

Presidents and their Strategies to Build Partnerships at HBCUs

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Executive Summary

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) face long-term funding disparities that make establishing partnerships essential for providing resources and support for HBCUs to achieve success. HBCU presidents are required to lead the efforts in cultivating successful partnerships with other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), small and large-scale businesses, and the community surrounding their campuses to address gaps in funding. In this study, Presidents Roslyn Clark Artis of Benedict College, Aaron Walton of Cheyney University, Rick Gallot of Grambling State University, Michael Sorrell of Paul Quinn College, and Makola Abdullah of Virginia State University provide best practices in creating partnerships. By examining their leadership beliefs and practices, we identified commonalities that have led to the successful establishment of partnerships at their institutions. These shared elements include learning to prioritize university operations, focusing on student needs and wants, using external experts and internal data to make informed decisions, collaborating across networks, and seeking innovative solutions to problems. The individual case examples of leadership practices highlight strategies other HBCUs can follow in their efforts to develop institutional, industry, and community partnerships.

The **SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP, EQUITY, & JUSTICE** sought submissions for The Year of Leadership—a three-report, research series examining leadership. We invited submissions that grapple with the idea of leadership within the context of education, both at the K-12 and higher education levels. We asked authors to consider: What makes for great leaders? What skills do leaders need to make change and be effective? What type of leadership is needed now? What if leaders fail? What kinds of people do leaders need on their team? What contemporary challenges should future leaders aim to address? How can one's various identities shape their leadership? What are some best practices and strategies to advocate for equitable and just institutional leadership in education? Within the educational context, where is leadership needed most?

The resulting data-driven reports are peer-reviewed and contain original research. All authors were financially compensated.

Introduction

In today's higher education landscape, partnerships are an essential function for HBCUs in part due to historical disparities in national and state funding, support, and resources. When comparing HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), the disparities in equitable financial support are clear. For example, Toldson (2016) highlighted funding disparities by asserting that the average HBCU in 2014 received approximately \$12.8 million in grants and contracts while PWIs received an average of \$27.7 million. While this average does not appear drastic, there are individual PWIs that average \$1.6 billion in grant funding compared to the collective funding of \$1.2 billion for all HBCUs combined (Toldson, 2016). Of course, PWIs with disproportionate amounts of grant funding are overwhelmingly major research institutions (R1s) according to the Carnegie Classifications, whereas the majority of HBCUs are either R2s or not research-focused institutions. That said, private grant funding is substantially higher at PWIs. Due to the lack of federal and state support, it is essential that HBCUs turn to other sources of support to provide funding for university initiatives.

Until funding disparities are addressed by state and federal governments, institutional, industry, and community partnerships continue to be an essential tool for the success of universities (AASCU, 2018; Prigge & Torracco, 2006). According to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU, 2018), institutional partnerships provide additional funding for informational technology (IT) purchases, increased course offerings, and bridge opportunities between primary and secondary education. AASCU also noted that community partnerships help universities to deliver on their mission of serving the population within their geographical region and helping to increase the

number of local students pursuing degrees in higher education. AASCU highlights that partnerships, when employed in an effective manner, can provide resources for key campus projects, create research or learning opportunities within academic communities, create employment opportunities for students, and help local communities and businesses grow. Furthermore, Prigge and Torracco (2016) contend that partnerships can create opportunities for universities to restructure the way academic missions are funded, supported, and marketed. Improvements in each of these aforementioned areas could assist HBCUs with combatting a lack of federal and state support. The establishment of university, industry, and community partnerships can eventually lead to institutional success and open the door to additional streams of funding and institutional support.

Understanding how HBCU leadership teams foster successful institutional partnerships offers critical insight into approaches that have been effective in addressing issues that stem from the inequitable support provided by state and federal governments. This report demonstrates how HBCUs have taken the initiative to establish partnerships and realize success from a return on their investment into partnership development. The insights revealed in this report also demonstrate ways HBCUs can continue to reach their goal of providing rewarding educational experiences for their students through an investment in innovative funding initiatives. Analyzing the efforts carried out by current HBCU presidents who have established successful partnerships may also provide a framework that can be followed by other institutions, which is essential so that other HBCUs can find additional ways of ensuring their future viability in higher education (Bland, Cantey, Joy-Davis, & Mack, 2013).

Literature Review

In this literature review, we highlight three areas that provide context for the need and importance of HBCUs to be engaged in the establishment of institutional, industry, and community partnerships. First, we illustrate the funding challenges that have an impact on HBCUs. We then highlight the role of institutional and industry partnerships in the long-term success of HBCUs. Lastly, we describe key leadership traits held by HBCU presidents that play a pivotal role in helping them develop innovative approaches to partnership development.

