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Message from our Chairman

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys



On behalf of The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, I am excited to present this year's annual report to the Honorable Governor, Ron DeSantis, Speaker of the House, Paul Renner, Senate President, Kathleen Passidomo, Attorney General, Ashley Moody, state agency heads, community advocates and organizations, and the citizens of the state of Florida. The report is the product of another year's effort to research and offer recommendations to drive down disparate conditions affecting Black males across the state. The Council extends its utmost gratitude to Attorney General Moody and her well-appointed staff, as well as Governor DeSantis and his staff for their continued support, without which the Council could not accomplish its mission.

This year the Council was able to make tremendous strides in research by acquiring full-time staff to assist our efforts. Executive Director, Terrell Nelson, Research Coordinator, Yata Caine, and Research Assistant, Sydney Griggs, were the successful candidates which rounded out our Council staff. Their collective talent helped rebrand the entire Council and so much more. This year we researched the fundamental and personal reasons why Black males are having trouble completing post-secondary education. Please read the analysis regarding retention rates, graduation rates, and the long-term effects associated with these difficult challenges. We implore our legislative members to review these recommendations and institute measures that will mitigate these crippling outcomes.

In a series of firsts and well-deserved accomplishments, the Council's 2022 Annual Report was highlighted in curriculum at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University after a successful Day of Dialogue on campus. We set-up the Dr. Eddy Reginer Research Graduate Scholarship intended to help students with graduate school costs while also providing mentorship,

highlighting the value of research, and emphasizing the need for change in communities throughout the State of Florida. The Council was recognized at the eighth Black Mental Health Symposium for its continued support for mental health in the Black community. This conference brings together professionals who work to destigmatize mental illness, increase access to care, and improve wellness among Black communities. We also participated at the 3rd Annual Florida Conference on Race, Equality, Justice and Opportunity which focuses on an honest fact-based discussion on race, our collective history, the value of inclusion, acceptance, and all the things made possible in America resulting from our diversity.

As in any year, the Council experienced changes within staff that helped the Council grow to the entity it is now. We would like to recognize the hard work and genius of Michelle Blanton. She was instrumental in keeping the Council afloat when our resources were the lowest while wearing multiple hats. Her fierce dedication to the Council was crucial. We wish her well in her new position at the Office of the Attorney General. Secondly, a very fond farewell to Attorney Erica Hill. Her sage counsel, wisdom, and Socratic thinking helped transform the Council from what could be possible for the Council and made it into a reality. Her astute analysis and wicked comprehension of any scenario and facts will be sorely missed. We wish her and her family continued success.

The Council will now shift its center of attention to 2024 and collaborate with our legislative members to focus on possible policy changing initiatives while researching strategies to reduce the barriers affecting Black males with the hope that the lives of Black males will improve in the state of Florida.

Sincerely,



Jerome Hill
Chairman



Message from our Executive Director

Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys



Greetings,

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys has devoted the last seventeen years to effecting positive change throughout the state of Florida. The Council has dedicated itself to make motivating and informative efforts to ensure that all Black men and boys realize their complete potential. Transitioning away from a worldwide pandemic has altered the nature of implementing sustainable changes to promote a healthier lifestyle. My objective as the newly appointed Executive Director is to contribute to the development of a novel reduction system specifically designed for our Black males. During the course of the following year, community, unity, transparency, and awareness will be our primary goals. It is critical that we assess and evaluate a variety of communities and institutions to determine what is causing the inadequacies of Black men and boys, while also refraining from sharing their story until we have heard it from them first. Our objective is to identify a solutional approach after assessing and evaluating the underlying causes, while simultaneously positioning ourselves to be readily available throughout the process.

The Council and its staff have made significant progress toward more positive and transferable change within 2023. As a result, we now have a greater understanding of a number of circumstances that impact Black men and boys. However, we will continue our efforts to understand more of those disparities within various sectors. Our team have provided support to the Council in order to optimize our efforts and establish priorities that are essential for the betterment of the Black male population in the state. The establishment of a cohesive community is challenging in the absence of intellectual development; therefore, the dissemination of educational knowledge is crucial in order to connect individuals with organizations and communities throughout the state of Florida and bring attention to the myriad inequities that impact our

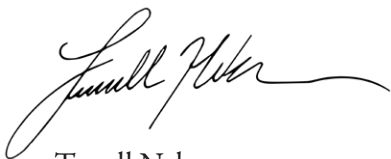


Black males. The implementation of change inevitably encounters obstacles and setbacks, but we have had the privilege of connecting with servant leaders throughout the state who share our commitment to fostering lasting transformation for Black men and boys. During this year, we have successfully completed a multitude of initiatives and assignments, which comprise the following:

- Implementing the Dr. Eddy Regnier Graduate Research Scholarship
- Brand Development: Website Design, Logo Revamp, and Social Media
- Staff Expansion: Executive Director and Research Coordinator
- 50 Partner Initiative: Gaining partners from various statewide agencies, businesses, and organizations for community engagement.
- Black Male College Research Tour: Visiting the four Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the State of Florida to explore graduation rates, retention rates, drop out rates and university students' support programs for Black men and boys.
- Community awareness and Council exposure
- Annual Report used in Sociology Curriculum at Florida A&M University
- Recognition at the 8th Annual Black Mental Health Symposium

We are of the opinion that proceeding gradually and steadily will ultimately prevail. Recognizing the gravity of the issues at hand and the sensitivity of the community we serve; it is critical that our approach and language towards comprehending the shortcomings of Black men and boys are deliberate. Nothing that we accomplish can be achieved in isolation. For their assistance, direction, and consistency, I would like to salute the Council, the Office of the Attorney, state senators, state representatives, Council staff, and community leaders, among others. As the year 2024 approaches, it is imperative that we maintain our steadfast commitment to establishing secure environments for Black men and boys and to exercising proactive Council presence. We shall persist in our endeavors to foster corporate cohesion, community involvement, and Council consciousness throughout the entirety of Florida.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terrell Nelson".

Terrell Nelson
Executive Director

OUR HISTORY

Inspired by the efforts in other states, Senator Frederica Wilson with the help of former Representative Frank Peterman, led the charge to create a statewide council to address socioeconomic and other factors affecting the lives of Black men and boys in Florida. In 2006, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys to be administratively housed within the Attorney General's Office. The Council is charged with proposing measures to alleviate and correct the underlying causes of the conditions affecting Black men and boys, including homicide rates, arrest and incarceration rates, poverty, violence, drug abuse, death rates, disparate annual income levels, health issues and school performance. The Council is responsible for presenting their findings, conclusions, and recommendations in an annual report.

As outlined in 16.615, F.S., the Council shall consist of 19 specific appointees. Each member of the Council is appointed up to a four – year term. The Council is required to meet quarterly with additional meetings to be held at the call of the chairperson or a majority of the Council members.

MISSION

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys is to research and propose measures that improve conditions affecting Black men and boys.

VISION

The Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys is committed to engaging, educating, equipping and encouraging all Black men and boys to successfully achieve their full potential.

