

DESERVED RECOGNITION OF A LEGACY

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are currently enjoying increased visibility in the mainstream media. The recognition of their inherent value to our country is both long overdue and yet right on time. Recent events have elevated the conversation around HBCUs at the national level, including the election of HBCU alumni Vice President Kamala Harris, gifts from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, and the passage of NC Representative Alma Adams' (NC-12) HBCU Capital Finance Debt Relief Act. The first HBCUs were founded before the American Civil War with the purpose of providing black youths—who were largely prevented, due to racial discrimination, from attending established colleges and universities—with a basic education and training to become teachers or tradesmen. The term “HBCU” was created by the Higher Education Act of 1965, which expanded federal funding for colleges and universities.¹

The power produced by these colleges is no surprise to many in the Black community and part of an under-appreciated story. This presents a unique window of opportunity to increase North Carolina's focus on the value of these historic institutions and the importance of their success and contributions to the state culture and diverse talent pipeline needed by business and industry. By leveraging this national momentum, North Carolina will be well-positioned to create real change in the collective impact of our HBCUs. They are critical institutions and key strategic partners in the state's opportunity to ensure our education-to-workforce system serves the needs of all North Carolinians.

THE POWER OF THE NORTH CAROLINA 10

There were once nearly 400 HBCUs across the country, but now only roughly 100 remain.² North Carolina is home to 10 accredited institutions, a significant share of the nation's total.³ Five are part of the public university system and five are independent colleges and universities. At CREED, we refer to them collectively as the NC10:

- Shaw University (1865), Private, Raleigh
- St. Augustine's University (1867), Private, Raleigh
- Johnson C. Smith University (1867), Private, Charlotte
- Fayetteville State University (1867), Public, Fayetteville
- Bennett College (1873), Private, Greensboro
- Livingstone College (1879), Private, Salisbury
- North Carolina A&T State University (1891), Public, Greensboro
- Elizabeth City State University (1891), Public, Elizabeth City
- Winston-Salem State University (1892), Public, Winston-Salem
- North Carolina Central University (1910), Public, Durham

¹“Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Higher Education Desegregation.” Home, US Department of Education (ED), 10 Jan. 2020, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9511.html.

²“The NCES Fast Facts Tool (National Center for Education Statistics).” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education, nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667.

³“Digest of Education Statistics, 2019.” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a Part of the U.S. Department of Education, nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_313.10.asp.

According to the United Negro College Fund, the NC10 generate nearly \$2 billion in total economic impact for the entire state, and for every dollar invested in an HBCU an additional \$.42 is felt by local and regional economies⁴. The NC10 are the primary producers of teachers of color in the state with nearly all having an approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP)⁵. In general, HBCUs do a better job mobilizing low-income graduates into higher-wage jobs than Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)⁶. HBCU alumni have higher status occupations than Black graduates from PWIs and report a stronger sense of racial identity than their counterparts⁷. However, notwithstanding these many assets, significant challenges still persist for the NC10. Many have struggled with enrollment, accreditation, and student persistence through graduation. As an organization dedicated to racial equity in education, we know this has to be addressed. Several questions remain if we are to keep their legacies alive and prosper as a state:

- 1. What lessons can be learned from North Carolina's HBCUs and how can we make them more central to statewide priorities?**
- 2. What assets or capital (cultural, social, and human) do they possess and how can they be leveraged to improve educational attainment for students in our state?**
- 3. What challenges exist for the NC10 and how can our state better support their needs in the future?**

OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE

With the support of the John M. Belk Endowment, to that end, the Center for Racial Equity in Education (CREED) is leading an initiative called Listening to the NC10. This effort, in partnership with EdNC, myFutureNC, and The Hunt Institute, seeks to have conversations with all 10 HBCUs as well as leadership of each college and university. Our goal for the year is to lift up the legacies, improve postsecondary experiences and outcomes for students of color, and increase the institutional prominence of the NC10 within the state and nationally. Our multi-pronged approach will include campus visits and listening tours, historical research, and written pieces to better tell the stories of these illustrious institutions, as well as convenings of Black college leadership to determine how the state can better support their needs. We'll be documenting our activities throughout the year publicly under the hashtag #TheNC10

⁴"The Economic Impact of North Carolina's HBCUs," UNCF, 25 Mar. 2020. uncef.org/programs/north-carolina-impact.

⁵Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education: Final Report and Recommendations. The Hunt Institute & Office of Governor Cooper, Dec. 2020. files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/HI-DRIVE-Final-Report.pdf.

⁶Reeves, Richard V., and Nathan Joo. "The Contribution of Historically Black Colleges and Universities to Upward Mobility." Brookings, Brookings, 15 Aug. 2017. www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2017/01/19/the-contribution-of-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-to-upward-mobility/.

⁷Strayhorn, Terrell L. "National MSI: Return on Investment Convening." Center for MSIs at Rutgers Graduate School of Education, A Return on Investment Analysis for Black Graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Insights from Three Studies, 2015. cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/HBCU_final%20paper.pdf.