FUNDING CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY HBCUs

The funding challenges faced by HBCUs are acknowledged as major barriers that have grown out of inequitable practices in federal and state funding and an inability to compete with PWIs. For example, HBCUs receive a small fraction of the per student funding that is received by PWIs (Boland & Gasman, 2014; Gasman, 2010; Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Toldson, 2016). This issue is exacerbated when one considers how past recessions have had an impact on HBCUs and how susceptible these institutions are to economic downturns (Boland & Gasman, 2014). Changes in federal appropriations also lead to increased cuts to the already limited funding provided to HBCUs (Boland & Gasman, 2014). Several authors have provided recommendations on how to address HBCU funding challenges at the institutional, federal, and state levels such as using an entrepreneurial leadership model to address the needs for HBCU survival and sustainability (Andrews et al., 2016; Esters et al., 2016). Using an entrepreneurial leadership model that includes enhanced marketing approaches can lead to an increase in organizational fundraising capacity, number of federal grants, and collaboration between PWIs and HBCUs (Boland & Gasman, 2014; Gasman, 2010). Similarly, focusing on increasing institutional competitiveness can also help HBCUs gain access to long-term funding that

can lead to the long-term sustainability of institutions (Toldson & Washington, 2015; Toldson, 2016). Despite the challenges presented by the lack of federal and state funding for HBCUs, there are still calls for change in the distribution of opportunities and amounts for state and federal funds. As such, many state governments have been asked to increase funding opportunities for HBCUs by adjusting funding formulas, to create additional training opportunities for HBCU administrators to understand the benefits of securing federal grants, and to increase understanding of the importance of HBCUs (Gasman, 2010; Boland & Gasman, 2014).

ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY

Partnerships are tools that assist universities with gaining additional resources and recognition, which are both necessary due to declining governmental funding (AASCU, 2018). Partnerships benefit institutions by helping them garner financial support, increase educational opportunities, improve public opinion locally and nationally, improve operational infrastructure, and assist in the development of new knowledge or intellectual property (AASCU, 2018; Felix, 2020). There are also a number of benefits that result from successful partnerships. For example, industry partnerships can provide funding for research closely related to industry-related projects and cross-institutional partnerships can expand human capital and technical expertise (Felix, 2020). AASCU describes three categories of partnerships: 1) community, 2) cross-institutional, and 3) public and private sector (AASCU, 2018). Community partnerships are between universities and communities within their respective geographical regions, which in turn improve or raise the public opinion of the institution (AASCU, 2018). Cross-institutional partnerships occur between multiple universities and allow for opportunities such as collaborative academic programming (AASCU,

2018). Lastly, partnerships with the public and private sector occur when universities partner with specific businesses and create opportunities for joint profit ventures or leasing of university-owned land for a profit.

Though there has been little empirical research focused on HBCU partnerships, what is known can offer some insight into the need and importance of establishing various collaborations. For example, partnerships between HBCUs and other institutions can help create bridge programs between HBCUs and PWIs, improve the image of HBCUs, and attract faculty, staff, and students (Esters et al., 2016). Partnerships between HBCUs and industry collaborators are also a potential pathway for improving recruitment and retention of Black students in predominantly White fields by providing improved access to tools and training on HBCU campuses (Washington et al., 2015). For example, IBM and HP partnered with multiple HBCUs through a multi-year investment as part of their goal to increase diversity of talent pipelines (Florentine, 2020). Similarly, Apple recently created a partnership with several HBCUs to increase diversity in their tech workforce as part of their Racial Equity and Justice Initiative (Diverse Issues, 2020).

HBCU PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Visionary leadership is seen as the hallmark of being a successful HBCU president (Esters et al., 2016). However, it is only the first of multiple leadership traits that has been identified as a necessity for a successful president. In recent years, much has been written about the leadership traits and practices needed for HBCU presidents to be successful (Anderson et al., 2019; Esters et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Strong HBCU presidential leadership involves having a skillset including vision planning, respect for culture and tradition, and the ability to negotiate (Anderson et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Presidents must also have well-rounded financial expertise that includes the ability to fundraise, plan university finances, and have an entrepreneurial disposition

(Esters et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016). In a recent study, Palmer and Freeman (2020) found that lacking technical skills such as vision-mission plans, innovation, financial skills, and a general lack of business skills contribute to presidential failure. In addition to possessing specific leadership traits, it is recommended that a successful HBCU president must have demonstrated experience in several areas (Gasman, 2020). Gasman's 2020 report for the Center for Minority Serving Institution's Aspiring Leaders Program recommends that successful HBCU (and other Minority Serving Institution) presidents need experience that includes:

"...at least 10 years of experience of senior level responsibilities; experience in strategic planning, program development, implementation and evaluation; experience in personnel management and team facilitation; ability to manage crises and lead in the midst of crises; knowledge of key and emerging issues in higher education; a general understanding of MSIs and their place on the higher education landscape; an understanding of the relationship between the governing board, president, faculty, and students; and considerable experience with fundraising..." (p. 7)

The experiences described are critical for new and emerging leaders to possess as they step into the role of an HBCU presidency, but more importantly, these skills are key to the success of presidents cultivating partnerships with their institutions.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The purpose of this study was to explore how leadership teams, specifically presidents of HBCUs, cultivate successful partnerships with other educational institutions, industry, and the community surrounding their campuses. The study explores these areas due to the historical funding disparities among HBCUs. Funding stemming from partnerships, grants, contracts, and other support can go towards supporting HBCUs' mission of providing access to underserved populations, and increased retention of faculty, staff, and students. However, due to financial disparities experienced by HBCUs, it is essential for these institutions to establish partnerships to support

their institutional missions. The research questions we addressed include:

1. What roles do HBCU presidents serve in establishing institutional partnerships?
2. What goals guide HBCU presidents' decisions to develop institutional partnerships?
3. What shared strategies do HBCU presidents employ to establish institutional partnerships?
4. How do institutional partnerships have an impact on HBCU presidents' standing within the university?