STATUTE

16.615 Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys

1) The Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys is established within the Department of Legal Affairs and shall consist of 19 members appointed as follows :

- Two members of the Senate who are not members of the same political party, appointed by the President of the Senate with the advice of the Minority Leader of the Senate.
- Two members of the House of Representatives who are not members of the same political party, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives with the advice of the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.
- The Secretary of Children and Families or his or her designee.
- The director of the Mental Health Program Office within the Department of Children and Families or his or her designee.
- The State Surgeon General or his or her designee.
- The Commissioner of Education or his or her designee.

(See page 29 for full Statute.)



COUNCIL MEMBERS



COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

Jerome K. Hill

Program Administrator
Florida Agency for Healthcare
Administration



COUNCIL VICE CHAIRMAN

Pat Smith

Executive Director
Children and Youth Cabinet
Office of Communications
Florida Department of
Children and Families



COUNCIL 1ST VICE CHAIRMAN

Justine D. Patterson

Regional Director
Region IV
Community Corrections
Florida Department of
Corrections



COUNCIL 2ND VICE CHAIRMAN

Ben F. Shirley, Jr.

Regional Economic
Self Sufficiency Director
Florida Department of
Children and Families



**Representative
Webster Barnaby**
Florida House of
Representatives



**Senator
Dennis Baxley**
Florida Senate



Reggie Bellamy
Executive Director
Palmetto Youth Center



**Representative
Christopher Benjamin**
Florida House of
Representatives



**Tony Crews, Jr. M.S.,
FCMM**
Instruction & Education
Coordinator
Florida Department of
Management Services



**Patrick Diggs, MSW,
LCSW**
Psychotherapist &
Behavioral Health Consultant
Sole Proprietor/Private
Practitioner



T. Willard Fair
President and CEO
Urban League of
Greater Miami, Inc.



Mike Mason
Assistant Deputy Secretary
for Health
Florida Department of Health



**Senator
Shevrin D. Jones**
Florida Senate



**Keantha B. Moore,
FCCM**
Interim Chief
Florida Department of
Economic Opportunity
Bureau of One-Stop and
Program Support



Marva H. Preston
Grace Embraced Outreach
Ministry, Inc.



Marcus Smith
Program & Policy Chief
Office of Prevention Services
Florida Department of
Juvenile Justice

STAFF



Terrell Nelson
Executive Director



Yata Caine
Research Coordinator



Sydney Griggs
Research Assistant



Michelle Blanton
Administrative Assistant II

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a red and black pen, writing on a white notepad. The person is wearing a plaid shirt. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom or meeting setting. A semi-transparent orange box with white text is overlaid on the image.

“The importance of this report lies in the recognition that access to higher education alone is insufficient to ensure equal outcomes.”

Introduction

Purpose of Study

In the United States, higher education plays a key role in shaping sustainability. Obtaining a college degree has long been considered a key pathway to upward mobility, personal growth, and economic success. However, for certain demographics, such as Black males, completing a college education remains a significant challenge. Since the era of segregation, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played a vital role in increasing educational opportunities and diminishing barriers often faced by Black students. Despite these advantages, Black males continue to face a unique set of challenges that often result in lower retention and graduation rates when compared to their peers.

This report sheds light on the persistent disparities that exist in college completion rates among Black males attending HBCUs in the state of Florida. By examining the unique experiences and barriers encountered by this specific demographic, we seek to identify the underlying factors contributing to the existing disparities and propose strategies to address them effectively.

The importance of this report lies in the recognition that access to higher education alone is insufficient to ensure equal outcomes. To gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges and experiences, we present a comparative analysis between Black males at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Furthermore, we aim to identify best practices and interventions that can be implemented to support Black males in successfully navigating the college journey and achieving their educational goals.

***Among students enrolled in four-year public institutions, 45.9% of Black students complete their degrees in six years – the lowest rate compared to other races and ethnicities. Black men have the lowest completion rate at 40%.
- (National Center for Education Statistics 2022)***

Literature Review

Factors Influencing Post-Secondary Completion Disparities and Retention Rates Among Black Males

Black males in higher education with an emphasis on retention and graduation rates, have become an increasingly widespread topic. In 2013, 16 percent of Black males earned a degree from an HBCU (Department of Education, 2013). For over a decade, researchers have taken a keen interest in this subject due to the low numbers being produced (Johnson, 2020). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), only 8.9 percent of Black males earned a college degree during the 2020-21 school year. Research has identified several factors that tie into these abysmal numbers. Those most notable include mental health, finances, lack of support, educational barriers, and socialization. Yet, many of these factors are present long before Black males ever enter college classrooms (Blackdeer et. Al., 2021). Powell (2021) asserts that living in a stereotypical world can be detrimental to a Black man. During kindergarten through 12th grade years, Black males are faced with stereotypes that have long-lasting effects within academia. In his study on Black males in urban public universities, Strayhorn (2016) noted that the “bad boy” image placed upon Black males comes from the unjust disciplinary processes within schools. Historically, these negative stereotypes have led to less support being given to them in academic settings (Johnson, 2020). In more urban areas, Black male students are educated utilizing outdated and disengaging curriculums that are taught by overworked and less experienced teachers (Gasman et. al., 2015). Moreover, they are faced with higher attrition rates and lower employment opportunities (Gasman et. al., 2015).

Black males are often confronted with the pressure to succeed academically in environments that may not be culturally responsive or inclusive (Joyner, 2023). Such pressure can result in mental health challenges for those pursuing college degrees, making it imperative that educational institutions understand the plight of Black

male students and adequately address their concerns. Otherwise, this can lead to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (BlackDeer et. al., 2021). Powell (2021) further suggests that campuses remedy this by cultivating supportive and inclusive environments that promote an open dialogue about the unique experiences and stressors faced by Black males. By acknowledging and actively addressing mental health disparities among Black males, their academic success and overall well-being can lead to a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

Research confirms that Black males who are completing post-secondary education often experience a deficit in financial stability. While most HBCUs are located within urban regions and typically offer ample socio-economic opportunities, Black males are usually excluded due to poverty, outcomes from legal and illegal residential segregation, high unemployment rates, workforce discrimination and normalization of violence and incarceration (Gasman et. al., 2015). Furthermore, they have more difficulty paying for school and external financial responsibilities when compared to their racial counterparts. In 2019, 18.8% of the Black population

indicates that high retention rates can reflect the academic success and financial stability of an institution (Owolabi, 2016). In other words, schools that have money to provide accurate resources for their Black male students, (i.e., tutoring, counseling, more faculty, etc.) greatly increase their chances to graduate.

The Role of Support Practices in Higher Education

Academic and social support are significant contributing factors in the educational attainment for Black males. In most HBCUs, Black women outnumber Black men by a two to one ratio (Strayhorn, 2016). However, Black male representation on college campuses have shown to be crucial in determining success. Research suggests that Black males who are taught by other Black males at HBCUs can have positive effects on their persistence (Strayhorn, 2016). Studies further note that frequent and meaningfully supportive relationships with faculty and staff at Predominately White Institutions, positively influences Black males' satisfaction with their college experience (Strayhorn, 2016). This support also extends to the university recruitment process by catering to the needs of Black males seeking higher education. According to Frazier and Rhoden (2018), diversity on many campuses in higher education is suffering because of the lack of Black males on those campuses. Others have suggested that the answer lies within the lack of Black male representation in undergraduate programs (Johnson, 2020). Gasmen et. al. (2015) suggests that HBCUs promote majors that are dominated by Black men and create "posse-like groups of Black men who can be success supporters."

