

Your Comprehensive Guide to Historically Black Colleges and Universities

HBCU

TODAY





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Photo courtesy of Howard University

HBCUs PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

by Hamil R. Harris

Although students had not yet returned to the Howard University for fall classes, Phil Dixon, chairman of the Journalism Department, was working hard in his campus office and listening intently as Tamika Smith tapped a computer screen and played her radio report about an elderly woman in Las Vegas whose gambling addiction pushed her to the edge of suicide.

Smith, who made the audio report during the National Association of Black Journalists Convention in Las Vegas, is a member of the Howard University Class of 2007. She has earned her degree in broadcast journalism and is preparing to enter the workforce. The report she produced was played nationally on National Public Radio's Next Generation Radio.

"Howard University gave me my life," says Smith, a 22-year-old native of Miami, who had a change of heart

about the military after she was offered a scholarship to attend Howard. "I was about to go off to Iraq. I had signed up for the military. I wanted to go to college, but I didn't know how. When I came here, it was the best decision I have ever made in my life."

From freed slaves to a young lady from the streets of Miami, HBCUs have snatched young minds from the brink of despair and given them opportunities for higher learning for decades. Today, Jim Crow is dead, legalized segregation is over, and there is an appearance that the career playing field of success is level. However, professors like Dixon know better. They continue to compete for the brightest minds among us while other bright minds flock to them. For some, education is not about grades but simple economics. They don't have the money to go to college. It is for this reason that HBCUs are more important today than ever.

According to the National Association of Equal Opportunities in Education, HBCUs are disproportionately educating students who come from families with low to moderate incomes. One hundred percent of enrolled students are eligible for the Pell grant in at least five HBCUs—an economic barometer since this award is given to students with low to moderate incomes.

But HBCUs are not just educating students who wouldn't have a chance to go to college otherwise. HBCUs are producing the highest number of African-American Ph.D.s per capita and, according to Grambling University President Horace Judson, at a time when the United States is falling behind China and India in producing engineers and scientists, universities like Grambling have tailor-made their missions to be on the international stage.

"I have a Ph.D. in chemistry, I went to Cornell and Lincoln University, and my provost has a degree in nuclear physics from Morehouse," Judson told *HBCU Today*. "My mission as the president of an HBCU in the twenty-first century is to recognize that it is not an industrial age, but an informational age. The issue today is not whether or not we can get a job in corporate America, the issue is can we be effective and produce in whatever pursuit we choose in the global economy."

From Grambling to Howard, excitement is in the air on the campuses of HBCUs cross the country. With 12,000 students and an endowment of nearly \$400 million, Howard University remains one of the top HBCUs in the country. Among the distinguished alumni at the Washington, D.C., institution founded in 1867 are former Ambassador Andrew Young, actresses Debbie Allen and Phylicia Rashad, former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and Black Panther Stokely Carmichael. Howard University leads the country in turning out African-American Ph.D.s.

Making the Choice

As Tamika Smith talked, Phil Dixon smiled without saying a word. Before coming to Howard, he was an award-winning editor at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and then at the *Washington Post*. Dixon gave up daily journalism to teach future journalists at Howard. "Students like this make it worth it," he says. "You have students who come here who could have gone anywhere. Sometimes parents bang their heads against the wall because the students will get a full ride to MIT or somewhere else and they will say, 'I didn't want to go there, I wanted to come here.'"

Howard is filled with talented students, and some give up lucrative scholarships to larger, state-funded schools to

attend this private HBCU. Courtney Holland, 19, a Howard sophomore from Miami, said when she graduated from high school her parents insisted that she cross the Florida state line when it came to going to college. "I said if I am going to indulge in a worthwhile experience then Howard University could provide the best experience," she says.

Holland, who is majoring in accounting, said her decision was costly because she had received a Bright Futures Scholarship that covered 75 percent of the costs if she attended any college in the State of Florida. "Ninety percent of my classmates were going to Florida State University and Florida, but I said that I have all my life to be in a predominantly white world," Holland says.