We grounded our study in qualitative research to achieve a deeper understanding of the roles that HBCU presidents play in establishing successful partnerships for their institutions. We employed semi-structured, open-ended qualitative phone interviews as the foundation of the methodological design (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 1990; van Manen, 1990). This interview format allowed us to ask broad questions regarding presidents' responsibilities related to establishing institutional partnerships and the impact of the partnerships (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990).

We collected data through semi-structured phone interviews with five current HBCU presidents. University presidents who participated in the study include: Roslyn Clark Artis, Benedict College; Aaron Walton, Cheyney University; Rick Gallot, Grambling State University; Michael Sorrell, Paul Quinn College; and Makola Abdullah, Virginia State University. We purposefully selected HBCU presidents who have successfully cultivated partnerships that help to further their university's ability to achieve their institutional missions. Our initial selection process

involved performing a brief content analysis of the official institutional website and news articles to identify partnerships that have been formed with the universities.

Each member of the three-member research team conducted interviews throughout this process. We also engaged in peer-debriefing throughout the data collection and analysis process to access biases and understanding of the data from the interview (Creswell, 2014). The data analysis process included multiple steps. After the interview recordings were transcribed, we then verified the accuracy of the transcript and engaged the participants in member-checking to approve the transcript (Creswell, 2014). Once the transcriptions were approved by participants, we then read through the transcripts multiple times for initial code formation (Creswell, 2013). The initial codes served as the larger points, or ideas, that were expressed by the research participants. These initial codes were then used to develop themes within each individual participant's interview. Once all interviews were collected, we conducted further thematic analysis to identify shared themes across the participants. The collective themes identified represented the common practices shared by the HBCU presidents that have led to establishing successful partnerships.

Throughout the data analysis process, we used multiple checks to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. As previously mentioned, we used member checking to verify the interview transcripts. We also used peer debriefing amongst our three-member team to achieve triangulation on the thematic coding of the interview, and to uncover biases, perspectives, and assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

"I think one of the things we had to determine right up front is, what level of energy and engagement we're going to have in these types of relationships. Because they take a long time and a lot of effort to develop." —President Aaron Walton, Cheyney University

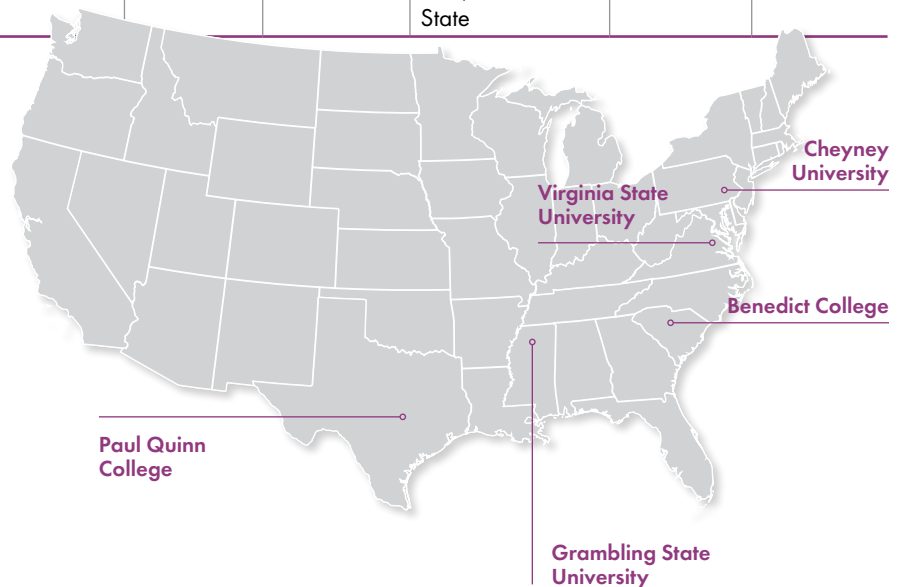
College/University Highlights

Benedict College, Cheyney University, Grambling State University, Paul Quinn College, and Virginia State University were selected for inclusion within this study. We purposefully chose a mix of private and public institutions to identify shared leadership practices that could be generally applied to both institutional types. Information about each university was obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) to highlight their status as public or private institution, student enrollment numbers, tuition and fees amounts, graduation rates, and retention rates (see Table 1).