In some respects, the issue of Black male representation maybe hidden within the hems of secondary education. In some school districts, higher education is not even presented as an option for Black males. A study conducted by Polite and Davis (1999) examined 115 Black males in high school and found that teachers and counselors often failed to direct male youth to college preparation opportunities. These practices could result in higher attrition rates by freshman or sophomore year in college, if students are underprepared and the social climate is less than accommodating. Research also suggests that increased attrition rates could be accounted for by the variation in experiences between Black males who attend HBCUs and those who attend PWIs (Strayhorn, 2016). Black males at HBCUs often find a supportive and culturally affirming environment,

"Last Year,

**892,502 out of 1,542,188
Black Males were Employed
(Aged 20-24 Years Old) in the U.S.,**

Leaving Over

**Half a Million-College Aged
Black Males Jobless."
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)**

were in poverty and 1.8 times more likely to have a greater share in poverty when compared to the general population (Creamer, 2020).

Financial difficulty experienced by Black male students can also be reflected in how postsecondary institutions and local communities spend their funding. Research



“... Black male representation on college campuses have shown to be crucial in determining success.”

with a strong sense of community and mentorship (Powell, 2021). Whereas at PWIs, Black males may encounter a sense of isolation and racial disparities, which can impact their self-esteem and academic performance (Powell, 2021). Across many HBCUs and a handful of PWIs, there are Black men initiative programs that offer mentorship, representation, and belonging that in turn increase academic success (Johnson, 2020). With these support practices put into effect, we can hope to see a rise in graduating Black men.

The pursuit of post-secondary education among Black males is a significant issue that has intrigued researchers for the last decade. Black males are faced with many challenges surrounding mental health, financial burdens, lack of support, limited socialization opportunities and educational barriers. The impact of these challenges extends beyond individual experiences, as it affects the broader landscape of diversity,

equity, and inclusion within higher education. Black males often grapple with mental health issues exacerbated by the pressures of academic performance, societal expectations, and the weight of systemic inequalities (Dulabaum, 2016). Financial constraints can further hinder their access to quality education, continuing the cycles of disadvantage. The absence of adequate support systems can leave them feeling isolated and unsupported, hindering their progress. Lastly, socialization within academia can be challenging, with the need for a sense of belonging and community are often unmet. There are various remedies that can address these issues such as cultivating inclusive environments, providing mental health resources (Powell 2021), and expanding financial aid options (Johnson, 2020). Only by recognizing and actively addressing these challenges can Black males have a chance at obtaining equal access to post-secondary education.

“Research indicates that fostering supportive and inclusive environments that encourage an open dialogue can promote positive experiences for Black males in higher education.” (Powell, 2021)



Pictured Here: Research Focus Group Participants, Filmed by Juming Delmas Studios

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and outcomes of Black males in higher education by providing both in-depth insights and broader context. The quantitative data analysis in this study involved the use of existing datasets, including institutional records and published reports. This approach allowed for a comparison of postsecondary retention rates between Black males attending the four HBCUs in Florida to identify any significant differences and explore potential factors contributing to the disparities.

The qualitative methods used in this study, such as focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and visual research techniques, allow for a rich exploration of the experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by Black males in higher education. Research indicates that fostering supportive and inclusive environments that encourage an open dialogue can promote positive experiences for Black males in higher education (Powell, 2021). The focus group session provided a platform for participants to share their experiences and engage in a meaningful dialogue with each other. To ensure adequate representation and facilitate meaningful discussions, the session consisted of eight participants and was approximately one hour in length. The focus group session was held at a convenient location for the participants to ensure a comfortable and confidential environment. A skilled moderator was appointed to facilitate the session, utilizing a predefined set of questions and prompts developed by Council staff to guide the discussion while allowing flexibility for participants to express their experiences, challenges, and perspectives related to post-secondary education completion. The session was video recorded to capture the participants' perspectives accurately. Additionally, research staff took detailed notes and observations to supplement the recordings.

In addition to the focus group session, semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for a more detailed exploration of specific themes and topics that emerged during the conversation.

Twelve Black male participants were interviewed for approximately thirty minutes by a skilled interviewer

chosen by research staff. The semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of individual perspectives and provided a more nuanced understanding of the research topic. Additionally, fifteen university administrators representing all four HBCUs in Florida were interviewed utilizing a predefined set of questions to gain additional perspective of the factors that contribute to academic success, including retention rates, support services and research on Black males.

To ensure accurate capture of their responses, the interviews with Black males were video recorded, while the interviews with university administrators were audio recorded with the participants' consent. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed alongside the data from the focus group session.

The combination of the focus group session and interviews provided a comprehensive understanding of the existing disparities among Black males in post-secondary education. Data collected from both methods were analyzed to identify common themes, patterns, and insights. Data were stored safely on a password protected computer owned by council staff.

Visual research techniques, such as the use of video recordings, provides additional layers of meaning and insight into the participants' experiences and emotions (Glaw et. al., 2017). Video data can be particularly valuable in qualitative research as it allows for a more in-depth analysis of participants' expressions, body language, and interactions (Haynes-Brown, 2021). The use of video data within this study serves several purposes. First, video recordings captured during the focus group and interview sessions provide additional context and meaning to the participants' experiences and discussions. The visual cues, gestures, and non-verbal communication captured in the videos serve to enhance the understanding of the participants' perspectives and emotions. Also, they provide nuanced insights and contribute to a richer interpretation of the data. Secondly, the video data served as the developmental foundation for a brief documentary-style visual research project, focused on the collegiate experiences of Black males entitled, *The College Experience Unplugged: Real Stories, Real Insight*. The project development involved editing video footage,



*Pictured Here: Research Focus Group
Participants, Filmed by Juming Delmas Studios*

selecting relevant segments, and incorporating other visual elements, such as images, graphics, or text overlays. The aim was to create a cohesive and compelling narrative that effectively highlights the corresponding research findings and give rise to the voices and perspectives of the Black male participants. By utilizing the video data collected in the study, the visual research project effectively conveys the experiences and challenges faced by Black males in higher education. It also presents key themes and findings in a visually engaging and accessible format, making the research more relatable and impactful to a broader audience.

The visual research project can serve as a powerful medium to disseminate the research findings to various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and the general public. It can also help to raise awareness about the experiences and challenges faced by Black males in higher education, promote dialogue, and inspire action towards creating more inclusive and supportive environments. Additionally, the research project contributes to the existing body of research by providing a unique and original perspective. It can offer insights and narratives that may not be fully captured through traditional written reports or academic papers. The combination of visual and audio elements can evoke emotional responses and foster a deeper connection with the audience, enhancing the impact and relevance of the research. Overall, the use of video data in this research project served both as a means to

enhance data analysis and as a foundation for developing a visual research tool that echoes existing research while also presenting original insights.

Largely, the mixed-methods approach in this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and outcomes of Black males in higher education. By combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study captured a range of perspectives and provided a broader context for the findings.

