

HBCU Engagement at the U.S. Department of Education
HBCU Summit Panel
September 18, 2017
Adam Kissel

Good afternoon. My name is Adam Kissel, and I work in the Department of Education as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs in the Office of Postsecondary Education. I am the White House Initiative on HBCUs Federal Liaison on behalf of the Department, and I am the Designated Federal Official for the HBCU Capital Financing Advisory Board.

The Department of Education has extensive engagement with HBCUs. I would like to speak briefly about a couple of the Department's responsibilities under the President's Executive Order on HBCUs, then highlight some of the grant programs that specifically help HBCUs and Minority-Serving Institutions more generally. Finally, I will mention a joint agency program and our work through the Office for Civil Rights

As just described, the Executive Order of February 28, 2017, gives the Department of Education particular responsibilities to advance opportunities in higher education through HBCUs.

One is to work with other agencies on collect annual plans to strengthen HBCUs. The other is to host the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs.

In addition, the Department houses and supports the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans, which works with the Initiative on HBCUs to "support enhanced educational

outcomes for African Americans at every level of the American education system, including early childhood education; elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education; career and technical education; and adult education.”¹

Some of the programs in the Department’s Office of Postsecondary Education that specifically serve HBCUs or Minority-Serving Institutions more generally include one you may have heard about this morning: the HBCU Capital Financing program, which provides capital to finance improvements to HBCU infrastructure.

The Department’s grant programs provide many opportunities for HBCUs to strengthen their institutions and increase their capabilities to serve students. The Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program, under Title III of the Higher Education Act, “provides financial assistance to HBCUs to establish or strengthen their physical plants, financial management, academic resources, and endowment-building capacity.” Among many ways that HBCUs can use Title III funding to help students, they can establish “a program of teacher education designed to qualify students to teach in public schools; the establishment of community outreach programs that will encourage elementary and secondary school students to develop the academic skills and the interest to pursue postsecondary education; . . . faculty exchanges and the development of academic instruction in disciplines in which black Americans are underrepresented[;] . . .

¹ <https://sites.ed.gov/whieaaa/executive-order/>

library materials[; and] tutoring, counseling, and student service programs."²

To help HBCUs educate graduate students, the Strengthening Historically Black Graduate Institutions (HBGI) Program provides grants to qualified graduate programs to help them "in establishing and strengthening their physical plants, development offices, endowment funds, academic resources and student services so that they may continue to participate in fulfilling the goal of equality of educational opportunity in graduate education." Grants under this program focus on "legal, medical, dental, veterinary, or other graduate education opportunities in mathematics, engineering, or the physical or natural sciences."³

Finally, the Office of Postsecondary Education runs several grant programs that serve HBCUs among Minority-Serving Institutions more generally. Also for graduate students, the "Master's Degree Programs at Predominantly Black Institutions" program focuses on master's degree students "in mathematics, engineering, physical or natural sciences, computer science, information technology, nursing, allied health or other scientific disciplines where African American students are underrepresented."⁴

In addition, the Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program "assists predominantly minority institutions in effecting long-range improvement in science and engineering education programs

² <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iduestitle3b/index.html>

³ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/idueshbgj/index.html>

⁴ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbimasters/index.html>

and increasing the flow of underrepresented ethnic minorities, particularly minority women, into science and engineering careers." Some of the project we fund "address specific barriers that eliminate or reduce the entry of minorities into science and technology fields."⁵

We also administer formula grants and competitive grants under the Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) Program. The formula grants, among many opportunities parallel to those under the Strengthening HBCUs Program, help institutions provide "academic instruction in disciplines in which Black Americans are underrepresented."⁶ The competitive grants help PBIs "establish or strengthen programs in . . . areas [including] science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) [as well as] teacher preparation."⁷

I will not have time to mention all of the grant programs that are open to HBCUs in the Department, so I will note briefly that HBCUs compete successfully for a wide variety of other programs in the department. In the Office of Postsecondary Education, these include the several TRIO and GEAR UP programs, which focus primarily on getting secondary students ready for postsecondary work. Altogether our institutional service and student service programs provide hundreds of grants to HBCUs with hundreds of millions of dollars of support.

Furthermore, in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), more than a dozen grants each year

⁵ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/idadesmsi/index.html>

⁶ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbihea/index.html>

⁷ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbi/index.html>

provide HBCUs with more than \$250,000 each. The Rehabilitation Services Administration provides another \$3-million per year.⁸

When taking into account Pell grants, student loans, work-study, and other programs, the Department of Education awarded more than \$4.2-billion to HBCUs in 2013.⁹

Finally, I want to mention the Minorities and Retirement Security (MRS) Program and then conclude by describing our work in the Office for Civil Rights. The MRS program is jointly administered with the United States Social Security Administration (SSA). This a pilot project that provides "grants to support research by graduate students at selected . . . Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) [at the graduate level] in the areas of retirement security, financial literacy, and financial decision making . . . within minority and low-income communities. . . . These grants also seek to expand the talent pool of scientists and researchers from MSIs who are prepared to conduct rigorous research in this area."¹⁰

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) engages specifically with HBCUs in several ways. For example, OCR participates in an annual training conference for HBCU Law Enforcement Executives and Administrators. At the 2017 conference, OCR briefed attendees on Title IX and provided updates on the work of OCR. The 2018 conference will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina.

⁸ Information provided by OSERS.

⁹ <https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/>

¹⁰ <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/mrs/index.html>

OCR staff also spoke at the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) Conference titled "NBCSL on the Hill," as well as the African American Youth with Disabilities Summit, which was sponsored by the White House Initiative on Education Excellence for African Americans.¹¹

Thank you for the opportunity to outline the many ways that the Department of Education supports HBCUs. If you would like to learn more, please visit the Department's website at www.ed.gov, and I would be happy to answer questions directly—please email me at Adam.Kissel@ed.gov.

Thank you again.

¹¹ Reported by OCR.