

## Perspectives on Exemplary Transformational Leadership Among Presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities



### A Monograph

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Based on findings from the UNCF Exemplary  
Transformational Leadership Survey

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Preliminary data collection and coding of responses was done by Noran Moffett, Ed.D., and Melanie Frizzle. Darryl Ann Lai-Fang, M.HRM, of the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building (ICB), administered the survey and UNCF-ICB's Kimberly Marks, Ed.D., provided oversight of the final editing process.

## Perspectives on Exemplary Transformational Leadership Among Presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

### PREFACE

This monograph presents the findings from the Exemplary Transformational Leadership Presidential Survey conducted by the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building (UNCF-ICB) Executive Leadership and Governance Program. The survey and this publication represent aspects of a multi-pronged initiative to provide assistance to the leadership of private historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the UNCF network. The initiative is based on the premise that stable, strategic and informed leadership, along with engaged and well-functioning governing boards, is essential for the continued viability and sustainability of any higher education institution.

With support from American Express Philanthropy, the UNCF-ICB Executive Leadership and Governance Program has:

- Developed a series of leadership training and professional development opportunities for presidents, senior administrators and board chairs at UNCF-member institutions to provide access to the latest information and expertise in leadership development and governance,<sup>1</sup>
- Laid the groundwork for the UNCF Presidential Consulting Network and formed a Leadership Council, the advisory committee to the Executive Leadership and Governance Program, in an effort to begin to systematically tap the wide-ranging skills and expertise of the leaders of its member institutions; and
- Conducted the Exemplary Transformational Leadership Presidential Survey (December 2011-January 2012) as a foundational component of the UNCF Exemplary Transformational Leadership Series aimed at further culling the rich reservoir of leadership experience and expertise among current and former presidents of UNCF-member institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The survey findings discussed here reveal the perspectives of a sampling of HBCU presidents about what it means to be a transformational leader at a particular moment in time. Further, it sheds light on the presidents' perceptions about how their own actions in specific situations have or have not embodied a transformational leadership style. Ultimately, the hope is that the findings documented in this publication will encourage current and future leaders at HBCUs to think deeply and reflectively about what it means to be a true transformational leader and to embrace those approaches and strategies that can best assist them in advancing their institutions' missions in progressive and innovative ways.

<sup>1</sup>These sessions took place over a five-year period beginning in 2007 and included: 1) a partnership with Harvard University for the UNCF/Harvard Institutes for Higher Education (HIHE) Initiative to offer HBCU administrators, both cabinet- and non-cabinet-level, to participate in one of four HIHE professional development seminars: Institute for Educational Management; Management Development Program; Institute for Management and Leadership in Education; and Harvard Seminar for New Presidents; and 2) the UNCF Institute on Trusteeship, developed in close collaboration with the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). The institute was tailored specifically to address the needs of private HBCUs.

<sup>2</sup>The series was officially launched when a subset of veteran UNCF presidents were asked to reflect on their personal perspectives and experiences in transformational leadership as panelists during the New Presidents Orientation at the UNCF Board of Directors meeting in Orlando, Florida (October 4, 2011).

### HIGHLIGHTS OF SURVEY FINDINGS

- » A majority of the UNCF presidents surveyed believe that the characteristics needed to effectively lead private HBCUs are embodied in the transformational leadership style. In particular, they agree that HBCU presidents must be motivational, visionary, risk takers, mission-focused, excellent communicators, courageous and adaptive, and they must have integrity and respect for employees.
- » Presidents at private HBCUs have used a combination of transactional and transformational leadership strategies to weather the downturn in the global economy, stabilize their institutions and implement innovative initiatives to revitalize their institutions.
- » Eighty-five percent of the presidents describe themselves as transformational leaders who generate new ideas for their institutions themselves as well as involve other stakeholders at the institution in the decision-making process.
- » The major transformational actions the presidents said they had recently undertaken were to revitalize academic programs; increase and enhance fundraising initiatives and funnel more resources into scholarships; and strengthen their institutions' administrative teams.
- » A significant number of presidents surveyed said they motivate alumni, faculty, staff and students through direct contact and communication with each group of stakeholders to keep them informed, by engaging them in work that is important to the viability of the institution, and by modeling transformational behavior.
- » Although the majority of the presidents acknowledged that the downturn in the economy had an impact on their decision making around recruitment and enrollment sustainability, only two presidents believed that their actions in this area were transformational for their institutions.
- » While a significant number of the presidents said that development of innovative academic programs to prepare students for the workforce of the future was or would become a major focus on their campuses, only one president in the sampling identified development of online academic programs as a priority.



## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE



UNCF's *Exemplary Transformational Leadership Presidential Survey* was administered online to presidents of the private HBCUs in the UNCF network from December 2011 through January 2012 to determine these leaders' personal definitions of "transformational leadership," understand the presidents' perspectives and opinions about the characteristics of a transformational leader, and document examples of their own actions that they believe exemplify transformational leadership.

The major objective was to identify the commonalities and differences in the ways that sitting UNCF presidents define transformational leadership as well as get a sense of how they apply their understanding of transformational leadership in the day-to-day operation of their institutions. The patterns and insights revealed are meant to be useful to presidents and aspiring leaders at private HBCUs and other special-mission institutions as they seek to help these colleges and universities become stronger, innovate, and thrive in the 21st century.

### BACKGROUND

It is clear that HBCUs have reached a watershed moment. The leadership at these institutions will have to determine whether they will succumb to the myriad challenges that besiege them or seize opportunities to transform themselves by taking advantage of recent and imminent changes in our society.

We know that private and public HBCUs represent just four percent of the 2,300 four-year postsecondary institutions in America and yet produce 19 percent of the African American graduates with bachelor's degrees. They produce 28 percent of African American college graduates with degrees in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).<sup>3</sup> These institutions offer a holistic approach to student engagement that, as Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has noted, other colleges and universities would do well to emulate.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, HBCUs excel when it comes to providing avenues for social mobility to low-income and first-generation students.<sup>5</sup>

### Challenges

Yet the leaders of HBCUs have faced a number of challenges over time, many of them byproducts of societal inequalities that consequently have resulted in limited endowments and students who enter college with widely varying levels of academic preparedness. These issues, in turn, affect retention and graduation rates. Detractors have persistently questioned the relevancy of HBCUs

and predicted their demise. Nonetheless, the leaders of these institutions have repeatedly found ways to overcome these challenges.

It was the collective vision and wherewithal of the leaders of a group of private HBCUs, for example, that spurred the formation of UNCF in 1944. Led by Frederick D. Patterson, president of what was then Tuskegee Institute, and Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of what became Bethune-Cookman University, these leaders decided that rather than going after the limited funds available to their individual institutions, they would partner to promote the accomplishments of their colleges and universities, cultivate relationships with some of the wealthiest individuals and foundations in the country to raise the financial support they needed, and then share those dollars. They also banded together to advocate for governmental support and legislation beneficial to HBCUs. Thus was born the largest and most effective education organization focused on students of color. Other organizations such as National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), Thurgood Marshall College Fund and the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) came after UNCF with similar and complementary purposes, but in most cases, focusing on the needs of both public and private HBCUs.

In recent years, the confluence of several factors has amplified the challenges faced by HBCUs. While the country's current economic crisis has affected institutions across the spectrum of higher education, the decline has been especially difficult for HBCUs. Title III funding, a life-saving resource for HBCUs, has been decreased. And sudden restrictions on federally funded student loans have further curbed enrollment at a number of HBCUs--potentially devastating for institutions that are tuition-driven. More than 14,000 students at HBCUs could not obtain Parent PLUS student loans during the 2012-2013 academic year, resulting in a decrease in institutional revenue for HBCUs of approximately \$160 million.<sup>6</sup> To offset the impact of fewer tuition dollars, leaders of many HBCUs have pulled funds from their institutions' already small endowments, scaled back or eliminated academic programs, and even implemented furloughs and layoffs of faculty and staff.