Participant Selection

The participant selection criteria in this study aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences among Black males in higher education. By including participants who have graduated from both HBCUs and PWIs, as well as those who are currently enrolled or discontinued their enrollment in these institutions, the study sought to gather insights into the factors that contribute to academic success or obstacles faced by Black males in higher education. In addition, the inclusion of business owners with varying levels of post-secondary education provided a broader perspective on the impact of education on career outcomes and economic mobility among Black males.

The study engaged a total of twelve Black males who represent a diverse range of educational experiences, ages, and backgrounds. A total of eight participants



were available to take part in the focus group session. Participants were selected based on the following categories:

- Graduates of HBCUs
- Graduates of PWIs
- Current students at HBCUs
- Current students at PWIs
- Former HBCU students who discontinued post-secondary education.
- Former PWI students who discontinued post-secondary education.

The participant selection process for the fifteen university administrators in this study aimed to capture a sample of individuals who hold administrative positions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in Florida. Participants were identified utilizing both a purposive and convenience sampling approach, based on key factors including those who were involved in decision-making processes related to student support services, diversity and inclusion initiatives, or academic affairs. Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants who met specific criteria and could provide valuable insights into the research topic. The convenience sampling approach played a role in identifying participants who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. Given the limited number of HBCUs in Florida, convenience sampling was necessary to ensure an adequate sample size.

The research staff contacted the HBCUs directly to seek permission and collaboration for the study. Through cooperation with the institutions and internet search, researchers obtained a list of names of other administrators who met the criteria for participation. The list could include various administrative roles, such as deans, department heads, student affairs professionals, and academic advisors. The selection of participants involved contacting the identified administrators through email, phone calls, and in-person meetings to explain the research project, its objectives, and the desired participant profile. The researchers emphasized the importance of their expertise and perspectives in addressing the research topic and encouraged their willingness to participate. It is important to note that the participant selection process may have encountered challenges, such as limited availability of administrators due to their busy schedules or potential reluctance to participate in research. However, efforts were made to ensure a diverse representation of administrators from different HBCUs in Florida to capture a range of perspectives and experiences. Overall, the aim was to capture a representative sample of administrators who could provide valuable insights into the research topic and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the role of administrators in supporting Black students' success in higher education.

Limitations

Like any research project, this study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and generalizing the results. Some limitations of the research project may include:

- **Sample Selection Bias:** The participants in this study were selected based on specific criteria, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Black males in higher education. The sample may not be fully representative of all possible experiences and perspectives of Black males.
- **Small Sample Size:** The study engaged a total of twenty-seven participants, which may be considered a relatively small sample size. While qualitative research often focuses on depth rather than breadth, the small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger population (Newton, 2012).
- **Self-Selection Bias:** The recruitment process involved snowball sampling and, which may introduce self-selection bias. Individuals who chose to participate may have unique characteristics or experiences that differ from those who declined to participate. This bias can affect the representativeness and generalizability of the findings (Newton, 2012).
- **Potential for Social Desirability Bias:** Participants may have been influenced by social desirability bias, where they provide responses they believe are more socially acceptable or expected. This bias may affect the accuracy and authenticity of the information shared during the focus group sessions and interviews.
- **Subjective Interpretation:** Qualitative research relies on the interpretation of the researchers, introducing subjectivity into the analysis process. Different researchers may interpret the data differently, potentially affecting the validity and reliability of the findings.
- **Data Collection Limitations:** The data collected in this study relied primarily on focus group sessions, interviews, and visual research techniques. Other forms of data, such as observational data or survey responses, were not included. The absence of these additional data sources may limit the breadth and depth of the findings.
- **Time Constraints:** The study’s timeframe for data collection was limited, which could impact the depth and breadth of the insights gained. Longer-term research or longitudinal studies may provide a more comprehensive understanding.

TABLE 1: Participant Profile of Interviews with Black Males vs. Black Male Focus Group

PARTICIPANT NUMBER	INSTITUTION TYPE	PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION	OCCUPATION
1IFG	HBCU	College Graduate	Attorney
2IFG	PWI	College Graduate	Business Owner
3I	PWI	College Graduate	Business Owner
4IFG	PWI	College Graduate	County Employee
5IFG	PWI	Some College	Business Owner
6IFG	HBCU/PWI	College Graduate	Higher Education Administrator
7I	PWI	College Graduate	Business Owner
8I	HBCU	Some College	Healthcare Aide
9I	HBCU	Current Student	Student
10IFG	HBCU	Current Student	Student
11IFG	HBCU	Some College	Business Owner
12IFG	HBCU	College Graduate	State Employee

Note: Sample of Black male participants who interviewed and participated in the focus group.
**Participated in interview only. *Participated in interview and focus group.



Only by recognizing and actively addressing these challenges can Black males have a chance at obtaining equal access to post-secondary education.

Results

HBCUs in Florida: A Brief Overview

TABLE 2: Participant Graduation and Retention Rates for HBCUs in Florida

COLLEGE NAME	GRADUATION RATE	RETENTION RATES (full-time)	RETENTION RATES (part-time)
Bethune Cookman University	32%	58%	33%
Edward Waters University	28%	56%	---
Florida Agriculture and Mechanic University	55%	89%	72%
Florida Memorial University	32%	51%	64%

Note: Data was collected from interviews with HBCU administration.

TABLE 3: Key Interview Themes with HBCU Administrators in Florida

TOP MAJORS FOR BLACK MALES AT HBCUs IN FLORIDA		
Biology	Business Administration	Criminology
Mathematics	Mass Communication	Psychology
MENTORSHIP		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one and group mentorship were identified as significant in ensuring the success of Black males at HBCUs. Mentorship from Black women was also recognized as a valuable tool. Black male faculty and staff were found to have a positive effect on the success rate of Black males, often taking on a role as an “extension of family” during the collegiate experience. 		
HBCU CULTURE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HBCUs were described as having a less transactional and more emotional feel compared to other institutions. This culture was reflected in the type of mentorship and support provided. The familial touch and support from faculty and staff were highlighted as important factors contributing to the success of Black males at HBCUs. 		
FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS & FINANCIAL AID		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over half of Black males attending HBCUs in Florida were identified as first-generation college students. Over half of Black males attending HBCUs in Florida were recipients of financial aid. 		
BLACK MALE SUCCESS RATE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The success rate of Black males was reported to be lower compared to Black females. 		
RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HBCUs engage in Black male recruitment by actively involving high school students and alumni. 		
REASONS FOR NOT FINISHING COLLEGE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding was identified as the primary reason why Black males do not complete college at higher rates. 		
FACTORS AFFECTING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION COMPLETION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental issues, such as depression and difficulty studying, were mentioned as barriers to completion. Pre-college factors, including lower average SAT scores among first-generation students, were also cited as a contributing factor. 		
DIVERSITY IN RESEARCH		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants reported that no one at the four HBCUs in Florida is conducting research on Black males. 		

Note: These descriptive statistics provide an overview of the key themes identified when interviewing administration at HBCUs in Florida. It is important to note that the statistics are based on the information provided and may not represent the entire population or all HBCUs in Florida.

