

Chapter 14

Strategies for the HBCU Presidential Preparation, Entrance, and Exit

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ABSTRACT

This chapter per the authors will discuss the foundation of historically black colleges and university (HBCU) and the HBCU presidency. The chapter will begin with a foundation of historically black colleges and universities, then transition into the black college president as a challenging leadership position. Next the chapter will discuss presidential preparation programs and competencies needed for the president as outlined by the American Council on Education. Lastly, the chapter will discuss entrance strategies and exit strategies for HBCU presidents.

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HBCU HISTORY

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) hold a significant place in the educational and cultural landscape of the United States. These institutions were established primarily to provide African Americans with access to higher education during a time when systemic racial discrimination barred them from most other colleges and universities. According to Gilliam (2018), “It was the grit, tenacity, ethic, and ingenuity of African American leaders that drove the success and development of Historically Black College and Universities”. Historically, most HBCUs were supported by white philanthropy and federal funding. However, it was the persistent work and vocal demands from African Americans that led to the development and growth of institutions and influenced the expansion and improvement of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Gilliam, 2018).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, have been educating African Americans since its inception and in 2024 Historically Black Colleges and Universities are still thriving, educating, and graduating African Americans. According to Graham (2019) “HBCUs were established to provide educational opportunities for Black Americans, and prior to their establishment, admission for Black students was often denied to the already established white institutions”. Further, HBCUs can be noted as caretakers of precious treasure.

In 1965, the Higher Education Act stamped that Historically Black Colleges and Universities are those as institutions who had and has the principal mission to educate African Americans and were not only accredited but also established before 1964 (Knight et al., 2012).

Multiple institutions claim their position as the first HBCU. While Cheyney University of Pennsylvania opened its doors in 1837, it did not provide instruction as collegiate offerings at that time. It was not until the 1900s that Cheyney provide these offerings (Brown & Ricard, 2007). The school, originally named The Cheyney Training School for Teachers, served as an accessible training ground for aspiring African American teachers.

In addition to Cheyney University stating its claim to being the first, Wilberforce University opened its doors 1856, the same year of its incorporation (Brown & Ricard, 2007). It is important to note that in addition to Cheyney University and Wilberforce University, Lincoln University, marks itself as the first degree granting HBCU (Battaglia, 2014). Recognizing Cheyney’s opportunity as the “blueprint”, Wilberforce argues that it serves as the nation’s oldest HBCU of Black-control in contrast to Cheney and Lincoln having white presidents, administrators and leadership (Brown & Ricard, 2007).

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