Even though Ed Holland, a Miami Certified Public Accountant and business owner, graduated from Florida State University with a degree in accounting in 1981, he respected his daughter's decision.

"I think the beauty of it all is that we have a choice today," Holland says. "We fought hard as a people to have a choice, and it was her choice. My wife graduated from Virginia Union, my brothers graduated from Morehouse, and now my daughter Courtney is majoring in accounting at Howard. She specifically wanted to go to Howard because she would be pushed to excel."

Dr. Paula Matabane can relate to Holland's attitude toward HBCUs. Even though she received a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's from Stanford University, she came to Howard, where she earned a Ph.D. and master's of divinity. "The University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League school, prepared me superbly to become an intellectual scholar," Dr. Matabane said, "but the issue of my identity, my place in the world as a scholar and the essential experiences that shaped me, including the experiences and wisdom of my once-enslaved ancestors, were not only ignored but actively discredited."

"Sometimes I look back on my undergrad years and regret not pursuing certain areas of experience," she said. "There was no encouragement to see value in the world I came from or to understand how it formed who I was, who I could be, and how I might make the larger world a better place. At Howard, students are encouraged to bring the totality of themselves into dialogue with their intellectual growth."

HBCUs: A Look Back

Quality HBCU educational experiences are found not just in large, well-endowed private schools like Howard, Hampton or Tuskegee. From North Carolina A&T to Grambling

“While all of these institutions were created for the education of freed slaves, they are needed today more than ever to educate all kinds of marginal people, regardless of their race.”

—Dr. Barbara R. Hatton, former president of South Carolina State University

State University, there are strong HBCUs across the country. Many of these state schools were created as “land grant” institutions after the Civil War to educate freed slaves. Today, although their missions have broadened, schools like Florida A&M, Prairie View A&M, Jackson State, Texas Southern University, and Alabama State University still carry the proud HBCU name and traditions.

Prior to the Civil War, it was against the law for slaves to be educated. Although there were exceptions, like self-educated Frederick Douglass, there were almost no formal educational opportunities for people of color. In the early 1830s, a group of Philadelphia Quakers started to educate some blacks at Oberlin College in Ohio and Berea College in Kentucky, but it would take decades of court battles and congressional laws for change to come.

Following the Civil War, Congress passed the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery. In 1862, Senator Justin Morrill led a movement to train Americans in the applied sciences, agriculture, and engineering. The Morrill Land-Grant Act gave federal lands to the states for the purpose of opening colleges and universities. Initially, few opportunities were created for freed slaves, but three decades later, the freedmen finally got their chance when Congress passed the second Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890.

In the wake of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890, sixteen black institutions opened after they received land-grant funds. The American Missionary Association (AMA) and the Freedmen’s Bureau would continue to set up colleges for blacks, and between 1861 and 1870, the AMA founded seven black colleges and thirteen normal (teaching) schools. These institutions would become the bedrock of black higher education. For the next fifty years, HBCUs

would flourish. Although funds were low and students often needed financial support from family and friends, they were getting something more than could be placed in a bank.

In 1928, HBCUs gained more support when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools began to accredit some schools. Even though the Great Depression and World War II crippled many black institutions, most kept their doors opened thanks to churches, a growing black community, philanthropists, and a new organization called the United Negro College Fund.

In 1954, the historic case Supreme Court *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ruled that the nation’s “separate but equal” system of education was unconstitutional. The case was won by a group of lawyers trained at Howard University that included a young lawyer by the name of Thurgood Marshall. A decade later, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that gave the federal government greater power to enforce desegregation.

In 1965, the federal government provided additional funding to HBCUs through the Higher Education Act. Then came *Adams v. Richardson*, a Supreme Court decision that found ten states in violation of the Civil Rights Act for supporting segregated schools.

While HBCUs gained in influence and resources because of government mandates and court decisions, in the last two decades, court-issued rulings have threatened the existence of some state-funded HBCUs that have duplicate programs as other state institutions often located in the same areas.

In 1992, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Fordice* that dual and segregated educational systems were unconstitutional; since that time, many HBCUs have become more diverse than ever.

