



American Bridge

Trump Policy Brief: Executive Order On Historically Black Colleges & Universities

3.9.17

TRUMP'S EMPTY GESTURE TO HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

After weeks of promotion and publicity, President Trump signed an executive order moving assistance to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) from the Department of Education to the White House. Trump he said would make HBCUs “an absolute priority,” and even went so far as to claim that he would “do more for HBCUs than any other president has done before.”

To date, Trump has done nothing of consequence for HBCUs. After Trump’s signing ceremony, Dillard University president Walter Kimbrough criticized what was promised as a “listening session” for devolving into a “photo opportunity” without any significant discussion. Morehouse College president John Wilson bemoaned that the “long-awaited executive order” amounted to nothing more than “a symbolic shift.”

Trump, after meeting with several HBCU presidents and advocacy groups, issued an order that did nothing to address their main requests: increased federal funding for their schools and for the Pell Grants program. Despite Trump’s promise to “ensure funding” for historically black schools as a part of a “New Deal for Black America,” his order allocated zero money for HBCUs, in contrast with billions provided under the previous administration. To the contrary, Trump’s massive budget cut proposals threaten to reduce funding for HBCUs, targeting agencies which provide them with hundreds of millions in revenue annually.

Whereas the Obama administration added more than a quarter billion to the Pell Grant program, on which more than seven of every ten HBCU students rely, Trump’s HBCU order called for increasing the role of the private sector in financing higher education. This preference for the private sector is consistent with Trump’s campaign platform that threatened Pell Grant funding with the proposed return to a system in which private banks issue federal student loans.

Trump Issued A Disappointingly Vacuous Executive Order On Historically Black Colleges And Universities (HBCUs)

TRUMP'S ORDER MOVED HBCU OVERSIGHT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO THE WHITE HOUSE, AND DID LITTLE ELSE

Trump Issued An Executive Order Moving Assistance To Historically Black Colleges And Universities From The Department Of Education To The White House. According to USA Today, “President Donald Trump on Tuesday moved to create closer ties with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), issuing an executive order that moves assistance to the 100 schools from the U.S. Education Department to The White House.” [USA Today, [2/28/17](#)]

- **Inside Higher Ed: Despite “Serious Hype,” The Only Real Change Included In The Order Was Moving The HBCU Initiative From The Department Of Education To The White House.** According to Inside Higher Ed, “President Trump signed an executive order Tuesday re-establishing the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and moving the initiative from the Department of Education to the Executive Office of the President. Despite the serious hype that surrounded the order, including weeks of promising it would go beyond previous administrations' efforts, it offered no other concrete changes from previous orders, such as

new funding commitments or contracting requirements by federal agencies. The executive order creates an advisory board (similar to that of past administrations) and also urges federal agencies to consider how they can better work with historically black colleges (as did previous presidential directives).” [Inside Higher Ed, [3/1/17](#)]

- **Similar To Directives From Previous Presidential Administrations, Trump’s Order Created An HBCU Advisory Board And Encouraged Federal Agencies To Determine How They Could Better Work With HBCUs.** According to Inside Higher Ed, “President Trump signed an executive order Tuesday re-establishing the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and moving the initiative from the Department of Education to the Executive Office of the President. Despite the serious hype that surrounded the order, including weeks of promising it would go beyond previous administrations’ efforts, it offered no other concrete changes from previous orders, such as new funding commitments or contracting requirements by federal agencies. The executive order creates an advisory board (similar to that of past administrations) and also urges federal agencies to consider how they can better work with historically black colleges (as did previous presidential directives).” [Inside Higher Ed, [3/1/17](#)]

Morehouse College President John Silvanus Wilson: Moving The White House HBCU Initiative From The Department Of Education To The White House Was A Symbolic Shift, The Impact Of Which Was Impossible To Measure. According to a press release from the Office of the President at Morehouse College, “And beside the expectation of new funding, there was advance talk of changes like an aspirational goal of 5 to 10 percent for federal agency funding to HBCUs, a special HBCU innovation fund, large boosts in Pell Grant and Title III funding, and extra tax breaks for those in the private sector who contribute to HBCUs. But, instead of the long-awaited executive order containing or signaling any of those outcomes, the key change is a symbolic shift of the White House HBCU Initiative from the Department of Education to the White House. It is not possible to measure the impact of this gesture anytime soon, if ever.” [Morehouse College, [3/1/17](#)]

TRUMP PLEDGED TO “DO MORE FOR HBCUS THAN ANY OTHER PRESIDENT HAS DONE BEFORE,” BUT HIS ORDER OFFERED NO MONEY FOR HBCUS – AND HIS PREDECESSOR OFFERED BILLIONS

Trump’s Order Was Hyped For Weeks With Promises That It Would Go Beyond Previous Administrations’ Efforts

Trump Pledged To “Do More For HBCUs Than Any Other President Has Done Before.” According to a press release from the Office of the President at Morehouse College, “Given my experience in the Obama administration, I knew this would require an extraordinary announcement. Why? Because I knew that President Obama had invested \$3 billion more in HBCUs in his first six years than President Bush invested in his final six years. Therefore, since President Trump pledged to ‘do more for HBCUs than any other president has done before,’ we could have reasonably expected him to get started by announcing at least an additional \$500 million to HBCUs...this year!” [Morehouse College, [3/1/17](#)]

Trump Promised During The Campaign That He Would “Ensure Funding” For HBCUs As A Part Of His “New Deal For Black America.” According to Politico, “On the campaign trail, Trump promised to ‘ensure funding’ for historically black schools in his ‘New Deal for Black America,’ part of his campaign’s outreach to minorities. Omarosa Manigault, the ‘Apprentice’ star-turned-White-House-aide, has spearheaded the drafting of the executive order, which is expected to be issued by the end of February — Black History Month.” [Politico, [2/27/17](#)]

Trump's Executive Order Had Been Hyped For Weeks With Promises That It Would Go Beyond Previous Administrations' Efforts. According to Inside Higher Ed, “Despite the serious hype that surrounded the order, including weeks of promising it would go beyond previous administrations' efforts, it offered no other concrete changes from previous orders, such as new funding commitments or contracting requirements by federal agencies. The executive order creates an advisory board (similar to that of past administrations) and also urges federal agencies to consider how they can better work with historically black colleges (as did previous presidential directives).” [Inside Higher Ed, [3/1/17](#)]

Trump: “With This Executive Order, We Will Make HBCUs A Priority In The White House — An Absolute Priority.” According to the White House's Office of the Press Secretary, “With this executive order, we will make HBCUs a priority in the White House -- an absolute priority. (Applause.) A lot of people are going to be angry that they're not a priority, but that's okay. (Laughter.)” [Office of the Press Secretary – White House, [2/28/17](#)]

Trump's Order Provided Zero Funding For HBCUs

Bloomberg: Trump Moved HBCU Oversight Into The White House From The Department Of Education, But “Stopped Short Of Allocating Any Money For The Schools Or Directing Congress To Do So.” According to Bloomberg Politics, “On the campaign trail, President Donald Trump praised historically black colleges and universities and signaled that they'd be a priority for his administration. This week, Trump followed his rhetoric by meeting with the leaders of more than 60 of the schools (called HBCUs), a gathering that also drew attention for the meme-able photo of Kellyanne Conway with her feet up on the Oval Office couch. Trump followed that meeting with an executive order designed to raise the profile of HBCUs by moving their oversight into the White House from the Department of Education. He stopped short of allocating any money for the schools or directing Congress to do so, as the leaders had asked.” [Bloomberg Politics, [3/1/17](#)]

The Obama Administration Invested Over \$4 Billion In HBCUs

The Obama Administration Invested More Than \$4 Billion In HBCUs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, “Over the course of 7 years, the Obama Administration has invested more than \$4 billion in HBCUs, because these institutions are vital engines of economic growth and proven ladders of advancement for generations of African Americans. Under the Obama Administration, 1 million more African-American and Latino students have enrolled in college. What's more, black and Hispanic students earned more than 270,000 more undergraduate degrees in 2013-2014 than in 2008-2009.” [U.S. Department of Education, [10/24/16](#)]

President Of Morehouse College: Given Trump's Pledge To “Do More For HBCUs Than Any Other President Has Done Before,” We Could Have Expected At Least \$500 Million From His Order.

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HBCU PRESIDENTS AND ADVOCACY GROUPS HAD ASKED FOR INCREASED FUNDING FOR THEIR SCHOOLS AND THE FEDERAL PELL GRANT PROGRAM

Trump’s Executive Order Ignored Requests For Increased Funding To Black Colleges And Did Not Address Increasing Pell Grants Funding. According to Black Entertainment Television, “This week, President Trump met with several presidents and advocacy groups for HBCUs and promoted an image of solidarity with these statistically underfunded institutions. However, Trump's executive order ignores two key requests from the schools: increased federal funding and Pell grants.” [Black Entertainment Television, [3/1/17](#)]

Buzzfeed: “A Coalition Of HBCU Presidents And Advocacy Groups Had Asked Trump To Write Increased Federal Funding Into The Executive Order, Including An ‘Aspirational Goal’ That At Least 5% Of Federal Grant Funding Should Go To” HBCUs. According to BuzzFeed News, “A coalition of HBCU presidents and advocacy groups had asked Trump to write increased federal funding into the executive order, including an ‘aspirational goal’ that at least 5% of federal grant funding should go to historically black schools. HBCUs have long struggled with chronic underfunding from states and low endowments compared to their predominantly-white counterparts.” [Buzzfeed News, [2/28/17](#)]

None Of The United Negro College Fund’s Funding Recommendations Were Included In The Order. According to a press release by the United Negro College Fund, “None of UNCF’s funding recommendations were included, which were: • Committing to an aspirational goal that HBCUs be awarded five percent of total federal grant, internship and cooperative agreement funding and 10 percent of total federal contract funding awarded to colleges and universities—which would nearly double federal support to HBCUs[;] • Backing up the federal funding goals with concrete commitments for annual funding growth at each federal agency reflected in agency budgets[.]” [United Negro College Fund, [2/28/17](#)]

- **United Negro College Fund: “We Await The Opportunity To See If The Administration Will Meet Their Pledges, Specifically As It Pertains To Funding For HBCUs.”** According to a press release by the United Negro College Fund, “A new HBCU Executive Order issued in the first 100 days of the Trump-Pence administration is a step in the right direction to promote the critical mission of HBCUs, which have created the nation’s foremost African American leaders for 150 years and counting. The president has set a high bar; however, we await the opportunity to see if the administration will meet their pledges, specifically as it pertains to funding for HBCUs,” said Dr. Michael L. Lomax, UNCF president and CEO, who joined Trump for a ceremonial signing of the order this afternoon.” [United Negro College Fund, [2/28/17](#)]

Thurgood Marshall College Fund President Johnny Taylor After The White House Signing Ceremony: “You Cannot Have Mission Without Money.” According to The Associated Press, “The next step is the budget. You cannot have mission without money,’ Thurgood Marshall College Fund President Johnny Taylor told reporters outside the White House after the signing ceremony.” [Associated Press, [2/28/17](#)]

The Schools Asked Trump For \$25 Billion To Be Split Amongst All 101 Of Them – Less Than The Amount Given To Harvard University Alone

HBCUs Asked Trump To Include \$25 Billion In His Budget Request To Congress For The Schools To Upgrade Their Infrastructure Or To Renovate Their Facilities. According to Bloomberg, “The HBCUs also asked the president to include \$25 billion in his budget request to Congress for the schools to upgrade their infrastructure or to renovate their facilities, many of which are historic sites. On Tuesday, the schools’ presidents lobbied members of Congress. Trump hasn’t yet submitted his budget to Congress, and critics are skeptical of his commitment to education broadly.” [Bloomberg, [3/1/17](#)]

HBCUs Only Received A Fragment Of Government The Money Devoted To Non-HBCUs. According to Essence, “HBCUs only receive a percentage of government money compared to non-HBCUs, and Congress has drastically reduced the length of Pell grants—something that many HBCU students rely on.

Statistics show that Brown University receives \$3.2 billion in government funding—less than any other Ivy League college. By comparison, Howard, the ‘richest’ of the HBCUs, receives a minimal \$586.1 million. The lack of funding forces the universities to cut costs, eliminate programs and sell valuable resources, sadly making their institutions less attractive to incoming students.” [Essence, [8/8/15](#)]

Thurgood Marshall College Fund President Johnny Taylor: The Proposal Of \$25 Billion To Be Split Between Over 100 HBCUs Needed To Be Considered In Context, As Harvard University Alone Had A Bigger Endowment Than All HBCUs Combined. According to Diverse Education, “According to Johnny C. Taylor, president of TMCF, HBCUs are asking for a \$25 billion one-time investment to kick-start much-needed infrastructure development on all HBCU campuses. While \$25 billion may appear to be a big ask, a number of elite institutions have endowments that are the same size or larger, Taylor said. ‘Put that in context — Harvard University’s endowment is bigger than \$25 billion,’ he added. The proposed \$25 billion would be dispersed among all 101 HBCUs, public and private.” [Diverse Education, [2/28/17](#)]

- **The Endowment For Harvard University Was More Than 50 Times As Large As The Endowment For Howard University.** According to Inside Higher Ed, “Although HBCUs provide excellent academic opportunities for their students, they do not have the monetary security other colleges and universities enjoy. For example, top-rated HBCU Howard University maintains an endowment of about \$660 million, while top-rated non-HBCU Harvard University has an endowment of \$36 billion.” [Inside Higher Ed, [7/12/16](#)]

Low Endowments Given To HBCUs Put Them At A Disadvantage When It Comes To Maintaining Programs And Attracting New Students

Essence: “The Lack Of Funding Forces The Universities To Cut Costs, Eliminate Programs And Sell Valuable Resources, Sadly Making Their Institutions Less Attractive To Incoming Students.”

According to Essence, “HBCUs only receive a percentage of government money compared to non-HBCUs, and Congress has drastically reduced the length of Pell grants—something that many HBCU students rely on. Statistics show that Brown University receives \$3.2 billion in government funding—less than any other Ivy League college. By comparison, Howard, the ‘richest’ of the HBCUs, receives a minimal \$586.1 million. The lack of funding forces the universities to cut costs, eliminate programs and sell valuable resources, sadly making their institutions less attractive to incoming students.” [Essence, [8/8/15](#)]

HBCUs’ Smaller Endowments Hampered Their Ability To Offer Competitive Financial Aid Packages. According to NerdWallet, “Students at HBCUs borrow student loans at higher rates than students at other colleges and universities, according to a UNCF report published in December 2016. The report cites the wealth gap and rising college costs as reasons. It also points out that HBCUs have smaller endowments than other schools, which means they can’t offer financial aid packages as generous as those at other institutions.” [NerdWallet, [2/9/17](#)]

Trump’s Order Called For “Increasing The Private-Sector Role” In HBCUs, Where Over 70 Percent Of Students Rely On Federal Pell Grants To Pay Tuition

Trump’s Order Called For “Increasing The Private-Sector Role” In HBCUs. According to BuzzFeed News, “But the executive order, which does little to depart from the language of a 2009 order by the Obama administration, made no references to increasing funding to black colleges. It also does not address increasing Pell Grants funding, earmarked for poor students, another item on the wish list of black college presidents. The order also departs slightly from Obama’s by calling for ‘increasing the private-sector role’ in historically black schools.” [Buzzfeed News, [2/28/17](#)]

- **As A Candidate, Trump Advocated The Restoration Of The Issuance Of Federal Student Loans By Private Banks, A System The Obama Administration Replaced With A Direct Loan Program That Created Savings Used To Offer More Pell Grants For Low-Income Students.** According to the Los Angeles Times, “Trump wants to restore a system in which private banks issue federal student loans, policy director Sam Clovis said in a May interview with Inside Higher Ed. The Republican Party platform also called for the federal government to stop originating student loans. Private banks used to issue federally backed student loans until 2010, when the federal government revamped the program and began originating all federal student loans through its Direct Loan program. The Obama administration cited billions of dollars in cost savings as a reason for the switch, and used the savings to offer more Pell Grants for low-income students. Today, most new student borrowing comes from federal direct loans, with private lenders servicing the government-issued loans.” [Los Angeles Times, [11/11/16](#)]
- **New Republic: “A Return To A Bank Lending System For Student Loans Could Reduce Levels Of Pell Grant Funding,” Reducing College Access And Graduation Rates For Poorer Minority Students And Increasing The Education Gap.** According to The New Republic, “A return to a bank lending system for student loans could potentially reduce levels of Pell Grant funding, unless Congress (along with the next president) is willing to appropriate more money. Any reduction in Pell Grant funding would have a similar effect as Trump’s proposal: it would reduce college access and graduation rates for poorer, African American, Latino, and Native American students. And that would lead to increased gaps in educational attainment between these groups and students from more advantaged families.” [New Republic, [5/26/16](#)]

More Than 70 Percent Of HBCU Students Relied On Pell Grants To Earn A College Degree.

According to the United Negro College Fund’s “Memo to President-Elect Donald Trump: Ten Ways To Invest In Historically Black Colleges And Universities,” “Seventh, we urge you to restore, increase and protect Pell Grants, which are the nation’s single most effective federal investment in higher education. Nearly 8 million students from America’s low-income and working-class families across the country – including more than 70 percent of HBCU students – rely on Pell Grants to earn a college degree that will put them on the path toward the middle class.” [United Negro College Fund, [12/1/16](#)]

United Negro College Fund: Pell Grant Scholarships Were “Particularly Essential For African American Families Whose Financial Assets Are On The Bottom Rung Of The Economic Ladder.”

According to the United Negro College Fund’s “Memo to President-Elect Donald Trump: Ten Ways To Invest In Historically Black Colleges And Universities,” “Pell scholarships enable college access, choice and completion for students who struggle to find the resources for college. They are particularly essential for African American families whose financial assets are on the bottom rung of the economic ladder. In 2011, the median net worth of African American households was only \$6,314 – less than six percent of the median net worth of white households. Research and our own experience demonstrates that providing more college grants pays off in increased college retention and graduation. For every \$5,000 scholarship that UNCF gives an African American freshman, that student’s likelihood of graduating increases nearly nine percentage points.” [United Negro College Fund, [12/1/16](#)]

- **Pell Grant Funding For HBCU Students Increased Significantly Under The Obama Administration, Growing From \$523 Million To \$824 Million Between 2007 And 2014.** According to the U.S. Department of Education, “The Administration has also fought for and won a historic commitment to fully fund Pell Grants and expand student aid for millions of low-income students. Pell Grant funding for HBCU students increased significantly between 2007 and 2014, growing from \$523 million to \$824 million. This year, President Obama announced a plan to make sure that Pell Grants are fully funded, including inflationary adjustments, and used strategically by students to reduce time and cost for receiving a terminal degree. The President’s 2017 budget also

proposes a \$30 million HBCU and Minority Serving Institution Innovation for Completion Fund, to help students from low-income backgrounds overcome challenges and persist through graduation day.” [U.S. Department of Education, [10/24/16](#)]