### Flux in Leadership

Throughout this period of great challenge, both public and private HBCUs have experienced an especially intense period of flux in leadership at the highest levels of administration. On average, when it comes to the chief executive officer position, HBCU presidents serve six years compared with 8.5 years of service by presidents in the broader higher education sphere.<sup>7</sup> Within the current network of 37 UNCF-member institutions, 16 presidents—43 percent—have been at the helm of their institutions for less than six years. Sixteen of all 105 HBCUs—15 percent—undertook a presidential search in 2012;<sup>8</sup> about half of those were UNCF-member institutions. By the close of 2013, presidents of four more UNCF institutions announced that they would be stepping down.<sup>9</sup>

As HBCUs attempt to stabilize, they must aggressively seek presidents who commit to doing three things: steer the institutions through the current economic crisis; make long-term

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System, Completions Component, 2011

<sup>4</sup> "HBCUs and Higher Education: Beyond the Iron Triangle." Remarks of Arne Duncan to 2009 National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Conference, September 2, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Awokoya, J., Richards, D., & Myrick-Harris, C. (2012). *Serving students and the public good: HBCUs and the Washington Monthly's College Rankings*. Fairfax, VA: Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, UNCF.

<sup>6</sup> McClure, T.M. (2013). *State of HBCUs: Past, present and future*. <https://stateofhbcus.wordpress.com/tag/uncf/>

<sup>7</sup> Gasman, M. (2013). *The changing face of historically black colleges and universities*. Center for Minority Serving Institutions, University of Pennsylvania. [http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/cmsi/Changing\\_Face\\_HBCUs.pdf](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/cmsi/Changing_Face_HBCUs.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Gasman, M. (2012). *Vacancies in the black-college presidency: What's going on?* *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 12. <http://chronicle.com/blogs/innovations/vacancies-in-the-black-college-presidency-whats-going-on/32204>

<sup>9</sup> In fall of 2013 Stillman College, along with Tuskegee, Shaw and Wilberforce universities, announced their presidents would be stepping down. See Hayes, D. (2013). *HBCU presidents at a new crossroads*, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, October 29, <http://diverseeducation.com/article/57130/>

commitments to reaffirm or retool the institutions' missions in ways that continue to provide access to students from underserved and under-resourced communities; and clearly articulate the value proposition of their institutions as vital to achieving the goal of dramatically increasing the number and quality of college graduates in the United States within the next decade.

### **New Opportunities**

Although they face new variations of old challenges, "HBCUs continue to defy the odds," notes Sylvia Carey Butler. "...[T]heir success at producing high-quality graduates counters the notion that they have outlived their time."<sup>10</sup> HBCU presidents have new opportunities to not just continue their historical missions, but to revitalize them as they focus on transforming their institutions to meet the needs of today's students. Beyond that, seizing these opportunities will enable HBCUs to make significant contributions to the education of the nation. As Secretary of Education Duncan recently noted, "...the tremendous historic role of HBCUs must endure—but it must evolve as well. To cite just one example, HBCUs must play a leading role in ensuring that America reaches President Obama's goal of having the highest college attainment rate in the world by 2020."<sup>11</sup>



The changing demographics in this country present one major opportunity. Even as they intensify their recruitment of students of African descent in more geographical locations, HBCU leaders also have the chance to expand their reach by recruiting more students from other underserved and under-resourced communities. They can follow the lead of Huston-Tillotson University President Larry Earvin, whose aggressive recruitment of Latino students over the past

decade helped pull that UNCF-member institution from the brink of financial disaster. Today, even as Huston-Tillotson affirms its heritage as an HBCU, it celebrates its Latino student population, which represents 18 percent of the school's enrollment. Under President Obama's new proposal for increasing the number of college graduates in the United States, higher education institutions can receive bonus money for the number of Pell Grant students who graduate.<sup>12</sup> Thus, more HBCU leaders can continue and even boost their institutions' strong track record of providing social mobility for low-income students.

Advances in technology provide HBCUs with opportunities to increase their visibility, provide even greater access to a college education for underserved students around the world, and create other revenue streams. Yet some HBCUs have static Web sites with outdated information about academic programs, faculty and initiatives, and most have not ventured into the realm of online education. In 2012 just 18 of the 51 public HBCUs and only six of the 55 private HBCUs—including the 38 UNCF-member institutions at the time of the survey—offered online degree programs. None of these programs were identified as blended, or "hybrid" programs with classes being held



in a combination of face-to-face classroom settings and online.<sup>13</sup> While the number of public HBCUs offering online programs increased to 21 in 2013, the number of such programs at private HBCUs remained the same.

