

The SCOTUS Decision and HBCUs: Fortifying Investment and Support

For nearly two centuries, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have made education more accessible to historically underserved Black communities.

Today, HBCUs provide a rich talent pool for companies seeking to make their workplaces more inclusive. The recent landmark Supreme Court ruling ending race-conscious admissions practices in higher education has brought heightened attention to these esteemed institutions.

A Call to Action for HBCU Investment

In a commentary, the Brookings Institution said the SCOTUS decision erodes racial equity in higher education and is likely to lead to Black enrollment declines at predominately white institutions. HBCUs can help fill the gap. However, to meet the demand, corporations, states, philanthropies, and individuals need to re-prioritize investments in HBCUs. In a [previous report](#), Brookings found that the ten largest HBCU endowments were 100 times smaller than those for predominantly white institutions in 2020.

Over the years, many companies have supported HBCUs through initiatives like financial contributions, scholarship programs, internship placements and recruitment efforts. By supporting and collaborating with HBCUs, companies can work toward internal fairness commitments in a way that develops future leaders and benefits Black communities.

Expanding Resources for HBCUs

In 2023, Fair360's Top 10 Companies for Diversity committed to improving opportunities for ethnically diverse populations in the coming year. All companies also have a formal recruiting relationship with at least one HBCU.

Southern Company (No. 24 on the 2023 Top 50 Companies list and No. 1 on the Top Companies for Black Executives) became a founding partner of PROPEL in 2020, a technology hub for HBCUs. While PROPEL plans to build a physical campus connected to Atlanta University, it currently partners virtually with over 100 HBCUs. Students at participating schools have access to the digital PROPEL platform, where they can take entrepreneurship, talent development and technology courses.

Meanwhile, the Southern Company Foundation has partnered with organizations like the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to provide funding grants to HBCUs. These grants fund higher education for Black students and provide skills training and talent development for the communities surrounding HBCU campuses.

Toyota North America (No. 4 on the 2023 Top 50 list and No. 2 on the Top Companies for Black Executives) also partnered with the UNCF to fund 11 HBCUs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Toyota supplied a grant to the UNCF to help students and universities cover unexpected costs. The support included unemployment assistance for students who lost on-campus jobs due to the pandemic. Financial help was also given directly to HBCUs that no longer received room and board payments from remote students.



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HBCU Recruiting

Eli Lilly and Company (No. 5 on the 2023 Top 50 list and No. 6 on the Top Companies for Black Executives) ramped up recruiting for Black employees through partnerships with several HBCUs. In 2021, it established recruiting relationships with Morehouse School of Medicine and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. In 2022, Eli Lilly launched its first annual HBCU day. This event provides networking opportunities for HBCU STEM students and expands the company's recruiting at HBCUs without an existing Eli Lilly partnership.

Marshall College Fund to provide scholarships and professional development opportunities to HBCU students. Such investments work in tandem with HBCU recruiting partnerships to improve the talent pipelines for Black professionals.

Best Practices for an Effective Talent Pipeline

A study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) explored the most effective strategies for recruiting from HBCUs.

Internships provide a pathway to employment and are an effective recruitment tool for entry-level positions. Another finding was the value of internships in kickstarting an HBCU recruiting program. Because internship turnover is so quick, often a year at most, assessing and tweaking the program can be done at regular, short-term intervals. The timing allows companies to analyze their recruiting strengths and weaknesses before implementing changes to improve recruiting for non-intern positions.

READ MORE: The Benefits of Internships and How to Find One



The same study also found that long-term relationships with HBCUs produce the most sustainable pathways to employment for Black students. Collaborating with on-campus career centers virtually and in person increased the visibility of potential candidates. Employed HBCU alums can also mentor interns and new hires to help them settle into the company and develop professionally. This cyclical recruiting system maintains a reliable, diverse talent pool and builds organizational trust among HBCU graduates.



In addition to these individual recruiting practices, Eli Lilly also partners with the Business Roundtable. This network of CEOs collaborates with the Thurgood