Table 1. College/University Characteristics

UNIVERSITY	LOCATION	FOUNDING DATE	UNIVERSITY TYPE	STUDENT ENROLLMENT ^a	TUITION & FEES ^b	GRADUATION RATE ^c	RETENTION RATE ^d
Benedict College (NCES, 2019a)	Columbia, SC	1870	4-Year Private	2,034	\$16,600 ^e	24%	56%
Cheyney University (NCES, 2019b)	Cheyney, PA	1837	4-Year Public	616	\$10,904 In-State; \$16,170 Out-of-State	26%	70%
Grambling State University (NCES, 2019c)	Grambling, LA	1901	4-Year Public	4,153	\$7,683 In-State; \$16,706 Out-of-State	35%	74%
Paul Quinn College (NCES, 2019d)	Dallas, TX	1872	4-Year Private	554	\$10,955 ^f	20%	57%
Virginia State University (NCES, 2019e)	Petersburg, VA	1882	4-Year Public	4,025	\$9,154 In-State; \$20,909 Out-of-State	38%	65%

^aStudent enrollment only includes undergraduate students. ^bTuition and Fees based on Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semester totals. ^cGraduation rate is based on students that enrolled in Fall 2013 and graduated with 150% of "normal time." ^dRetention rate is based on students returning between Fall 2018 and Fall 2019. ^eNo difference between In-State and Out-of-State tuition. ^fNo difference between In-State and Out-of-State tuition.



Results

Each HBCU president in this report engaged in leadership practices and partnership goals that were unique to the setting of their university (see p. 18 for presidential biographies). However, there were also practices that were common among the presidents. This report will first describe the individual successes achieved by each HBCU president followed by a description of the shared leadership practices that exist among all HBCU presidents in their efforts to cultivate partnerships at their universities.

President Artis: Benedict College



President Roslyn Artis is the 14th and first woman president of Benedict College. Artis believes “The greatest single value of a historically Black college is our history and our legacy. [And] the greatest

single impediment to our future is our history and our legacy.” Artis shared that “while we want to be respectful of our history, we have to pay particular attention to the present...and much more importantly, where the world is going.” While maintaining that distinct level of respect for the history and tradition of Benedict College, Artis employs a disruptive leadership style that challenges the status quo to ensure the best decisions are made for the university. In efforts to achieve this goal, Artis focuses on using data to drive decision-making related to cultivating partnerships that address the needs of the university. She shared that she follows this approach because her goal “...is not to run the institution by my gut. I think I’ve developed some chops over time, but I want to always be sure, because we have so few resources that I don’t have the luxury of making mistakes.” Artis wants to ensure the decisions made regarding partnership choice and direction are the right ones at the right time. Benedict College is located in South Carolina, which Artis described as a state with an increasing need for students within business and

STEM fields due to its growing technological and advanced manufacturing industry. In turn, students at the university needed access to technology that would allow them to prepare for these fields and the opportunity to network with potential employers. President Artis worked to develop partnerships that would meet this need. Two examples of partnerships developed through President Artis’s efforts include an institutional partnership with other South Carolina colleges and universities and an industry partnership with Boeing.

The power of partnership is demonstrated in a collaboration that Artis shared involving the various small institutions in South Carolina. Institutions came together to create a multi-institutional career fair. The collaborative career fair was developed to ensure students were given the opportunity to engage with potential employers and companies were given the chance to engage with a large, diverse hiring pool. Companies were more enticed to attend a large career fair for multiple institutions versus attending a career fair for a school with only 2,000 students. Artis stated that the “sharing of information and bouncing ideas off of each other... help [universities] leverage our size, particularly the small private institutions.” Artis also recommends that HBCU presidents “really have to adopt a new spirit of collaboration and engagement and sharing if all the HBCUs are to be strong and survive into the next century.” President Artis pays close attention to the future of the world so that she can make partnership decisions that will have

an immediate impact or an impact even ten or twenty years into the future.

One example of Artis's forward-thinking is through an industry partnership with Boeing, which has a major assembly center in the state. The partnership was initially created out of the need to address an outdated computer infrastructure on Benedict's campus. Partnering with Boeing led to improvements of campus computer labs and other IT systems. The improved IT infrastructure on campus has helped Benedict increase the number of highly skilled and well-trained employees graduating from the university. Through this partnership, Boeing gained access to

increased diversity within their potential hiring pools, Benedict improved IT infrastructure on campus, and students gained access to an improved educational experience and potential employer. President Artis also shared that the university pursues partnerships that can provide more than university resources. Artis shared that "we're not looking for sponsors, we're looking for investors. We're looking at people who will think about this relationship in a longitudinal way and in a multifaceted way." Artis wants to see partnerships that will mature over time and lead to Benedict continuing to thrive into the distant future. Artis believes "there's tremendous power in partnerships."

President Walton: Cheyney University



President Aaron Walton is the leader of the first HBCU, Cheyney University, which was founded in 1837 and is located in Cheyney, Pennsylvania.

Walton stepped into his role with the

task of changing the business model of the university to ensure a sustainable future for the institution. As the president, Walton believes that "as we move forward in the arena of education today, only the large institutions that have tremendous endowments will be able to survive in the kind of environment that we live in." In efforts to ensure that Cheyney, or other HBCUs, survive to the future, Walton believes that it was a necessity to assess current assets to determine where the university stands. Assessing the university is what Walton suggests will help presidents guide their decisions on which direction to take the university. Cheyney's assessment was particularly important due to the on-going issues with the operation of the university. Cheyney was facing down enrollment, funding slashes, financial deficits, and facilities being in disrepair (Woodhouse, 2015). President Walton

was in part hired to ensure that Cheyney would remain operational for years to come.