A Culture of Inclusion

Dr. Barbara R. Hatton, former president of South Carolina State University, points out that institutions like Florida A&M, Tuskegee, Alabama A&M, South Carolina State, and North Carolina A&T have done well because they were federal land-grant institutions dedicated to educating freed slaves. “In the old segregated days you had white land-grant institutions and black institutions, and that funding still exists today,” she said.

Even though African-American students have more educational options than ever, many continue to choose HBCUs. Leah Dixon had a briefcase full of college admission letters, but the twenty-year-old from Hampton, Virginia, traveled a few miles away from home and enrolled at Norfolk State University in an historic city that is home to

one of the test cases for the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation case.

Austin Cobb also had plenty of choices for college, but the nineteen-year-old from Philadelphia headed to Alabama, to Tuskegee University, because he wanted to major in animal science.

And although 19-year-old Paul Henry just wanted to leave New Orleans and go into the Air Force after Hurricane Katrina, a family member convinced him to go to college, so he attended Tuskegee University because he knew he wouldn't be treated like just another student.

Today, the mandate is strong and the mission is undaunted on HBCU campuses across the country. According to each of these students, attending an HBCU has been a life-changing experience that began on the day they arrived on the campus with a big trunk and too many warm sweaters.

Leah Dixon said she went to Norfolk State because, "I got a chance to be around a culture like no other." Cobb is fulfilling his dream of majoring in animal science "because of the warmth of the faculty and staff," and Henry is glad that he didn't go into the Air Force or another school because, "They care about you [here] while at another university you might be just another name."

Rev. Grainger Browning is pastor of the 10,000-member Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church in Fort Washington, Maryland, one of the most affluent predominantly black jurisdictions in the country. Even though his children and many young people in his church could afford to go to any school, Browning is a strong supporter of HBCUs. His father was a professor at Hampton University in the 1960s, and today his son attends Morehouse, and his daughter is a student at Hampton University.

"It was always clear that I was going to Hampton to be free of not having to deal with racism," said Browning. "It changed my life. I had never been in a position of leadership. You have to be able to go as far as you can with nothing being able to stop you but you."

Impact on History

While alumni and students talk about their affinities for HBCUs, these institutions offer more than warm and fuzzy anecdotes of success. The glaring reality is that without the role and function of HBCUs, the landscape of America would be quite different. Had it not been for the desire of Heman Marion Sweat and a rejection letter from the University of Texas Law School, there would not have been a Texas Southern Law School. Had there not been a Dr. Benjamin Mays at Morehouse, there might not have been a Mar-

tin Luther King, Jr. Had there not been a George Washington Carver at Tuskegee, there might not have been a Skippy peanut butter or a Ponds cold cream.

The nation's 104 HBCUs are having an impact beyond just educating young people. According to a 2006 report released by the National Center for Educational Statistics, the combined spending of all 101 HBCUs was \$6.6 billion in 2001, and of this amount, 62 percent was spent by public HBCUs. Collectively, HBCUs would rank 232 on *Forbes* Fortune 500 companies. The report goes on to say these schools are not just producing graduates—they have a tremendous economic impact on the communities in which they are located.

According to the report, the 104 HBCUs pumped \$4 billion in the labor economy, creating 180,142 full- and part-time jobs. The impact of these institutions was particularly significant in smaller communities. For example, in Tuskegee, Alabama, Tuskegee University hires more than 2,100 workers and accounts for 24 percent of the town's entire labor force. The job picture is similar in Grambling, Louisiana, where Grambling State University employs about 10 percent of the town's workforce.

The 10 largest public HBCUs that are having an economic impact in their community include Florida A&M (\$432 million), North Carolina A&T (\$298 million), Tennessee State University (\$289 million), Southern University (\$267 million), Texas Southern (\$254 million), Morgan State University (\$252 million), Jackson State University (\$249 million), Prairie View A&M (\$231 million), Norfolk State University (\$194 million), and North Carolina Central (\$178 million). The largest private schools economically are Howard University (\$1.2 billion), Hampton University (\$227 million), Clark Atlanta University (\$227 million), Meharry Medical College (\$173 million), and Xavier University of Louisiana (\$154 million). The report also states that the Morehouse School of Medicine and Morehouse College accounted for \$212 million combined.

