education; perhaps as fundamental as the advent of the “common school” and its impact on primary education in the 19th century or the G.I. Bill and its influence on higher education in the 20th century. “By educating Americans from the cradle up through a career,” as Secretary of Education Secretary Arne Duncan has written recently, “... and putting the dream of a college degree within reach for anyone who wants one,” American education has the potential to change in meaningful ways.²

By the last quarter of the 20th century, the United States led the world in the

proportion of young people in college, according to critic and author Andrew Delbanco.³ Today, however, he cites studies showing that we rank 10th in the percentage of young people (ages 25-34) with a post-secondary degree – behind such countries as Canada, Japan, South Korea, Ireland, Norway, and France. At the same time, repeated studies demonstrate that the income gap between those with a college degree and those with only a high school education continues to widen.⁴

President Obama has committed the United States to rectifying this situation and, by 2020, once again having the world’s highest proportion of students graduating from college. He has also challenged every American, regardless of educational status, to enroll in at least one year of higher education or work force training. To achieve these goals, the President has proposed

¹ *Smart Options: Investing the Recovery Funds for Student Success*, Coalition for Student Achievement April 2009 < www.coalitionforstudentachievement.org>.

² “Educating Our Way to a Better Economy,” *Dallas Morning News*, 23 March 2009.

³ “The Universities in Trouble,” *The New York Review of Books* 14 May 2009: 36-39.

⁴ Andrew Hacker, “Can We Make America Smarter?” *The New York Review of Books* 30 April 2009: 37-40.

opening the doors to higher education even wider by dramatically expanding college financial aid (notably Pell grants for low-income students), consolidating student loan programs, and making the financial aid process far simpler and more reliable. The administration's comprehensive proposals aim to help students succeed from kindergarten through college. At the higher-education level, President Obama has established an equally ambitious set of goals: for students to graduate from college at higher rates than in the past, improve teacher training and classroom skills, expand funding for community colleges, offer new courses in emerging technologies, and invest in initiatives to spur competition and innovation in education.

MINORITY STUDENTS AND THE OBAMA AGENDA

The administration's proposals are extraordinarily ambitious and their implications for our nation's young people, especially for our minority youth, are far-reaching. Consider the idea of having everyone take at least one year of post-secondary education, which translates into educating 16 million more Americans – or about 780,000 more students attending college each year. With current undergraduate enrollment at only 14 million, this represents an enormous increase.

Several other very large numbers are looming out there as well. One important number is 15 million – the number of educated workers and professionals the United States will need simply to replace members of the baby boom generation who will be retiring during the next 25 years. Another number is 12 million – the number of minorities who will need college education or post-secondary training to close the equity gaps between whites and people of color in the United States. The challenge, in

short, is unprecedented: to educate more people than ever before at the college level and to do a better job of it.

Where will such large numbers of students come from? They will certainly not come from the same demographic pool from which our colleges and universities currently draw. Instead, we must identify and recruit from much larger populations of young people who previously have been unwilling, unable, or unprepared for college. Overwhelmingly, these are minority students – largely African American, Hispanic, and Native American – but also disadvantaged young people from many different urban, rural, ethnic, and immigrant communities.

One-third of the American population is now minority, meaning that Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans exceed 98 million out of the total national population of more than 296 million. Minorities continue to be the fastest-growing population groups in the country, accounting for 80 percent of the nation's recent population increase. Without question, these younger minority populations will be key to achieving the Obama administration's goal of creating a more highly educated and skilled population that will become the source of American economic growth, innovation, and global leadership in the future.

THE HBCU ROLE

HBCUs have long been at the forefront of core issues confronting American higher education today – whether preparation of students for college-level work, racial and ethnic diversity, college costs and accessibility, teacher training and quality, student retention and graduation rates, or science and technology education.

Through such nationally recognized institutions as the Thurgood Marshall College Fund for public HBCUs and the United Negro College Fund for private HBCUs, Black colleges and universities have provided scholarships and financial support that enable thousands of African American to attend college – in many cases, these individuals are the first members of their family to have such an opportunity. No other institution or organization can match the experience and expertise of the HBCU community in recruiting, motivating, and supporting young African Americans and other minorities in their quest for a quality college education and a rewarding career. The HBCU mission of providing access to a college education for minority students complements and reinforces the Obama administration's push to make a college education affordable for everyone who wants one. Within the larger context of American higher education, HBCUs continue to play a crucial role and make unique contributions to minority students. Many of the smaller liberal-arts black colleges have excellent reputations for preparing young people for graduate school, building up self esteem and honing their academic skills. HBCUs are affordable, and they have a reputation for a nurturing environment that is appealing for many students.

One of the beauties of higher education in the United States is that it is filled with different choices; HBCUs offer young people a unique choice. These venerable institutions are a reflection of the complexity of higher education in this country. The fact that they empower and nurture students is vitally important because the research on the experiences of African Americans says this is not the case at most historically white institutions.⁵

HBCU EDUCATION INITIATIVES

HBCUs bring strength to the higher education community through their commitment to student engagement, high expectations and standards, financial support, strong retention efforts, and academic success for their students. All of these values are aligned with the educational priorities of the Obama administration.

In many cases, the HBCU community already has programs up and running that directly address the President's educational priorities, often in strategic partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies as well as the private sector.

Consider the area of teacher training and quality, which is one of President Obama's concerns. In remarks honoring national and state teachers of the year in April, the nation's leader said, "In a global economy where the greatest job qualification isn't what you can do but what you know, our teachers are the key to our nation's success." Estimates are that the country's public schools will have to hire more than two million new teachers over the next decade. Based on past experience, more than half of the African American teachers will come from HBCUs.

