



If You Can Dream It, You Can Achieve It at an HBCU!

May 25, 2011

Honorable Phil Berger
President Pro Tempore
North Carolina State Senate
State Legislative Building
Raleigh, NC 27601
Email Address: philbe@ncleg.net

RE: Proposed Budget Reduction Priorities for FY 2011 and FY 2012

Dear Senator Berger:

I am writing as the national membership association of the nation's 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and 50 Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs). NAFEO members include Bennett College for Women, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingstone College, Shaw University, and St. Augustine's College, the independent HBCUs in the State of North Carolina, as well as Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina A & T State University, and Winston Salem State University, the public HBCUs in the State. I am writing to respectfully request that you forestall efforts to cut LTG/SCSF funding while also providing no lottery funding for students attending independent colleges and universities in the State of North Carolina. The proposal to use just \$62 million of the current \$104 million in LTG/SCSF funding for a new need-based program based on the lottery formula, would likely prove inadequate to meet the gap caused by the LTG/SCSF cut. Our members are concerned that the proposed cuts might have a devastating and potentially destabilizing impact on the independent HBCUs of the State. We would like to meet with you to explore options prior to you having a vote to eliminate sorely needed funding for the HBCU independent colleges and universities in the State.

NAFEO understands clearly that these challenging financial times require tough budget decisions. We appreciate also that when making decisions about where to invest sparse public dollars, it is generally accepted that public dollars should be invested first in public entities. Mr. President Pro Tempore, we even accept that as a general rule, "[a]s important as the private sector of higher education is to America, the struggle to improve educational attainment across the board and to reduce the marked disparities in outcomes that are so troubling will take place mainly within the public universities,"¹ because roughly 3/4s of students pursuing a four-year degree are attending public universities. But the reality of the American higher education system is today and has always been that there is a three-tiered American higher education system: one historically white private higher education system; one historically white public higher education system; and one historically black higher education system. This latter system has always been and is today woefully underfunded with much smaller endowments, much fewer public and private investments than their white counterparts; and a much greater pull on their institutions from students and communities that have traditionally been and continue to be underrepresented in the American higher education system.

¹ William G. Bowen, Matthew M. Chingos, Michael S. McPherson, Crossing the Finish Line, Princeton University Press (2009) p.10.

The historically black higher education system is a very small, yet diverse segment of the higher education system. Although born out of the American slave system, today's HBCU system is richly diverse, interdependent, interconnected and meeting education needs of diverse students not otherwise being met by any other segment of the higher education community of colleges and universities.

Though woefully underfunded and under-supported by public and private sources since their founding in the years following the Civil War, today's HBCUs are providing **the best return on investment of all classes of higher education institutions**. According to The College Board's *Trends in College Costs* report, a 4-year degree at a private HBCU costs roughly \$10,000 less than a comparable degree at a private Historically White College or University (HWCU); and a 4-year degree at a public institution costs \$2,500 less than a 4-year degree at a public HWCU, on average. HBCUs are graduating disproportionate numbers of students in growth and high needs disciplines. While HBCUs are just 3.3% of all American colleges and universities, they are graduating 50% of black teachers, 22% of black students with a bachelor's degree in science and engineering; roughly 30% of all blacks who go on to receive a PhD in engineering. The top 8 and 20 of the top 50 US institutions producing black S & E doctorate recipients are HBCUs.

The above data are supported by the 2010 Commission on Civil Rights report on "*The Education Effectiveness of Historically Black Colleges and Universities*" and the 2011 NSF report, "*Enhancing Underrepresented Minority Participation: America's Science and Technology Talent at a Crossroads.*"

The independent colleges and universities in the State of North Carolina are leaders among the independent colleges and HBCUs in the nation. For example, St Augustine's, which enrolls in excess of 1500 students, fifty percent of whom are from North Carolina, is routinely ranked as among the best returns on investments for colleges in its category. Its community development corporation and Neighborhood Stabilization Program are enriching its service area and adding greatly to the economy of the State. President Dianne Boardley Suber represents the public and private HBCUs from North Carolina and the nation as a member of the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs.

Bennett College is one of the nation's two HBCU colleges for women. Under the leadership Dr. Julianne Malveaux, a nationally acclaimed economist and journalist, Bennett College for Women is leading in preparing women of color in global studies, women studies, religious studies, entrepreneurship, and in communications and new media. It operates dual degree programs with North Carolina A & T in STEM that are helping to meet the State's need for more women and more racially and ethnically diverse members in the labor force in STEM. Forty percent of the students at Bennett College come from North Carolina, more than 50% of Bennett graduates remain in State, add to the tax base and enrich the civic, social, cultural, academic and economic life of the State.

Dr. Ronald L. Carter, president of Johnson C. Smith University, is continuing and expanding on the tradition of Johnson C. Smith as a "communiversity." President Carter is engaging the university directly with the community in many ways. Through the Center for Applied Leadership and Community Development, the university recently launched its first Carolina Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools summer enrichment program. The Freedom Schools help North Carolina students develop a passion for reading, better prepare and inspire them to high standards. The program enrolls students from targeted North Carolina communities and in this manner provides another direct educational and economic benefit to the State.

During the five-year tenure of President Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr. at Livingstone College, he has expanded the university's reach into and contributions to the families and communities in Livingstone's service area, and is increasing the tax base in many ways. A central component of the educational experience at Livingstone is for students to work in and serve the community. This fall, Livingstone's nearly 1,000 students will fan out across Rowan County to work with some 30 non-profit agencies. Now in its third

year, the college's Community Service/Service Learning program benefits students and the community through volunteer work.

The reduction in or elimination of state funds from North Carolina's independent HBCUs will likely reverse or retard some of the important community and State enrichment referenced above. A reduction in state funding to these vitally important institutions at this time would be especially calamitous. At this time these institutions, like others across the country will have to adjust to meet federally mandated rescissions in many of the programs that assist them to thrive, including Title IIIB of the Higher Education Act, TRIO programs, SEOG and other student aid programs, as well as federal pipeline programs. The proposed cuts at this time in which each of the State's independent HBCUs is doing its part to meet the federal and State ambitious goals for increasing student retention and graduation rates, would make their already challenging task more daunting.

For the above and other reasons that I would like very much to discuss with you and your colleagues prior to a vote being taken to cut funding from the State's independent colleges and universities, I respectfully request that you not disinvest from these equal educational opportunity institutions. The HBCUs in the State of North Carolina, including the independent colleges and universities, are the clearest, the most effective and efficient pathway through which excellent, diverse students from all walks of life, especially low-income, first generation students from traditionally underserved communities, are being prepared, inspired, and graduated to serve humanity and help North Carolina communities, the economy and the State to thrive.

NAFEO and I stand ready to work with you and your colleagues in any manner of means, Senator Berger, to identify a fair and equitable way of avoiding cuts to the HBCUs in North Carolina, including the independent colleges and universities. I may be reached at (202) 552-3300 or (202) 439-4704.

I thank you for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,



Lezli Baskerville
President & CEO

cc: Senator Richard Stevens(Wake)
Senator Pete Brunstetter (Forsyth)
Senator Neal Hunt (Wake)
Other Members of the North Carolina State Senate