HBCUs can take advantage of the opportunities that technology and new media tools provide by redesigning and updating their Web sites, which represent the first glimpse of an institution to potential students

and donors. A more robust and intentional presence on Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites can help an institution connect to individual prospective students, promote academic programs and co-curricular activities as well as tout the accomplishments of its students and faculty to the world.

Even those institutions with limited technology infrastructure of their own can now take advantage of cloud computing and outsource much of the work needed to launch online courses and degree programs.<sup>14</sup> UNCF-member institutions Johnson C. Smith University and Tougaloo College are examples of HBCUs that have begun to venture into the realm of virtual educational programs to boost enrollment and revenue. Smith provides online courses through its adult degree program. Tougaloo College offers a post-baccalaureate Certification Program in Health Informatics Management and Systems (HIMS) that is completely online. And Hampton University, a private HBCU (not in the UNCF network), offers 17 online degree programs from associate's to doctoral levels, more than any other HBCU, private or public.

Whether more HBCUs will embrace emerging opportunities or succumb to recurring challenges depends in large measure on the acumen and wherewithal of their leadership. As Brian Bridges, executive director of the UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, notes:

*As the country moves closer to becoming a minority-majority population, several opportunities exist for HBCUs, from increased enrollments, funding, and overall attention. However, the appropriate strategic leaders and vision must be in place to take advantage of any opportunities that arise for these schools.*<sup>15</sup>

In short, to overcome the myriad challenges and to seize opportunities and thrive, HBCUs must have visionary leaders—transformational leaders—who inspire the range of stakeholders within their institutions to work collectively to bring about positive change.

The presidents of private HBCUs in the UNCF network can lead the way.

<sup>10</sup> Butler, S. (2012). Enrollment management practices at private HBCUs: A model for success. UNCF Institute for Capacity Building.

<sup>11</sup> The enduring and evolving role of HBCUs. (2013). Remarks of U.S. secretary of education to the National HBCU Week Conference, September 26.

<sup>12</sup> Jackson, D. (2013). Obama unveils plan on college affordability. USA Today, August 22. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/08/22/obama-college-affordability-bus-tour-buffalo-syracuse/2684331/>

<sup>13</sup> Beasley, R. (2013). HBCUs online and blended degree programs. Last updated June 9. <http://hbcu-levers.blogspot.com/2013/06/hbcu-online-blended-degree-programs-2013.html>

<sup>14</sup> Hawkins, B.D. (2013). College, connected: Online enrollments at HBCUs continue to grow. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, March 26, <http://diverseeducation.com/article/52200/>

<sup>15</sup> Brian Bridges in Gasman, M. (2013). *The changing face of historically black colleges and universities*, Center for Minority Serving Institutions, University of Pennsylvania.



## EXEMPLARY TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEFINED

The concept of *transformational leadership* was introduced almost four decades ago, in 1978, by political scientist James MacGregor Burns. According to Burns, transformational leaders are change agents who articulate a clear vision for an organization and motivate followers to strive to meet higher standards, ideals and morality through their charismatic personalities and inspirational powers of communication. Dozens of researchers have since offered variations on Burns' original theoretical model. Among the most prominent of these theorists is Bernard Bass, who posits that transformational leaders act in ways that make others want to trust them, and they give meaning to organizational life.