HBCUs Today and Tomorrow.

Dr. Barbara R. Hatton says if HBCUs are to thrive in the future they must obtain additional resources, reassess their core missions, and adapt to changing times.

"The truth is unless some of these institutions can redirect themselves to the original mission while at the same time refitting that mission to today's culture and needs, some of them will not survive," Hatton said. "While all of these institutions were created for the education of freed slaves, they

are needed today more than ever to educate all kinds of marginal people, regardless of their race.”

From Grambling to North Carolina A&T and from Tennessee State to Florida A&M, every fall thousands of alumni and fans returned to their old schools to enjoy all of the bands, fashion, and pageantry of black college football games. University officials point out that these stadiums are filled with African American professionals who earned degrees from HBCUs, and many of these people would have never gotten a chance to attend college had it not been for the efforts of an HBCU.

When many people think about Grambling University they often bring up the name of legendary football coach Eddie Robinson and all of the great football classics that the team has been part of over the years, but Grambling is more than just a football power or a Saturday afternoon experience. The university offers seventy-five undergraduate and graduate degree programs through their colleges of Business, Education, Arts & Sciences, Professional Studies, and School of Graduate and Research. In addition, Grambling has the only doctoral program in developmental education in the nation.

From the opening of its new Center for Mathematics Achievement in Science and Technology—that was funded by a \$2.4 million National Science Foundation grant—to the creation of the Summer Institute on World Literature that, in 2007, featured eight prominent literature scholars from across the country who spent several weeks discussing the works of Homer, Dante, Christine de Pizan, and Shakespeare, there is plenty of action going on at Grambling away from the football field.

Grambling, under the leadership of President Horace Judson, has been on the move since he arrived three years ago. Some of Judson’s projects include increasing the diversity of the student body, crafting a master plan for the institution, and overseeing the construction of Tiger Village, a state-of-the-art, 1,200-bed, apartment-style dormitory that opened in the fall of 2007. In addition, Judson and his administration embraced new academic standards handed down by Louisiana’s Board of Regents that actually raised admission requirements for students coming to the school.

“The real strength of American higher education is diversity,” Judson told *HBCU Today*. “We come at diversity from a different angle. We can’t forget that 60 percent of the world is not white and not Christian. Our goal is to be very relevant in the global community. Since I have been here, we have increased the number of international students from

forty to more than 300. We have a mission not just to educate African-American students but to help our students achieve cultural competence.”


Judson went on to say that students from thirty different countries are now matriculating at Grambling and 40 to 45 percent of the school’s faculty is non-African American. He says while the university is proud of its rich history and legacy, it is equally important that they know the Grambling that extends far beyond the football field and the famous football teams that made the late Eddie Robinson the winningest football coach in history.

“It is critically important for people to know that throughout our history, Grambling has been about the pursuit of academic excellence, but the broad society has not looked at us in that way,” Judson said. “Our focus is to strengthen our academic programs. We are going to make those programs stronger and stronger. We are focusing on national problems.”

Overcoming Challenges

While HBCUs provide a tremendous opportunity, they also have a big challenge of gleaning critical resources to keep their doors open. “There is a tremendous pressure on small private colleges because of the cost of education today,” Judson said. “Their financial support has eroded because of the way they used to get their money from the churches; today there is also a tremendous competition for students.”

But despite this challenge, Judson says larger private institutions show that it can be done. He pointed out that institutions like Howard, Hampton, Morehouse, and Spelman have been successful not just because they have great academic reputations, but the leaders of these schools have worked for decades to build large endowments, with the money for these schools generated from the interest of these funds. He says the key for all HBCUs is to adapt to present times because the mission has changed.

