

**DATE:** January 25, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)  
Success Update

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:** Information

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In 2017 with the passage of Public Chapter 464, Tennessee became the first state in the country to have a full-time, statewide higher education professional focused on strengthening the capacity of its historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), both public and private. HBCU is a federal designation, applied to accredited postsecondary institutions founded before 1964 and with the primary mission of educating black Americans. Today, there are 100 HBCUs nationwide, and six in Tennessee: American Baptist College, Fisk University, Lane College, LeMoyne Owen College, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee State University. Knoxville College, which lost its SACSCOC accreditation in 1997, was re-authorized in May 2018 by the Division of Postsecondary School Authorization to operate as a higher education institution, and is seeking re-accreditation in the coming years.

During this inaugural year, THEC has been actively engaged in developing an HBCU strategic plan with targeted goals and objectives. Through robust research and analysis, innovative programming, and meaningful convening, the Director of HBCU Success has advocated on behalf of Tennessee’s historically black institutions, promoting the positive economic, educational, and workforce impacts of HBCUs and building a community of informed, devoted HBCU supporters across sectors and industries. Below, each strategic goal is listed along with key tasks accomplished during 2018.

*Strengthening the capacity of HBCUs to participate in state programs*

- Awarded Veterans Reconnect Grants to Lane College (\$66,984) and Tennessee State University (\$69,200) to assist veterans and service members in their pursuit of college degrees.
- Awarded a Military Pathway Pilot Project grant to Fisk University (\$50,000) to develop guided academic pathways to support veterans as they transition from the military to college campuses and prepare them for the civilian workforce.

*Fostering enduring private-sector initiatives and public-private partnerships while promoting specific areas and centers of academic research and programmatic excellence throughout all HBCUs*

- Created TN H.I.R.E. (HBCU Interns Reaching for Excellence), a summer internship program. Beginning Summer 2019, 50 HBCU students will be selected for placement in a six- to eight-week internship with a partnering state agency or private business. Students will be provided training on soft skills prior to their placement, and expected to complete a presentation of their work at the conclusion of the program.

*Improving the availability, dissemination, and quality of information concerning HBCUs to inform public policy and practice*

- Developed an HBCU Success [website](#) with links to various resources, including an HBCU infographic series with institutional characteristics, enrollment and financial aid data, and completion metrics, collected from state and national data.

*Sharing administrative and programmatic practices within the consortium for the benefit of all*

- Started an Executive-in-Residence program at Lane College with the Director of HBCU Success at Lane College, with the goal of providing technical assistance while embedded within the campus context. This residency will rotate institutions approximately each Fall and Spring semester.
- Awarded HBCU Summer Bridge Program grants to American Baptist College, Fisk University, Lane College, LeMoyne Owen College, and Tennessee State University for establishing or increasing the capacity of transitional academic summer programs for incoming freshmen (\$400,000).

*Exploring new ways of improving the relationship between the state and HBCUs*

- Planning is underway for a joint HBCU Day on the Hill, and institutions have been invited to participate on February 13, 2019.

State legislation also provided for the creation of an HBCU Board of Advisors, comprised of ten legislative appointees from a variety of industries and backgrounds. This board has been charged with improving the identity, visibility, and distinctive capabilities and overall competitiveness of Tennessee's HBCUs, by engaging the philanthropic, business, government, and education communities in dialogue regarding new HBCU programs and initiatives. This advisory board had its first convening on November 28, 2018. Dr. Ivory Toldson, president of QEM Network and former White House Executive Director of HBCU Initiatives, was an invited guest and provided detailed and encouraging remarks on fostering the success of HBCUs. Also in attendance were the presidents of Tennessee State University, Lane College, American Baptist College, and representatives from Fisk University and Meharry Medical College. The next convening of the advisory board is planned for Spring 2019.

HBCU Success will have a positive impact on achieving the state's Drive to 55 goals. In fall 2017, enrollment at Tennessee's HBCUs totaled approximately 12,000 students, which represents 5 percent of non-profit postsecondary enrollment in Tennessee, but nearly 25 percent of all black students enrolled. HBCUs graduated 21 percent of black bachelor's degree completers and 44 percent of black doctoral (professional practice) degree completers in 2016-17. By strengthening the capacity for student success and completion at these institutions, HBCUs will continue to contribute significantly to the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential.