Governing Boards at HBCUs

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The Governing Structures of State Supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Hilton, Freeman, Lee, & McClain
Purpose

• To gather information regarding the policies that govern the selection of public HBCU board members.

• To examine the ways in which policies shape the quality of candidate selection.
Significance

• The significance of this study stems from the immense pressure board governance at state colleges and universities have encountered as a result of declining state funding.
Brief History of HBCUs

• Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) date back to pre-Civil War.

• During this era, only a handful of universities embraced the mission of educating and training newly freed and disenfranchised slaves.

• Post-Civil War, the number of HBCUs grew exponentially, with more than 200 institutions being found in the South five years following 1865.
Brief History of HBCUs Continued

• It is not truly known how many HBCUs were established, but Marybeth Gasman in 2013 identified that there 105 HBCUs located in the United States.

• In March 2013 the U.S. Education Department designated the American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee as the country’s 106th HBCU.

• In April 2015, Simmons College of Kentucky earned the designation of HBCU status making them the 107th such institution.
Present Day

• HBCUs encompass less than three percent of all American colleges and universities.

• Presently, nearly 400,000 students attend HBCUs and nearly 17 percent of all bachelorette degrees that are awarded to African Americans come from HBCUs.
Dissecting HBCU Governing Boards: Structures and Appointment

• While the state context of governance is different for each of the nation’s 51 public HBCUs, they generally follow 3 distinct institutional governance structures: 1) *statewide*; 2) *local*; and 3) *shared*. 
Structures and Appointment

• The Statewide Governance Model is characterized by a single, state-level board that is vested with governing multiple institutions (including HBCU campuses) with the responsibilities for governance, control, and management of each institution under its purview.

This includes:
• The powers to hire presidents and chancellors;
• Set policies and procedures that govern all institutions;
• Approve the development of new degrees and programs;
• Set financial priorities for each campus and;
• Provide coordination for the entire system of colleges and universities.
Structures and Appointment

• The *Local Governance Model* is described by a single, institutionally-based board that provides oversight over all aspects of the institution:
  - Hiring of the president;
  - Setting policies and procedure;
  - Ensuring financial fidelity and;
  - The authority to create new programs and degrees.

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- The *Shared Governance Model* is blanked by bicameral statewide and local boards that each exercise assigned governance functions for an institution of higher education. Institutions in this category usually have an institutionally-based governing board –usually a Board of Trustees– that has responsibilities to choose the president, ensure financial fidelity and to enact policies and procedures.

- The responsibility of governance of the institution is also shared with a state coordinating board that usually has the power to:
  - Confirm presidential selections by local board;
  - Approve new academic programs and degrees;
  - Set budgetary priorities and provide policies and procedures that set the parameters in which institutionally-based boards can operate.
Statewide governance model is present at 26 (50 percent) public HBCUs institutions and across ten states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, South Carolina, Oklahoma; Tennessee and Texas).
In 100 percent of the cases where public HBCUs are governed by system-level coordinating boards- including both those that are part of the statewide and shared governance models- members are appointed to the boards according to state law.
Appointments to Local Governing Boards, 2015

- Appointments by Governor/ Mayor and Automatic Reps (28%)
- Appointment by Governor (52%)
- Appointment by Legislature (20%)

100 percent of public HBCUs that have institutional-level governing boards appointment board members in accordance with state law.
Dilemma

- Institutional mergers and closures at South Carolina State University and past items within the University System of Georgia boards.

- At South Carolina State University, oversight from board members caused institutional instability and statewide scrutiny. A recommended two-year closure was suggested by the South Carolina House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Higher Education for the institution in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years.

- Upon analysis it was discovered that South Carolina State University, a land-grant institution, was underfunded by over $6 million dollars from 2010 to 2012 by South Carolina legislatures.
Recommendations

In order to select ideal board members, we recommend that institutions:

- Locate individuals who have shown a commitment to public education;
- Locate individuals who have a record of community service;
- Locate individuals who are competent with strategic planning, a record of integrity, and a willingness to work collaboratively across the board.
THANK YOU!

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