Part of Cheyney's assessment involved identifying institutional assets that could be used. President Walton shared that "Cheyney is not unlike any other institution, other than, it sits on 275 acres of very valuable property in Chester County. And there were a number of buildings that we had on campus that were unoccupied." Using that information, Cheyney decided to use empty space as work sites for future partners to occupy. Cheyney University used this self-assessment information in conjunction with the help of external experts to identify potential partnerships. President Walton shared that the university made the decision to hire a management firm, Mosaic, that looked for potential partnership opportunities in Cheyney's areas of interest. Walton describes Mosaic as having "a master plan of the types of industries and businesses that they will approach based on discussions with faculty, staff, administration here at the university." He also shared that Mosaic goes out to "actually do the legwork and that's their job." The partnerships identified by Mosaic helped provide additional internship opportunities for students and generated rental space income when partners moved to campus, which supplements the university's budget.

President Walton also shared that while he is looking for opportunities that benefit the university, they are also pursuing partnerships that “benefit the Chester and Delaware County locations because the campus sits in both counties...looking at how do we help the state, because we are a state-owned institution. So, everything that we do has a symbiotic relationship with these entities and with our constituencies.” President Walton’s forty-plus years in corporate management are assisting the university with operating under a business model to achieve continued longevity of the university. Walton

shared that he is “taking the lead on all the initiatives in terms of opening the discussion with the various organizations that we’re doing business with.” He stated that as an HBCU president and leader, “you can’t pass off your vision to someone else. You have to execute your own vision.” Walton puts himself at the forefront of working to ensure the continued success of the institution. He also recommended that universities have “to be open to possibilities and there are no bad discussions that you could have with anyone.”

President Gallot: Grambling State University



President Rick Gallot is a former Louisiana state senator and the 10th president of Grambling State University. Gallot provided a single overarching recommendation for other HBCUs

looking to find partnerships: “You’ve got to put the students first. At the end of the day, everything that we do should reflect the best interests of our students and that’s what we’ve done.” Gallot’s student-centered mindset had led to beneficial partnerships with SodexoMAGIC, Adidas, and even Beyoncé.

The Grambling and SodexoMAGIC industry partnership was born out of the need to find an improved campus dining experience for students. Gallot described the SodexoMAGIC as a “Partnership between Sodexo, which is one of the giant food service providers and Magic Johnson Enterprises.” Ultimately, Gallot stated that SodexoMAGIC was chosen because it was the “most lucrative and most student-centered of all proposals.” The partnership also provided the university with the opportunity to increase exposure by working with NBA legend, Magic Johnson, as part of the contract.

Gallot shared that exposure was even evident during a trip to New York. He shared the following story about an experience while on an elevator in Manhattan,

A man working at the hotel looked at me and I had a Grambling shirt on. He said, wait Grambling didn’t you all just signed something with Magic Johnson? And so, it’s like, yeah, of course... So, the fact that this little school in rural North Louisiana signed a food service contract that just happened to be with Magic Johnson caught the eye of this young man who was in New York.

President Gallot’s consideration of students spreads to all partnerships. When deciding to partner with Adidas to provide sports apparel/equipment for the university, one of Gallot’s first questions involved the safety of the sports equipment for student athletes rather than the potential financial benefits of the partnership for the university. Gallot also leveraged university partnerships in the University of Louisiana System network to help bolster existing partnerships with Adidas. Using the provided insight from other institutions, Gallot’s executive team made the decision to move forward with the partnership. Grambling’s partnership with Adidas also created the ability for the university to work with Beyoncé, who partners

with Adidas on her sports apparel line. Grambling's historic marching band and dancers were able to perform with Beyoncé during large events, including Coachella. In turn, this led to increased marketing for Grambling and tremendous exposure and experience for the student performers. When working to establish partnerships, President Gallot focuses on ensuring the success of students, but also gives consideration

for the potential impact of the partnership on the university beyond its original purpose. He attributes these mounting successful partnerships as being the "result of God showing Grambling favor in this time." Rarely, if ever, does President Gallot take credit for Grambling State University's accomplishments under his tenure.

President Sorrell: Paul Quinn College



President Michael Sorrell is the 32nd and longest-serving president of Paul Quinn College. He believes that HBCU presidents must be transformative and "encourage people to dream

bigger dreams" to truly be successful in their roles. In demonstrating his belief in being transformative, Sorrell and his team developed the Urban Work College Model to change the direction of Paul Quinn College. The Urban Work College Model focused on preparing students to enter the workforce as high quality, productive employees. President Sorrell developed the model in part because of his belief that the "most important thing you can do as a college president is to understand who your students are and understand what their needs are." He recognized that his students had different needs than those at other institutions. President Sorrell places value on innovative solutions that don't always fit the traditional higher education framework. Sorrell shared this statement about higher education, "I'm not interested in academic solutions...What people need is for us to actually step out from outside of our offices, listen to them, and actually look as if we give a damn about them." In his leadership of Paul Quinn, that is exactly what President Sorrell has done through the development of the Urban Work College Model to meet the needs of his students.