Although Grambling is a public school, Judson says it still is important that funds be raised to finance school programs. He has established an endowment and would like to raise \$30 million to fund the university’s programs. “We are an institution now that is relevant for the twenty-first century,” Judson says. “We are inclusive, and we are more effective in the way that we function, providing strong and effective leaders who are also culturally competent.” 

Hamil R. Harris is an award-winning writer and reporter for The Washington Post.



Photo courtesy of Alabama A&M University

ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY

ADDRESS: 4900 Meridian Street
Normal, AL 35762
(256) 372-5000

WEB SITE: www.aamu.edu

FOUNDED: 1875

MASCOT: Bulldog

AFFILIATION: None

TYPE: 4-Year Public

RATIO: 14:1

STUDENT BODY: 5,300

HISTORY

Alabama A&M University (AAMU) is a land-grant university supported by the State of Alabama and federal funds appropriated by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The university opened on May 1, 1875, as the Huntsville Normal School through the efforts of William Hooper Councill, an ex-slave who became its first principal and president.

In 1878, the name changed to the State Normal and Industrial School at Huntsville upon the introduction of industrial education. In 1891, upon receiving the Federal Land-Grant Fund, the school offered training in agriculture and mechanical arts, and thus changed its name again to the State Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes.

Upon becoming a junior college in 1919, the name was changed to the State Agricultural

and Mechanical Institute for Negroes. When the State Board of Education allowed the institute to work on the senior college level in 1939, the name was changed to Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College. In 1969, the Alabama State Board of Education, which is the governing body of the institution, adopted the name of Alabama A&M University.

Alabama A&M University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS).

MISSION

AAMU is committed to providing an environment where scholars, thinkers, and leaders can flourish. The university works in cooperation with businesses, industrial and government agencies, and other institutions to help students put theory into practice.

MOTTO

“Service Is Sovereignty”

TRIVIA

Since 1997, a Nobel Laureate has visited the campus of AAMU every year.

NOTABLES

- Ruben Studdard—American pop, gospel, and R&B singer; winner of American Idol, second season
- John Stallworth—NFL player; selected to Pro Football Hall of Fame

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

AAMU is comprised of five schools: the School of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, the School of Arts & Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Education, and the School of Engineering & Technology.

The School of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences awards degrees in Agribusiness, Community Planning and Urban Studies, Food and Animal Sciences, Plant and Soil Sciences, and Family and Consumer Sciences.

The School of Arts & Sciences awards degrees in Biology, Chemistry, English, Mathematics, Military Science, Physics, Political Science, Social Work, Sociology, and Telecommunications.

The School of Business awards degrees in Accounting, Business Administration (with concentrations in Management Information Systems, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, International Business, and Office Systems Management), Business Education, Economics, Finance, Management, and Marketing.

The School of Education awards degrees in Art; Communicative Sciences & Disorders; Curriculum, Teaching & Educational Leadership (Developmental Reading, Ph.D. Reading, Secondary Education, and Educational Lead-

ership); Elementary & Early Childhood Education; Health & Physical Education; Music; Psychology & Counseling (Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, Guidance & Counseling, School Counseling, and Rehabilitation Counseling); and Special Education (Collaborative Teaching).

The School of Engineering & Technology awards degrees in Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineering; Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Technology; Computer Science; Industrial Technology; and Construction Management.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Alabama A&M University has 115 registered student organizations, including concert, theater, band, choir, Greek societies, and honor societies. Students can join the student-run newspaper or the yearbook. The campus also has a student-run radio station, WJAB.

SPORTS

Alabama A&M University's sports teams, the Bulldogs, are members of the NCAA, Division I and participate in the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC). Currently, there are seven men's varsity programs (baseball, basketball, football, golf, soccer, tennis, track and field) and eight for women (basketball, bowling, cross-country, softball, soccer, tennis, and track and field, and volleyball).

TUITION

\$4,500/\$9,000

CONTACT INFORMATION

Alabama A&M University
P.O. Box 908
Normal, AL 35762
Phone: (256) 372-5245
Toll-free: (800) 553-0816
Fax: (256) 372-5249
E-mail: admissions@aamu.edu