TABLE 4: Central Interview Themes for Black Males who attended HBCUs and PWIs

CULTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HBCU Participants: Among the 12 Black males interviewed, those who attended HBCUs reported feeling more connected to their culture and gaining a better understanding of their identity and the world around them. • PWI Participants: They expressed that attending PWIs provided them with a better understanding of the real world, as they were already familiar with the environment due to their upbringing.
STEREOTYPES AND MISCONCEPTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HBCU Participants: The Black males who attended HBCUs reported experiencing few stereotypes or misconceptions. However, some stereotypes they encountered included doubts about receiving a quality education, financial assistance, or achieving success. • PWI Participants: On the other hand, those who attended PWIs faced scrutiny for their choice of school, as HBCUs were considered more culturally relevant. However, they also received praise from their close circles, emphasizing that attending a PWI would provide them with the best education and ample resources.
UNIQUE CHALLENGES FACED BY HBCU ATTENDEES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges Faced by HBCU Participants: Resources: The biggest challenge reported by HBCU participants was a lack of financial resources, familial support, and general knowledge about college admissions and expectations. These individuals faced difficulties due to limited financial means and inadequate guidance. • Challenges Faced by PWI Participants: Cultural differences: Similar to HBCU participants, those who attended PWIs faced challenges related to the cultural environment on their campuses. They had to navigate and adjust to different cultural norms and practices.
SUPPORT & EMPOWERMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources: Many interviewees expressed the need for resources to support Black males in their college education, including financial assistance, access to classes, textbooks, and other educational materials. • Early Intervention: Interviewees emphasized the importance of the state taking a more hands-on approach through early intervention programs aimed at empowering Black males in their educational journey. • Diverse Representation: There was a common desire for more diverse representation of Black males in college settings, including faculty, staff, and student organizations, to create a more inclusive and empowering environment.
SUCCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autonomy and Support: The majority of the Black males interviewed attributed their success to the ability to pursue their own desires and make decisions on their own terms. They emphasized the importance of personal agency and being able to do what they want, when they want. Additionally, they mentioned the significance of giving back and supporting the schools from which they benefited. • Mentorship: In the focus group, all participants agreed that mentorship plays a crucial role in achieving success. They highlighted the value of guidance and support from various sources, including community leaders, professors, and their fellow students. Mentorship was seen as a pathway to acquiring knowledge, skills, and connections necessary for success.

Note: These descriptive statistics provide an overview of the key themes identified when interviewing Black male participants. It is important to note that the information may not represent the entire population or all HBCUs in Florida.

TABLE 5: Central Focus Group Themes for Black Males Who Attended HBCUs & PWIs

WORKING WHILE BEING IN SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The participants emphasized the importance of having sufficient monetary resources to support their education. Working while being in school was seen as a way to secure the necessary funds.• They highlighted the need for financial literacy education before and during college. This would help Black males navigate financial responsibilities such as paying bills, managing rent, and balancing work with academic commitments.
MENTORSHIP
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentorship was identified as a crucial factor in the success of young Black males in higher education. The participants expressed the belief that having a prominent Black male mentor in their lives would have greatly benefited them.• They emphasized the importance of giving back and becoming mentors themselves. They believed that mentoring current Black males in college would provide them with guidance and help them navigate the challenges they may face. Mentors could offer insights, support, and encouragement, helping them understand that they don't need to have everything figured out when they first enter college.• The participants emphasized the value of connections and having a group of people with whom they could connect. These relationships can drive success and provide a support system.
INDIVIDUAL PATHS & RESILIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The participants recognized that everyone's path to success is different. They emphasized the importance of being independent and finding one's own path to success.• They acknowledged that they experienced low moments due to the lack of resources available. However, these experiences of adversity and limited resources-built resilience in them.• The participants expressed a desire to pass on their knowledge and experiences to younger males, equipping them with the information they themselves lacked. They hoped that sharing tips and advice would empower the younger generation with the tools to navigate their educational journeys more successfully.

Note: These findings highlight the significance of financial resources, mentorship, independence, resilience, and the importance of giving back in the experiences of Black males in higher education. The perspectives shared in the focus group provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by Black males and the strategies that can support their success.



Pictured Here: Research Focus Group Participants, Filmed by Juming Delmas Studios

TABLE 6: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT HBCUs IN FLORIDA

	BCU	EWU	FAMU	FMU
First-Year Experience (FYE) courses	x	x	x	x
Wildcat 360 Center	x			
Office of Student Success and Analytics			x	
Undergraduate Student Success Center			x	
Tiger Center for Academic Persistence and Success (TAPS)		x		
CARES Program/I Roar Program				x
TRIO Program		x	x	
The Black Male Initiative		x		
Student Clubs and Organizations	x	x	x	x
Black Male College Explorer Program				x
Big Brother, Big Sisters School to Work Program				x
Student Counseling Centers	x	x	x	x

Note: Student Support Services offered at HBCUs in Florida.

Florida's four HBCUs are dedicated to providing a comprehensive array of support services for their student bodies. These institutions maintain a strong focus on fostering the academic and personal development of their students throughout their enrollment. The support services encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from academic to social, and are integral to the overall college experience. Academic support encompasses a diverse range of services and resources aimed at facilitating and enhancing students' scholastic achievements, while social support pertains to the assistance and emotional connections that contribute to students' holistic well-being. This discussion will delve into an analysis of both forms of support.

Academic support stands as a foundational pillar at these HBCUs, with an assortment of comprehensive services in place to ensure that students receive the requisite support to excel in their academic pursuits. A primary example of such support is the implementation of First-Year Experience (FYE) courses across all four institutions. These courses are meticulously designed to aid incoming freshmen in acclimating to the university environment and to provide them with a preview of the academic and social expectations that will shape their collegiate journey. Notably, Edward Waters University offers a distinct FYE program tailored to students entering the institution ahead of the traditional academic schedule.

This specialized FYE program at Edward Waters University underscores the institution's commitment to providing tailored academic support that meets the unique needs of its student population. Furthermore, the HBCUs offer a range of additional academic resources, such as tutoring services, mentoring programs, and academic advising, all of which are geared toward enabling students to thrive academically.

Social support is equally paramount at these institutions, encompassing a wide array of services and connections that contribute to the overall well-being of the student body. Students at HBCUs benefit from a strong sense of community and belonging, which is fostered through peer support programs, community engagement initiatives, and mentorship opportunities. By providing a supportive social environment, these institutions aim to address the diverse needs of their students beyond the academic realm, thereby nurturing a holistic approach to student development.

The academic and social support services offered by Florida's HBCUs play a pivotal role in nurturing the growth and success of their student bodies. By providing a robust framework of academic resources and fostering a supportive social environment, these institutions are dedicated to empowering students to achieve their full potential both academically and personally.

Outside of the academic sphere, each HBCU offers distinctive services designed to cater to the multifaceted needs of their student populations. Notably, Bethune-Cookman University features the Wildcat 360 Center as a prominent component of its Division of Enrollment and Management. This center is specifically tailored to enhance student services and bolster the efficacy of undergraduate admissions, financial aid, and housing services, thereby aiming to optimize the overall student experience. Similarly, Florida A&M University offers two pivotal services that span across multiple departments to provide comprehensive support for their students. The first is the Office of Student Success and Analytics, which integrates Academic Support Services, the Office of Admissions/Recruitment, and the Office of Academics with the objective of delivering seamless student services and resources, while concurrently fostering the advancement of knowledge, student development, critical thinking, and professionalism. The second service, the Undergraduate Student Success Center, offers academic coaching, houses the office of Transfer Student Services, and facilitates internships and networking opportunities.

Moreover, Edward Waters University is home to the Tiger Center for Academic Persistence and Success (TAPS), which offers support for academic advising, academic support through writing and math labs, as well as tutoring services. Lastly, Florida Memorial University has implemented the CARES program, which stands for Coordination, Assessment, Response, and Education. This team is dedicated to mitigating any potential disruptions to a student's academic or personal well-being, demonstrating the institution's commitment to providing comprehensive support beyond the classroom setting. These unique services underscore the HBCUs' dedication to nurturing the holistic development and success of their students by addressing a wide array of non-academic needs.

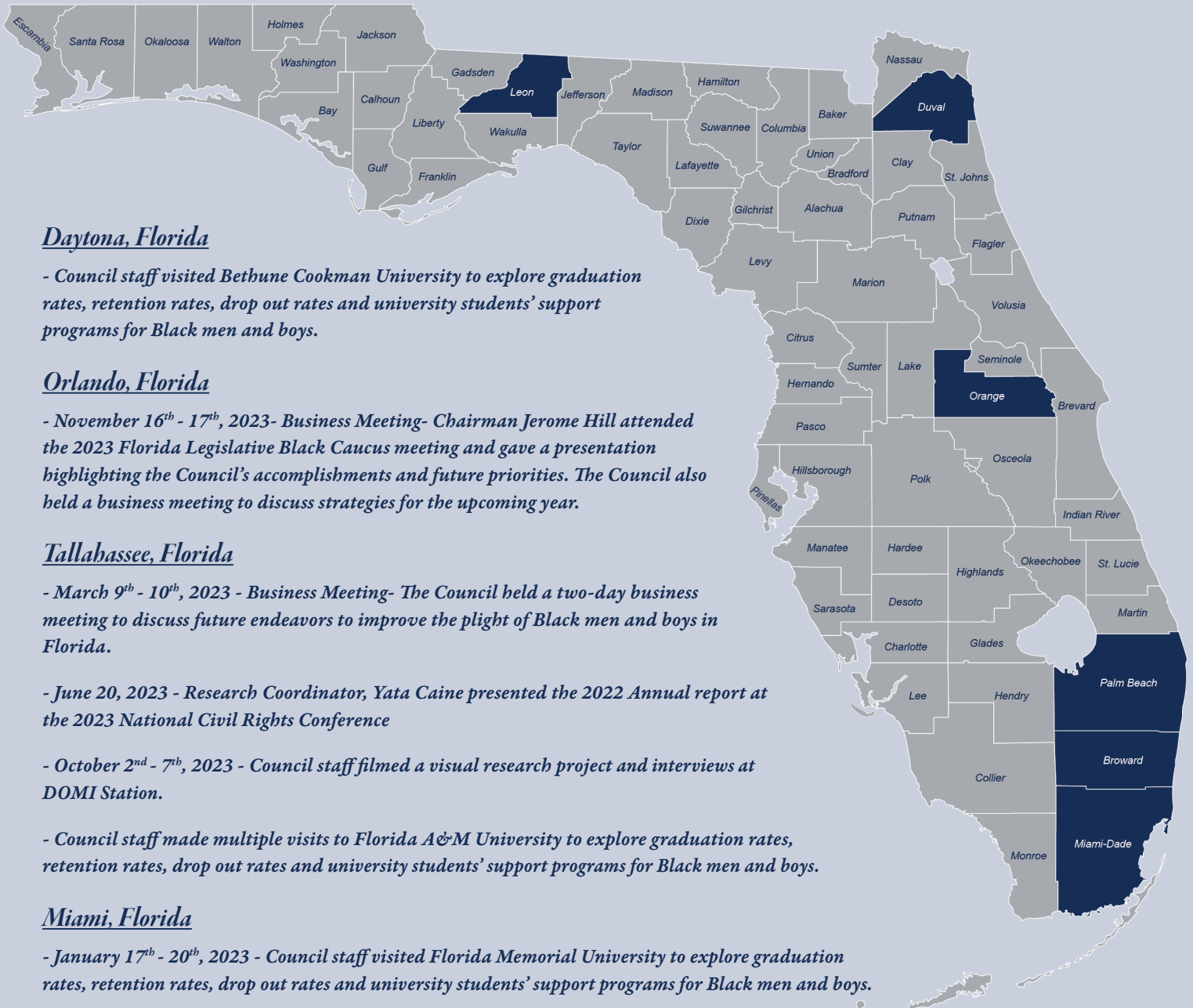
The TRIO programs, federally funded initiatives designed to provide support for first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities as they navigate the challenges of higher education, stand as another prominent academic service offered by these institutions. At Florida A&M University, the TRIO program endeavors to facilitate the transition into college life for students. Complementing this program is the Upward Bound initiative, which delivers pre-college support encompassing counseling, cultural exposure, and academic enrichment. Additionally, the Education Opportunity Center, also part of the TRIO suite, assists qualified adults in obtaining a high school diploma or GED and in enrolling or returning to college or technical school. Similarly, Edward Waters University extends the benefits of a TRIO program to its students through the Student Support Services (SSS), which aims to enhance college retention and graduation rates while providing academic tutoring in areas such as math, reading, writing, study skills, and science, among other subjects.

These federally supported programs play a crucial role in empowering students to surmount obstacles and realize their academic and professional aspirations. Moreover, the provision of social support services is integral to fostering student success at these universities, complementing their academic offerings. Notably, Bethune-Cookman University's program, The Black Male Initiative, established in 2014, strives to promote holistic male development by enhancing male student engagement, retention, and graduation rates. This initiative exemplifies the universities' commitment to addressing students' social and personal development as a complement to their academic pursuits.

In conclusion, the HBCUs in Florida offer a comprehensive support system that addresses the diverse academic, social, and professional needs of their student bodies. The overarching objective is to empower students to surmount obstacles, navigate real-world challenges, and realize their academic and professional aspirations. This steadfast commitment to student success underscores the pivotal role these institutions play in cultivating thriving and empowered student communities. By providing robust academic and social support, these HBCUs furnish students with the resources essential for their success as they progress through their collegiate journeys.

FLORIDA COUNCIL ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK MEN & BOYS

RESEARCH LOCATIONS



Daytona, Florida

- Council staff visited Bethune Cookman University to explore graduation rates, retention rates, drop out rates and university students' support programs for Black men and boys.

Orlando, Florida

- November 16th - 17th, 2023- Business Meeting- Chairman Jerome Hill attended the 2023 Florida Legislative Black Caucus meeting and gave a presentation highlighting the Council's accomplishments and future priorities. The Council also held a business meeting to discuss strategies for the upcoming year.

Tallahassee, Florida

- March 9th - 10th, 2023 - Business Meeting- The Council held a two-day business meeting to discuss future endeavors to improve the plight of Black men and boys in Florida.

- June 20, 2023 - Research Coordinator, Yata Caine presented the 2022 Annual report at the 2023 National Civil Rights Conference

- October 2nd - 7th, 2023 - Council staff filmed a visual research project and interviews at DOMI Station.

- Council staff made multiple visits to Florida A&M University to explore graduation rates, retention rates, drop out rates and university students' support programs for Black men and boys.