Sorrell explained that the majority of students at Paul Quinn faced struggles with access to economic resources. Because of this, he believes that students needed preparation to be ready to enter a "higher level of employment opportunity." President Sorrell used the Urban Work College Model to provide students with that preparation through work experiences and internships on and off-campus throughout their matriculation at the university. To provide these work experiences, Sorrell worked with the surrounding communities of Dallas and Plano, Texas to identify potential industry partners. These partnerships provide the university with funding for operational expenses for the internships, the companies with a highly trained and diverse recruiting pool, and students with the opportunity to grow professionally and with a potential full-time employment opportunity. Sorrell focused on innovating Paul Quinn College by completely changing its model of operation, and in turn, this has led to more partnerships and student opportunities.

In the beginning, the Urban Work College Model was not a system being used by other universities, which allowed Paul Quinn to stand out within higher education. Paul Quinn is recognized as the nation's first urban work college and is seen as an example of potential success for other institutions. President Sorrell believes that HBCU presidents need to "dream bigger dreams, chase things that really result in being who you need to be in this game. I just think that it's important to dream big and be innovative if we want to see impactful change on their campuses." Dreaming bigger dreams has led to great success for President Sorrell and Paul Quinn College.

President Abdullah: Virginia State University



President Makola Abdullah is the 14th President of Virginia State University. He arrived in Virginia with years of experience in vice president roles from his time working in the Florida higher

education system. Above all, President Abdullah believes that presidents have to recognize “Quality over quantity...there’s no shortage of partnership possibilities...There are a lot of folks that really recognize the value that our institution can bring to the table.” Abdullah believes that Virginia State and other HBCUs have already established their value and do not need to partner with just anyone for the sake of adding an additional partner to the university catalog. Abdullah supports the idea that HBCU presidents must be selective in their partnerships to ensure that they do not overextend their capacity and so that the partnerships formed can be developed into long-lasting relationships. In Abdullah’s view, it is “critical, just being able to say no sometimes.” President Abdullah emphasized that it is the president’s role to determine which partnerships require focus and attention to grow and be sustainable. The prioritization is how Abdullah believes you achieve the necessary bandwidth to achieve goals. Another consideration of Abdullah was that “people like

to see growth and the university reaching out and becoming a member of the community.” Becoming part of the community connected with the university’s goal to increase their ability to engage the growing technology industry in Virginia.

President Abdullah shared that Virginia is a state with an increasing need for individuals in technology-based career pathways, so he has taken steps to ensure the university will meet this need in the future. Virginia State and Verizon developed a partnership that would benefit local youth and industry relationships with long-term implications. The partnership provides financial support for a middle school technology summer program for Black children led by Virginia State, which has the potential to increase youth interest in STEM fields for careers and in attending Virginia State University. Abdullah also has worked to prepare university students to benefit from the technology needs of the state. For example, Virginia State is part of a consortium of universities that are working together in a partnership with Amazon. This industry partnership focuses on increasing the number of students graduating with computer science and engineering degrees, which in turn, increases the number of HBCU graduates that enter the high-tech pipeline. Abdullah’s work to address Virginia’s technology needs has been as a strategic pathway that allows the university to be seen as a developer of talented workers that can fulfill the needs of the state in the short term and long term.

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Each president and their respective university had a different leadership philosophy that guided their decision-making related to the establishment of partnerships. President Artis believed in a disruptive leadership model, President Sorrell supported dreaming big through transformative leadership, President Gallot believed in placing students first, President Walton trusted using corporate-derived business decisions, and President Abdullah believed in prioritizing efforts to ensure results were achieved. These differences should be expected due to the breadth of experiences held by each president. There was not a single leadership philosophy that was explicitly shared by each president, but there were commonalities that existed among their shared actions as the leader of their respective institutions. Each President, while guided by different beliefs, used similar strategies to achieve success within their institutions.

During the analysis of the collective interviews, five common practices were identified among the HBCU presidents when discussing the development of partnerships at their respective institutions. These common practices included: 1) Prioritizing, 2) Being Student-Centered, 3) Being Data-Driven, 4) Collaboration, and 5) Innovation. Table 2 below depicts the presence of each leadership practice identified among the five presidents' interviews. While not all areas were revealed during each interview, the five identified practices were common across most presidents.

Table 2. Shared Leadership Practices

PRESIDENT	UNIVERSITY	PRIORITIZING	BEING STUDENT-CENTERED	BEING DATA-DRIVEN	COLLABORATION	INNOVATION
Artis	Benedict College	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sorrell	Paul Quinn College		✓	✓		✓
Abdullah	Virginia State University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Walton	Cheyney University	✓	✓	✓		✓
Gallot	Grambling State University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

First, HBCU presidents identified ways to prioritize their actions. Presidents must be able to prioritize partnerships to ensure the institution maintains its ability and capacity to develop each partnership. Second, each of the presidents expressed the need for partnership development to be student-centered. Presidents recognized that partnerships must account for the current and future needs of students to be truly beneficial for the university. Third, the presidents in our study shared that their decisions were often influenced by data or metrics. Presidents collected data about the needs of their campuses, students, and state constituents. Presidents indicated that using data from these groups would help direct the focus of the targeted partnerships such that the most urgent needs of the three stakeholder groups are addressed. Fourth, presidents embraced collaboration to enhance other partnership possibilities. Presidents collaborated with other external stakeholder groups to help improve the chances of establishing mutually beneficial partnerships. For example, Virginia State University and Benedict College both collaborate with other institutions in their states to increase opportunities to partner with large corporations that would benefit their universities. Lastly, presidents were innovative and forward-thinking with regard to partnership development. They explored partnerships that would lead to further success and expansion over time. For example, the presidents considered changes that could occur in the future and took steps to prepare for these changes.