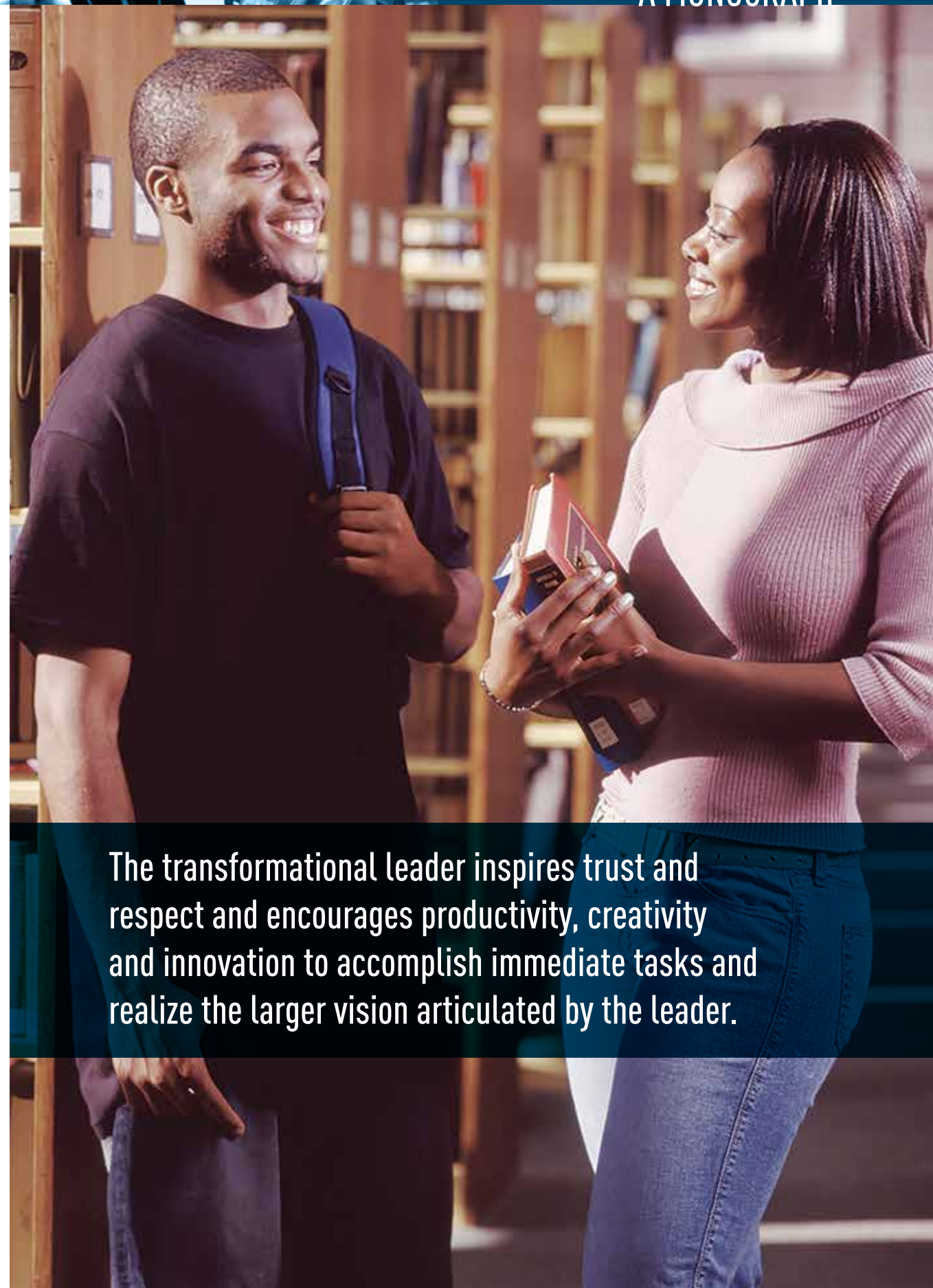
The transformational leader inspires trust and respect and encourages productivity, creativity and innovation to accomplish immediate tasks and realize the larger vision articulated by the leader. This dynamic leader increases followers' awareness of the importance and value of tasks and persuades them to work together to achieve the collective, organizational goals before their personal objectives. Moreover, through his dynamic personality, her charisma, their high ideals and sense

of purpose, transformational leaders motivate the most positive manifestations of "higher order needs" among stakeholders. Those include the social need to belong to the group with similar goals, aspirations and work ethic (affiliation); the need for recognition (esteem); desire for job mastery and professional growth (self-actualization); and the desire to excel at the work they do (achievement).<sup>16</sup>

Bass identified four primary components of transformational leadership:

- Individualized Consideration--the degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs
- Intellectual Stimulation—the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers; they nurture and develop people who think independently
- Inspirational Motivation—the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers, challenges followers with high standards, communicates optimism about future goals, and provides meaning for tasks to be performed
- Idealized Influence—how the leader provides a role model for high ethical behavior, instills pride, and gains respect and trust

To be truly successful and sustain that success, the transformational leader must have a moral foundation and vision based on moral character and ethical values. Moreover, a sense of morality must undergird the choices and actions made by the leader and those he or she leads.