Dillard University President Walter Kimbrough: “If We See A Cut In Programs Like Pell, What We Were Told Then Is Inconsistent.” According to NPR, “KIMBROUGH: Well, I mean we'll have to see. You know, there was some really strong promises made when we were in the Oval Office yesterday. SHAPIRO: What were the promises? KIMBROUGH: Well, that this administration is going to fully support HBCUs in the work that we do; we value HBCUs. All of that was said, and you know, for me, the proof will be in the budget. So if we see a cut in programs like Pell, what we were told then is inconsistent.” [NPR, [2/28/17](#)]

HBCU OFFICIALS WHO ATTENDED TRUMP’S CEREMONY CRITICIZED IT AS A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

Dillard University President Walter Kimbrough: Though Leaders From Historically Black Schools Were Scheduled To Have A Listening Session With Officials, Their Meeting “Really Was A Photo Opportunity. We Didn’t Have Any Significant Conversation.” According to NPR, “SHAPIRO: He was surrounded by leaders of historically black schools. Yesterday they were scheduled to have a listening session with the new education secretary, Betsy DeVos, and other officials. That was shortened when the opportunity arose for a meet and greet with the president in the Oval Office. Walter Kimbrough was there. He's the president of Dillard University in New Orleans, and I reached him earlier today at the Library of Congress. WALTER KIMBROUGH: We didn't expect to have an audience with the president, and that really, you know - it really was a photo opportunity. We didn't have any significant conversation.” [NPR, [2/28/17](#)]

Headline: “Morehouse College President: We Got Played.” [The Root, [3/2/17](#)]

- **Morehouse College President John Silvanus Wilson: After “Much Advance Chatter” About The Meeting Being “Historic,” “There Were Many Signals From Key Trump Administration Officials That They Would Surprise HBCUs With Favorable Treatment.”** According to a press release from the Office of the President at Morehouse College, “Many had high hopes about this meeting. There was much advance chatter about it being ‘historic,’ and there were many signals from key Trump administration officials that they would surprise HBCUs with favorable treatment. [...] Steadfast, John Silvanus Wilson Jr.” [Morehouse College, [3/1/17](#)]
- **Wilson: “In General, The Meetings Were A Troubling Beginning.”** According to a press release from the Office of the President at Morehouse College, “In general, the meetings were a troubling beginning to what must be a productive relationship. Trust that the HBCU community will continue to press for the kind of funding that educational excellence and national competitiveness require!” [Morehouse College, [3/1/17](#)]
- **The Order Came After Weeks Of Discussions And Two Days Of Meetings And Photo Ops.** According to Inside Higher Ed, “The signing of the document followed weeks of discussions between White House advisers and advocates of HBCUs and two days of meetings and photo ops with college and university presidents in Washington.” [Inside Higher Ed, [3/1/17](#)]

Not Only Was Trump’s Order Purely Symbolic, But His Proposed Budget Cuts Threaten Funding For HBCUs And Their Students

TRUMP'S PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS WOULD HAMPER AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE MILLIONS IN FUNDING TO HBCUS

Proposed Budget Cuts To Nondefense Federal Agencies Could Put HBCU Funding At Risk.

According to The Root, "Trump's executive order has the raw material to maintain the status quo of federal-government support to HBCUs. However, proposed budget cuts to nondefense federal agencies—especially the departments of Education and of Health and Human Services and the National Science Foundation, which account for hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue to HBCUs—could weaken the capacity of the executive order." [The Root, [3/1/17](#)]

- **The Departments Of Education And Of Health And Human Services And The National Science Foundation Accounted For Hundreds Of Millions Of Dollars In Annual Revenue To HBCUs.** According to The Root, "Trump's executive order has the raw material to maintain the status quo of federal-government support to HBCUs. However, proposed budget cuts to nondefense federal agencies—especially the departments of Education and of Health and Human Services and the National Science Foundation, which account for hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue to HBCUs—could weaken the capacity of the executive order." [The Root, [3/1/17](#)]