COLLECTIVE PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLES

The shared leadership practices were also evident in the decisions made regarding the partnerships developed by each president. Table 3 highlights some examples for each institution and identifies the type of partnership, the benefits for the partner, the benefits for the university, and the benefits for the students.

Table 3. Summary of Partnerships and Benefits to Various Stakeholders

UNIVERSITY	PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLE	PARTNERSHIP TYPE	BENEFITS FOR PARTNER(S)	BENEFITS FOR UNIVERSITY	BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS
Benedict College	Career Fair with other South Carolina Colleges and Universities	Institutional	Increased student access during career fair participation	Increased engagement with current or potential industry partners	Increased access to potential internships or full-time employment opportunities
Paul Quinn College	Industry Partners in Dallas and Plano, Texas	Industry	Increased access to high quality trained interns or employees	Small operational profit from managing internship programs	Increased access to potential internships or full-time employment opportunities
Virginia State University	Verizon	Community and Industry	Improved public perception within community; long term growth of diverse pipeline in state	Improved public perception within community; long term growth of student population due to youth engagement with university	N/A ^a
Cheyney University	Mosaic	Industry	N/A ^b	Increased operational capacity for university improvement; increased company presence on campus	Overall improved university experience and internship opportunities
Grambling State University	SodexoMAGIC	Industry	N/A ^c	Free publicity due to partnership ties to Magic Johnson; improved campus dining experience	Access to increased and enhanced food options on campus

^aPartnership focuses on potential future student populations. ^bThe partnership between Mosaic and Cheyney involves a contractual obligation where Cheyney is paying Mosaic for their services. ^cThe partnership between SodexoMAGIC and Grambling involves a contractual obligation where Grambling is paying SodexoMAGIC for their services

Each HBCU president pursued partnerships that had the potential to have a long-term and meaningful impact on their respective institutions. Partnering with other institutions in South Carolina allowed Benedict College to provide students with an improved career fair experience and to connect with a larger number of corporations. Partnering with various industry partners in Dallas and Plano provided Paul Quinn College with the ability to make a small operational profit from managing internship programs and provided students with access to internship opportunities. Virginia State's partnership with Verizon allowed them to create a pipeline of talent that could lead to an increase in STEM majors as those middle school students transition into college students in the future. Cheyney and Grambling strategically invested in partnerships that would lead to additional opportunities or benefits on campus. In Cheyney's case, Mosaic identified industry partners to fill empty space on campus, which created rental space income and opportunities for student internships. Grambling's careful selection of a campus dining partner, SodexoMagic, led to free publicity for the university through the partners association with Magic Johnson. Each president carefully considered the partnerships before any agreements were finalized.

Recommendations

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Due to the historical disparities in national and state funding, federal and state-sponsored partnership development programs should be created to encourage HBCUs to engage in the development of industry partnerships. These types of partnership development programs could do much to help HBCUs gain the traction they need to identify partners and create innovative partnerships.
- The creation of incentives for businesses and industries to engage in partnership development with HBCUs is yet another strategy that should be created at the federal and state level. Such incentives should be created such that the partnerships are created in an equitable manner.
- It may be useful for grant funding opportunities, which are created to support HBCUs, include as part of the proposal criteria, a requirement for including components of business and industry partnership development. This approach could result in more innovative funding models being developed that could have long-lasting impacts for institutions and the business and industry partners.

“...My goal is not to run the institution by my gut. I think I’ve developed some chops over time, but I want to always be sure, because we have so few resources that I don’t have the luxury of making mistakes. I really have to get it right in the first place. And secondly, if you’re going to be disruptive, if you’re going to change things that are deeply ingrained in the culture of an institution, you better have some backup to demonstrate why that’s a good thing. And you better be reasonably sure, from a predictive analytic model, that’s going to work.” —President Roslyn Artis, Benedict College

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- This study demonstrates that presidents have engaged in a number of innovative approaches to the development of industry partnerships. Specifically, our findings revealed that the presidents were mindful of the importance of providing students with greater access to employment opportunities, leveraged their institutions' assets (e.g., buildings, land, etc.), pursued partnerships that were reciprocal in nature, and focused on the transformational nature of the partnership outcomes. Collectively, these approaches could serve as strategies for other HBCUs to consider as they pursue partnerships with business and industry.
- Relatedly, the partnership development strategies enacted by the presidents in this study could also lead to an HBCU industry partnership model that could be a turning point in helping address the financial needs experienced by many HBCUs. The model should include components that highlight how successful partnerships are developed through an emphasis on areas such as space and infrastructure, technology, student employment opportunities, and international engagement opportunities. Model development should include a focus on the shared leadership practices we identified of: 1) prioritizing, 2) being student-centered, 3) being data-driven, 4) collaboration, and 5) innovation.
- Additionally, an HBCU president should be mindful of their short and long-term goals as well as within what context (local, regional, state) their priorities should focus when they develop business and industry partnerships. Such a focus will also encourage HBCU presidents to pursue partnerships that will help them achieve the goals of their institutions' strategic plan in a more deliberate and focused manner.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