The transformational leader inspires trust and respect and encourages productivity, creativity and innovation to accomplish immediate tasks and realize the larger vision articulated by the leader.

<sup>16</sup> Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectation*. New York: Free Press.

Strategies of transformational leadership can be used both in normal day-to-day operations of an institution and during crisis situations that demand creative thinking, selflessness and a high level of teamwork to overcome challenges. Burns and Bass further clarify what transformational leadership is by providing an example of what some consider an antithetical leadership style—*transactional leadership*. In contrast to the transformational leader, the transactional leader stresses the necessity of employees following the rules, policies and procedures prescribed by a manager. Original thinking and creativity are generally discouraged. A system of reward and punishment is meant to keep workers in check. Leaders who operate in this way exclusively are most concerned with maintaining the status quo. However, a transactional leadership style is not necessarily a bad approach. It, too, can be useful in the short term to deal with clear-cut problems or aspects of a crisis situation. The most effective leader knows when and how to switch styles as the situation dictates, but always with the dual aim of ensuring the viability of the institution and sparking lasting transformational change.

Over the past three decades, a number of scholars have revisited Burns' and Bass' transformational leadership models. Much of this research is based on studies within business contexts. While the study of transformational leadership in higher education has increased significantly in recent years, very little of it focuses on understanding what transformational leadership means in the context of HBCUs. Beyond that, there are only a few studies that document and analyze leadership at HBCUs at all. Exceptions include the book *Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students* (2001). In this study of 45 HBCUs from their inceptions to the 1990s, Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann conclude that HBCUs would continue to be significant higher education institutions if their leaders maintain "vision and focus."

In the recent monograph *The Politics of Success: An HBCU Leadership Paradigm* (2012), former HBCU president Barbara Hatton<sup>17</sup> describes the characteristics and approaches to leadership of past public and private HBCU presidents. However, she eschews the idea of using most current leadership style theoretical models to describe and analyze the perspectives, characteristics and actions of these women and men. Instead she says:

*Successful presidential leadership of HBCUs is about maximizing institutional possibilities for achieving a vision in the context of the historical circumstances of any given time. Successful HBCU presidents master the politics of survival, the politics of success and/or the politics of distinction. They outlast the threats against building a new future for the institution and are able to inspire a strong network of support to realize that future. By constantly reading the environment, successful HBCU presidents understand and capture the historical moment (and sometime create that moment). Their leadership is more about the strategies and tactics for building or cultivating, and situating the institution in a network of support, than it is about exceptionality, individual heroics, particular leadership styles or "things just falling into place."<sup>18</sup>*

It can be argued that Hatton's description of the characteristics of past HBCU presidents is aligned with the characteristics of the transformational leader as a visionary change agent who

rallies employees to embrace the leader's ideals and act collectively as a network to achieve the best outcomes for the institution and its stakeholders.

And what of current private HBCU presidents? How do they define transformational leadership? Do they believe in the efficacy of a transformational leadership style? Do they see themselves as transformational leaders? The results from this survey provide some insights.

## METHODOLOGY

The online research instrument used for UNCF's *Exemplary Transformational Leadership Presidential Survey* was developed by a team of researchers using Survey Monkey.<sup>19</sup> The survey consists of 13 items:

- 10 open-ended items
- 3 demographic items

## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

### Open-ended Items

The following are the 10 open-ended items posed to UNCF-member presidents as the major component of the survey to gauge the extent to which these chief academic officers' perspectives and behaviors reflect transformational leadership characteristics.

