

FUNdraising Good Times: African American corporate executives: We need you!

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
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The expertise and connections of African American corporate executives can help chart a sustainable future for historically black colleges and universities.

Historically black colleges and universities are amongst the largest African American controlled businesses in America. Many date back to the 19th century. They have educated generations and built the black middle class. They are major employers in communities across the country. They also face well-documented challenges as they operate in an increasingly competitive educational marketplace.

These challenges can be addressed through a deep and meaningful partnership with African American corporate executives. These executives have increased corporate profits, managed turnarounds, introduced new products, increased employment, expanded operations, managed globalization, developed new technologies, and introduced social media to market and sell their products. Their expertise and management skills – when combined with that of academic leaders and trustees – can creatively and strategically address higher-education challenges in areas such as recruitment, retention and graduation; finances; marketing; and fundraising including alumni giving, corporate, foundation, state and federal support.

African American corporate executives can serve as executive coaches and mentors to presidents and chancellors, shadowing these leaders and working with them to provide additional strategies, perspective and potential solutions gained from their corporate experience. They can volunteer to serve as trustees providing HBCUs with the same level of professionalism they would bring to a corporate board. They can serve as interim-presidents acting as change agents who help address unresolved structural challenges. They can serve on a corporate leadership team – joining with their peers – to provide management expertise and connections that can transform institutions. Such a team can surround and support the president and trustees helping to resolve challenges and take advantage of unleveraged opportunities.

Corporate executives can also provide funding and resources needed to stabilize our HBCUs. They can build endowments. They can ensure the continued competitiveness of HBCUs through timely capital investments in facilities, equipment and technology. Mutually beneficial strategic collaborations can support corporations who place a premium on attracting and retaining a diverse talent.

When the White House or a state governor needs top talent they often turn to the private sector, calling upon the patriotism of corporate executives, asking them to take a leave of absence to serve their fellow citizens. Today we need African American executives to heed the call to service. HBCUs provide a special brand of higher education. They play a critical role in educating African American, Hispanic and first generation students who seek an education that will allow them to fully participate in the global economy and build a strong future for themselves

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and their families.

Increased "business know-how" and financial investment can help HBCUs continue to play a key role in addressing educational disparities. Reach out to these institutions, share your know-how, and help them grow to the next level. Volunteer now!

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Mel and Pearl Shaw are the authors of " [Prerequisites for Fundraising Success](#) ." They position nonprofits for fundraising success. Visit them at

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