- Future studies should examine financial data related to partnership development. For example, one approach could involve exploring how much revenue or projected revenue partnerships generate.
- Yet another study could explore the broader benefits as well as impacts of the partnerships on students, the industry partners, and local and state economies. Likewise, it would also make sense to explore if certain business and industry partnerships result in a greater return on investment or lead to greater growth and brand recognition for an institution.
- The current study included a small number of presidents and only one woman president. As such, future research should include interviews with a larger number of presidents with a focus on including more women presidents. Increasing the number and including more women presidents would result in more diverse perspectives related to the development of partnerships.
- It would also be interesting to compare the approach to partnership development between public and private HBCUs. Understanding how these institutional types approach partnership development may lead to an exchange of ideas that could benefit each institution respectively.

Conclusion



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The findings from this study support the need for presidents to be proactive and deliberate when identifying opportunities for business and industry partnerships. Additionally, presidents should be mindful that partnerships should be developed with a focus on how benefits accrue to students, the institution, and partners. Pursuing partnerships with these goals in mind will help ensure they are created equitably. This report also makes clear the importance and benefits of collaborative partnerships. In particular, our report raises awareness of how HBCU presidents approach to development of business and industry partnerships. The presidents in this study revealed the driving forces behind their partnership development, which included factors such as focusing on the needs of students, the local community,

and career and workforce preparation. It was also revealed that funding for infrastructure improvements was a driving force in partnership development. Most importantly and consistent among each of the five presidents was that bold, innovative, and forward-thinking leadership was a critical skill necessary to carry out their vision for partnership development. Innovative HBCU presidents recognize that collaborative partnerships create opportunities for their institutions as well as for students that may have not previously existed (Esters et al., 2016). For example, presidents in this study highlighted that many of their business industry partnerships provided students with access to funding for scholarships, workforce preparation, new and innovative degree programs, professional development, and leadership opportunities. In summary, the partnership development strategies pursued by the presidents in this report will do much to help to expand our understanding of innovative funding models that could lead to the resurgence and continued success of HBCUs.

HBCU PRESIDENT BIOS

BENEDICT COLLEGE

President Roslyn Artis

President Roslyn Artis is the 14th and first woman president of Benedict College. President Artis, who holds a Doctorate in Higher Education Leadership and Policy from Vanderbilt University and a Juris Doctorate from West Virginia University's College of Law. Artis also holds the distinction of being the first woman President of Florida Memorial University. President Artis practices a disruptive leadership style that isn't afraid to push for change and challenge the status quo. Her leadership has led to her receipt of numerous awards and the receipt of many accolades for Benedict College as an institution.

CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY

President Aaron Walton

President Aaron Walton arrived on the campus of Cheyney University with four decades worth of experience in corporate management. President Walton's role was initially only to serve as an Interim President, but his immediate impact on the campus led to the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education to select him to take on the role in a permanent capacity. President Walton has led the university on a path to successfully address the university's accreditation and financial issues, while also ensuring that current and future students are able to continue successfully matriculate.

GRAMBLING STATE UNIVERSITY

President Rick Gallot

President Rick Gallot is the 10th President of Grambling State University. President Gallot has a lifelong connection to the state of Louisiana, having graduated from both Grambling and Southern University and A&M College. He is also a former Louisiana state senator. Gallot is a modest leader that continually recognizes the members of his executive

team as being the reason Grambling has been successful during his leadership term. He also places an extremely high value on ensuring his leadership decisions always keep the needs and wants of students in mind.

PAUL QUINN COLLEGE

President Michael Sorrell

President Michael Sorrell is the 32nd and longest serving president of Paul Quinn College. President Sorrell has served thirteen years in his role at Paul Quinn and his longevity can be greatly attributed to his belief in dreaming big and not being afraid to take well-informed chances. President Sorrell has received numerous awards including being the HBCU Male President of the Year on three separate occasions and being recognized as one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders by *Fortune*. He has used his expertise to develop the New Urban Work College Model, which focuses on preparing students to enter the urban workforce while still in school. Sorrell's model has since been adopted by other colleges and has even led to the opening of additional campus sites in other Texas cities.

VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

President Makola Abdullah

President Makola Abdullah is the 14th president of Virginia State University. President Abdullah arrived in Virginia with deep connections throughout higher education in Florida. Abdullah has previously served as a Vice President at both Bethune-Cookman University and Florida Memorial University and has served as a Dean at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. His leadership experience has led to significant achievements at Virginia State, which include being recognized as a top university for African Americans by *Essence*, being recognized as the HBCU of the Year, and ranked as a top-twenty HBCU on the 2019 *U.S. News & World Report's Best College rankings*.

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“I believe that our institutions have an incredible amount of value. We have never come to the table with nothing. Our institutions and the work that they do for students and faculty, to me, are on the cutting edge of trying to provide access to what some might call the American dream or others might call social mobility. And that’s something that’s really, really valuable, and people really do recognize it. And so that’s why I don’t believe that we have a shortage of partners and partnerships because there’s real value in HBCUs.” —President Makola Abdullah, Virginia State University

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