The TMCF HBCU Teacher Quality and Retention Program is the first national effort of its kind that is designed to increase the pool of highly qualified minority teachers who can teach in underserved schools and communities – communities that are in great need of these services. The program seeks out HBCU students with outstanding academic records and leadership skills, focusing on those majoring in education or science and technology fields. Participants receive career guidance and mentoring as undergraduates and attend a summer institute, or take online courses, covering such topics as classroom

management and standards-based lesson design. They continue to receive mentoring and professional support throughout their early teaching careers. Finally, the program has a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation component to ensure that it produces real, measurable results for students.

Among other key HBCU initiatives that the Thurgood Marshall College Fund is conducting in partnership with government and private foundations are:

- Annual TMCF Leadership Institute for more than 600 outstanding HBCU students in New York that attracts some of the nation's top corporate, educational, and non-profit employers.
- A financial-aid program, in collaboration Lumina Foundation for Education, which seeks to improve services and training for HBCU staff and students.
- Initiatives to enhance minority educational and professional advancement in the fields of science, technology and engineering. For example, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund has conducted a long-term partnership with the Defense Department to provide scholarships, professional training, and internships in a wide range of science and technology areas. The Fund has pursued similar technology partnerships for minority students with other federal agencies, including the Department of Energy, Housing and Urban Development, and NASA.
- Programs for African American boys and men that aim to improve their academic achievement, retention rates, professional training, and leadership skills – an issue of compelling importance for our educational system and society's welfare. In 2006, for example, TMCF published *HBCUs Models*

for Success: Supporting Achievement and Retention of Black Males – and tracked tangible results from its proposals, including greater nationwide research and focus on how to support, motivate, and retain black males in higher education.⁶

• A national high school curriculum redesign and reform effort, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, aimed at transforming low-performing secondary schools through partnerships with neighboring HBCUs. HBCU professors, students, and alumni tutor high school students and encourage parents to take an active role in their children's academic development. At the Coppin Academy in Baltimore, for example, English II students were significantly more proficient than the city average (65 percent compared to 48 percent). Tenth grade English students at the Texas Southern Math and Science Academy at Jones High School in Houston, Texas, scored in the 93 percentile versus a statewide average of 84 percent. And in Royal Academy, Brookshire, Texas, more than 80 percent of students met statewide standards – a remarkable 90 percent jump over their 2005 achievement levels.⁷

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

With their historic mission and considerable experience educating African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities, HBCUs are an indispensable component of our national effort to transform American higher education. These institutions have helped to make education accessible to all and worked to ensure that all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, will succeed.

⁶ Thurgood Marshall College Fund, *HBCUs Models for Success: Supporting Achievement and Retention of Black Males* 2006 < <http://www.tmcmodelsforsuccess.com/> >.

⁷ Thurgood Marshall College Fund, 2007 Annual Report.

We have identified four proposals that are vital to strengthening HBCUs' role in implementing the President Obama's far-reaching agenda for higher education:

- 1.** We must expand the Pell grant and similar loan and tax-credit programs to lower college costs and raise attendance, retention, and graduation rates. In 1976, Pell grants for low-income students covered 72 percent of the average cost of attending a four-year college or university. By 2003, the percentage had fallen to less than 40 percent. By expanding the Pell grant program, and ensuring its funding as an educational benefit, the United States will finally be able to make good on its promise of making college available to every qualified individual – and lift an enormous financial burden from thousands of African American and other minority students attending HBCUs.
- 2.** At the same time, we must provide a “safe harbor mechanism” that will address the unintended consequences for many HBCUs of substituting a government Direct Lending program for the current privately operated Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). Many of these schools simply lack the capacity and resources to handle Direct Loan mandates and could find themselves excluded from such vitally needed student assistance programs.
- 3.** We must increase funding for HBCU teacher training and retention programs. Research shows that the single most important factor in improving any student's performance is the quality of the teacher, and the impact of a skilled and caring teacher is particularly significant for low-performing, minority students.
- 4.** We must increase the resources for and commitment to HBCU facilities, equipment, and training in the critical STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. A number of recent reports have highlighted the compelling need to educate more scientists, researchers, and engineers to ensure America's economic well-being and leadership position in the world.

BIOGRAPHIES

Dwayne Ashley,

is a noted higher education and non profit expert. In his role as CEO of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, he is one of the strongest voices for Historically Black Colleges and Universities

He is the author of several books, articles, and serves as a speaker for several universities and organizations throughout the country. His works include: co-author: *I'll Find A Way or Make One: A Tribute to Historically Black Colleges and Universities*; author: *Dream Internships, 8 Steps to Raising Money: Measuring Your Fundraising Impact* and co-author of *8 Winning Steps to Creating a Successful Special Event*.

Mr. Ashley has been named to Ebony Magazine's "100 Most Influential Black Americans" list for five consecutive years. He is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University of the District of Columbia; Distinguished Alumnus Award from Langston University; Positive Image Award from the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity; and numerous other awards and honors.

Dr. Marybeth Gasman

is an Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Her work explores issues pertaining to philanthropy and historically black colleges, black leadership, contemporary fundraising issues at black colleges, and African-American giving.

Dr. Gasman's most recent book is *Envisioning Black Colleges: A History of the United Negro College Fund* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). She is also the lead editor of *Understanding Minority Serving Institutions* (State University of New York Press, 2008). Dr. Gasman received the Association for the Study of Higher Education's Promising Scholar/Early Career Award given in honor of a scholar's body of scholarship in 2006 and won the Penn Excellence in Teaching Award in 2008.

Dr. Gasman's research on Historically Black Colleges has been cited in various media venues, including *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, *National Public Radio*, *Inside Higher Education*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *CNN*.