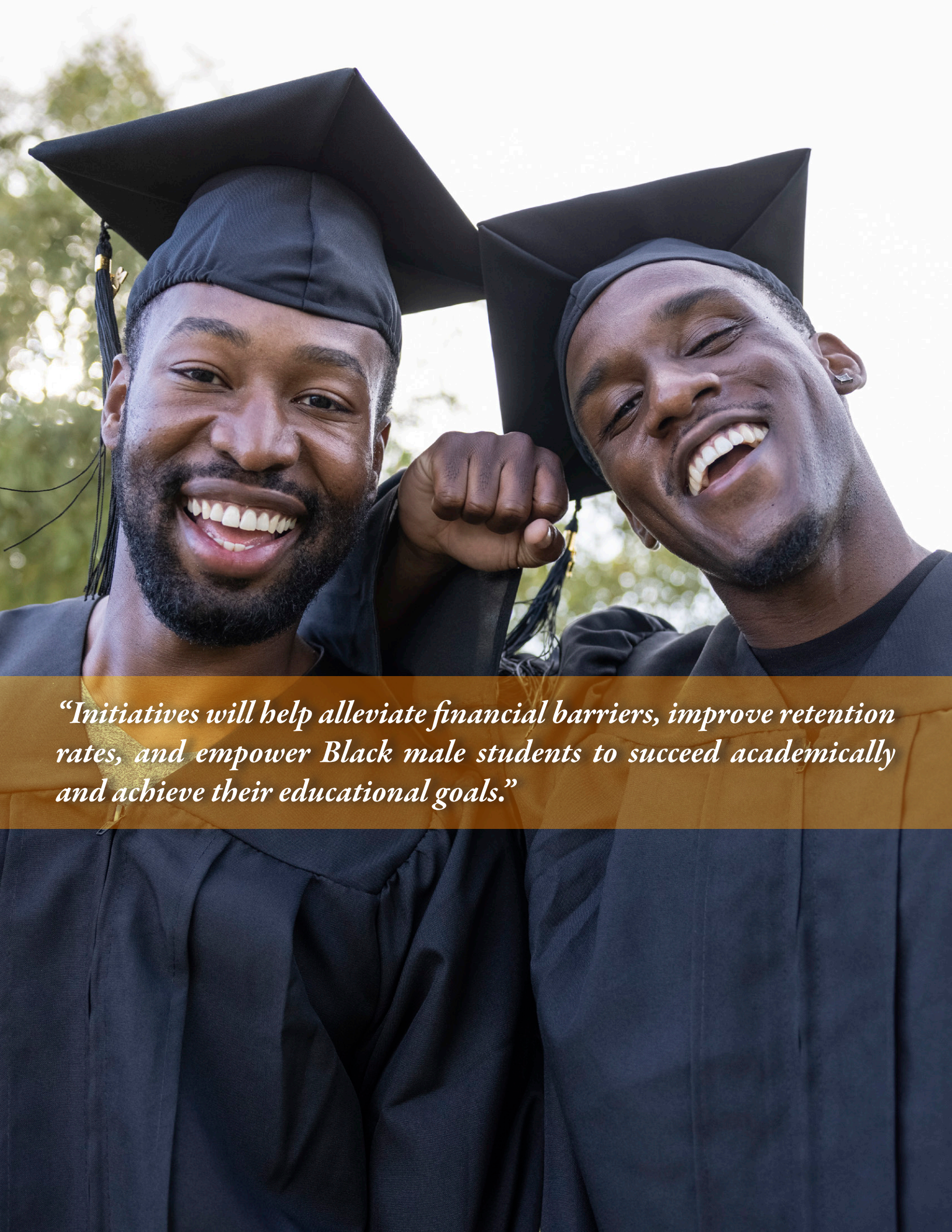
Miami, Florida

- January 17th - 20th, 2023 - Council staff visited Florida Memorial University to explore graduation rates, retention rates, drop out rates and university students' support programs for Black men and boys.

Jacksonville, Florida

-September 27th, 2023 - Council staff visited Edward Waters University to explore graduation rates, retention rates, drop out rates and university students' support programs for Black men and boys.

-September 28th, 2023 - Chairman Jerome Hill and Executive Director Terrell Nelson served as panel speakers at the 8th Annual Black Mental Health Symposium



“Initiatives will help alleviate financial barriers, improve retention rates, and empower Black male students to succeed academically and achieve their educational goals.”

Policy Recommendations

Although programs and initiatives exist to address barriers in educational attainment, research conducted for this report identifies lack of support as a primary obstacle that impedes Black males from succeeding academically. The State of Florida can take significant strides in addressing funding disparities, gaps in mentorship and equitable access to higher education.

By prioritizing targeted support, resources, and partnerships, Florida can create a pathway for Black males to access post-secondary education, excel academically, and thrive in their chosen careers.

Recommendation I:

It is recommended that the **Florida Legislature** increase funding allocated for the **Florida Fatherhood Initiative** by \$156 million dollars; to expand their *Evidence-Based Education Programs for Fathers grant* to include funding for **university scholarships, grants, and work-study programs** specifically targeting Black male fathers attending the four **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** in the **State Florida**. This would allow the state to match federal funding previously received through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) by HBCUs for direct financial student support (White House, 2022). Currently, the grant funds educational programming that focuses on topics such as parent coaching, co-parenting collaboration, newborn and infant care education, and parenting skills training. By expanding the grant program to include funding equitable access to higher education for Black fathers, we can decrease negative outcomes primarily faced by Black males and widen the road to prosperity and economic self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, identified stakeholders should **advocate for the establishment of loan forgiveness programs** that specifically target Black fathers attending HBCUs in Florida. These programs can alleviate the burden of student loan debt and pave the way to upward mobility.

It is also recommended that Florida Fatherhood Initiative stakeholders explore fostering collaborations between the HBCUs and its local employers to **provide work-study opportunities** for Black male students. The expanded

grant program can offer valuable professional experiences while helping to alleviate financial burdens associated with tuition and living expenses. In addition, they can advocate for flexibility in work-study programs to accommodate students' academic schedules, ensuring that employment does not hinder their progress towards degree completion or fatherhood.

It is further recommended that the Florida Fatherhood Initiative stakeholders and Florida's HBCUs **strengthen partnerships with financial institutions**. Collaborating with financial institutions to conduct workshops on financial aid and scholarship opportunities for Black male students can provide information on available funding sources and strategies for maximizing financial aid packages.

Lastly, it recommended that Florida's HBCUs **integrate financial literacy programs into the curriculum**, specifically tailored to address the unique financial challenges faced by Black male students. These programs should cover topics such as budgeting, student loan management, and wise financial decision-making.

Recommendation II:

It is recommended that the **Florida Fatherhood Initiative** earmark a portion of the 21.2 million dollars in grant funding to **expand the Mentorship Programs for At-Risk Male Students grant** to target at-risk Black male students attending HBCUs. Currently, this grant assists at-risk male students who are in middle school or high school in developing economic, social, emotional, and cognitive skills to prepare them for future success. By expanding the grant program to include post-secondary Black male students, they may matriculate throughout their entire educational career with the valuable guidance of mentorship.

It is also recommended that Florida Fatherhood Initiative stakeholders move into partnership with HBCUs to **develop peer mentorship programs** where upperclassmen Black males can mentor and support incoming and underclassmen at-risk Black males. Peer mentors can provide relatable guidance, share experiences, and help navigate campus life, creating a support network within the student community.

Additionally, provide training and resources for peer mentors to enhance their mentoring skills and ensure they are equipped to address the unique challenges faced by Black males.

Furthermore, HBCUs should aim to **strengthen alumni networks and further support the mentorship expansion** through the establishment of mentorship initiatives that connect successful Black male alumni with current students. Mentors can provide valuable career guidance, networking opportunities, and personal support, helping Black males navigate the transition from college to the workforce. These connections can take place by organizing networking events, panel discussions, and workshops that facilitate meaningful connections between alumni mentors and current students, fostering a sense of community and long-term support.

It is also recommended that HBCUs partner with corporations, professional organizations, and community leaders to **provide professional mentorship opportunities** for Black males during and after college. These mentors can offer career guidance, internships, job-shadowing experiences, and industry-specific insights to enhance career readiness and success. Additionally, they can develop mentorship programs that focus on specific career fields, such as STEM, business, arts, or healthcare, to provide tailored guidance and support for Black males pursuing various career paths.

Lastly, it is recommended that the Florida Fatherhood Initiative and HBCUs **regularly evaluate the effectiveness of mentorship programs** by collecting feedback from mentees, mentors, and program coordinators. Evaluations should assess the impact of mentorship on academic performance, career development, and overall well-being of Black male participants. Also data-driven insights could be utilized to refine and improve mentorship programs, ensuring they address the evolving needs and challenges faced by Black male students.

Recommendation III:

It is recommended that the **State Legislators, state agencies, stakeholders, colleges, and universities promote interdisciplinary collaboration** by encouraging researchers from various fields, including sociology, psychology, education, public health, economics, and criminal justice,

to work together on reinvestment-related research. These collaborations could foster partnerships between universities, research institutions, community organizations, and policymakers to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Furthermore, research projects should **involve meaningful community engagement** by partnering with community-based organizations, grassroots movements, and Black male-led initiatives. This collaboration will foster trust, enhance the relevance of research questions, and promote the implementation of research findings into actionable strategies.

It is also recommended that State Legislators, HBCUs, and Florida Fatherhood Initiative **allocate funding for longitudinal studies** that track the educational, economic, and social trajectories of Black males from childhood to adulthood. Longitudinal research will provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to or impede reinvestment, allowing for the development of targeted interventions and policies.

It is further recommended that HBCUs **promote diversity and inclusion within research** by encouraging the recruitment and retention of Black scholars, researchers, and graduate students. This will ensure that research on the reinvestment of Black males is conducted by individuals who have firsthand experiences and a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Black males.

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Enabling Legislation

FL Stat § 16.615 (2020) Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys.—

(1) The Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys is established within the Department of Legal Affairs and shall consist of 19 members appointed as follows:

- (a) Two members of the Senate who are not members of the same political party, appointed by the President of the Senate with the advice of the Minority Leader of the Senate.
- (b) Two members of the House of Representatives who are not members of the same political party, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives with the advice of the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.
- (c) The Secretary of Children and Families or his or her designee.
- (d) The director of the Mental Health Program Office within the Department of Children and Families or his or her designee.
- (e) The State Surgeon General or his or her designee.
- (f) The Commissioner of Education or his or her designee.
- (g) The Secretary of Corrections or his or her designee.
- (h) The Attorney General or his or her designee.
- (i) The Secretary of Management Services or his or her designee.
- (j) The Secretary of Economic Opportunity or his or her designee.
- (k) A businessperson who is an African American, as defined in s. 760.80(2)(a), appointed by the Governor.
- (l) Two persons appointed by the President of the Senate who are not members of the Legislature or employed by state government. One of the appointees must be a clinical psychologist.
- (m) Two persons appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives who are not members of the Legislature or employed by state government. One of the appointees must be an Africana studies professional.
- (n) The deputy secretary for Medicaid in the Agency for Health Care Administration or his or her designee.
- (o) The Secretary of Juvenile Justice or his or her designee.

(2) Each member of the council shall be appointed to a 4-year term; however, for the purpose of providing staggered terms, of the initial appointments, 9 members shall be appointed to 2-year terms and 10 members shall be appointed to 4-year terms. A member of the council may be removed at any time by the member's appointing authority who shall fill the vacancy on the council.

- (3) (a) At the first meeting of the council each year, the members shall elect a chair and a vice chair.
(b) A vacancy in the office of chair or vice chair shall be filled by vote of the remaining members.

- (4) (a) The council shall make a systematic study of the conditions affecting Black men and boys, including, but not limited to, homicide rates, arrest and incarceration rates, poverty, violence, drug abuse, death rates, disparate annual income levels, school performance in all grade levels including postsecondary levels, and health issues.
(b) The council shall propose measures to alleviate and correct the underlying causes of the conditions described in paragraph (a). These measures may consist of changes to the law or systematic changes that can be implemented without legislative action.
(c) The council may study other topics suggested by the Legislature or as directed by the chair of the council.
(d) The council shall receive suggestions or comments pertinent to the applicable issues from members of the Legislature, governmental agencies, public and private organizations, and private citizens.
(e) The council shall develop a strategic program and funding initiative to establish local Councils on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys.

- (5) The council may:
- (a) Access data held by any state departments or agencies, which data is otherwise a public record.
 - (b) Make requests directly to the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee for assistance with research and monitoring of outcomes by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.
 - (c) Request, through council members who are also legislators, research assistance from the Office of Economic and Demographic Research within the Florida Legislature.
 - (d) Request information and assistance from the state or any political subdivision, municipal corporation, public officer, or governmental department thereof.
 - (e) Apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services from the state, the Federal Government or any of its agencies, or any other public or private source for the purpose of defraying clerical and administrative costs as may be necessary for carrying out its duties under this section.
 - (f) Work directly with, or request information and assistance on issues pertaining to education from, Florida's historically Black colleges and universities.
- (6) The Office of the Attorney General shall provide staff and administrative support to the council.
- (7) The council shall meet quarterly and at other times at the call of the chair or as determined by a majority of council members and approved by the Attorney General.
- (8) Eleven of the members of the council constitute a quorum, and an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present is required for final action.
- (9) The council shall issue its annual report by December 15 each year, stating the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the council. The council shall submit the report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairpersons of the standing committees of jurisdiction in each chamber.
- (10) Members of the council shall serve without compensation. Members are entitled to reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061. State officers and employees shall be reimbursed from the budget of the agency through which they serve. Other members may be reimbursed by the Department of Legal Affairs.
- (11) The council and any subcommittees it forms are subject to the provisions of chapter 119, related to public records, and the provisions of chapter 286, related to public meetings.
- (12) Each member of the council who is not otherwise required to file a financial disclosure statement pursuant to s. 8, Art. II of the State Constitution or s. 112.3144, must file a disclosure of financial interests pursuant to s. 112.3145.

History.—s. 1, ch. 2006-123; s. 2, ch. 2008-6; s. 1, ch. 2008-130; s. 39, ch. 2011-142; s. 3, ch. 2014-19; s. 1, ch. 2019-3; s. 18, ch. 2019-4; s. 17, ch. 2021-25.

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