1. Please provide your definition of the term "transformational leader."
2. In your opinion, what are the characteristics necessary for an individual to be an exemplary "transformational leader," specifically at a historically black college or university?
3. How would you describe your leadership style/behavior at this time in your institutional history?
4. Please cite up to three recent decisions that you operationally describe as transformational actions you have undertaken in your role as president at your current institution.
5. Cite three examples of how the downturn in the global economy impacted your decision making at your institution.
6. Reflect upon an institutional challenge that has occurred over the past five years that caused you to demonstrate a transformational leadership behavior to seek a resolution. Were other stakeholders at your institution empowered to act for sustainability?

<sup>19</sup> The online research instrument used for UNCF's *Exemplary Transformational Leadership Presidential Survey* was developed by educators Noran Moffett, Ed.D., and Joseph H. Silver, Ph.D., with input from Clarissa Myrick-Harris, Ph.D. At the time of the survey, Dr. Silver was provost and vice president for academic affairs at Clark Atlanta University (CAU); Dr. Moffett was an associate dean of education at CAU; and Dr. Myrick-Harris was interim executive director of the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building. The survey administrator was Darryl Ann Lai-Fang, M.HRM, a relationship manager in the UNCF Institute for Capacity Building. Clark Atlanta University graduate student Melanie Frizzle, M.A., assisted in preliminary data collection and coding of responses.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Barbara Hatton is a former president of South Carolina State University (1992-1995), a public HBCU, and Knoxville College (1997-2005), a private HBCU.

<sup>18</sup> Hatton, B.R. (2012). *The politics of success: An HBCU leadership paradigm. Documenting the perspectives of past HBCU presidents, An oral history project.* Paper 15. <http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/hbcupres/15>



7. From your perspective and perception of transformational leadership, please share an assessed need for an academic innovation at your institution and discuss how you have used (or will use) transformational leadership behavior(s) to address that need.
8. Using your perspective and perceptions of transformational leadership, how would you describe your approach to the empowerment of students at your institution in the last five years? Then please cite an example of a decision that would support your description.
9. From your perspective of transformational leadership behaviors, cite selected actions that you and other stakeholders have implemented during the last five years, either as part of your institution's strategic plan, or other planning process, that:
  - a) have been intentionally initiated to promote a culture of transformation at your institution; and
  - b) that you believe are/will be quantitatively or qualitatively measurable examples of leadership vision.
10. Please provide examples of how you personally have inspired the following stakeholders to embrace a transformative culture to advance the institution over the past five years. (One example per stakeholder group)
  - A. Alumni
  - B. Faculty
  - C. Staff
  - D. Students

### Demographic Items

Please answer the following information about yourself

11. Gender
  - Male
  - Female
12. Age
  - 35 – 40
  - 41 – 45
  - 46 – 60
  - 61 – 65
  - 65 – 70
  - 70 – 80
  - Over 80
13. Length of tenure as president of your current institution
  - a. \_\_\_Years
  - b. \_\_\_Months

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS



During a six-week period from December 2011 through January 2012, the presidents of the then 38 UNCF-member institutions were asked to provide their personal definitions of transformational leadership, share their views about what it takes to be a transformational leader, and give examples of their own decisions and actions that they think exemplified transformational leadership. In an attempt to ensure a significant response rate, the presidents were given

three options for completing the survey:

- Complete the survey online themselves, save answers as they go and come back to them over the course of the six weeks that the survey will be available
- Refer to the PDF of the questionnaire sent via email, write out the answers to the survey questions and have them typed into the online survey
- Create answers to the open-ended questions in a Word document and the president, or you, the executive assistant, can then cut and paste the answers in the online survey and submit it

The survey data were entered into a secured Web-based survey data analysis program.<sup>20</sup> The qualitative, written responses to open-ended items were coded quantitatively and summarized in the narrative and, in some cases, placed in table or graph form. The responses to the multiple-choice demographic items are presented as quantitative data in graphs and tables as well. The anonymity of the presidents has been maintained.

### Sampling

At the time of the survey there were 38 member institutions in the UNCF network. The leaders of all of these institutions were invited to participate in the survey—31 male presidents (82 percent of total) and seven female presidents (18 percent of total). Fourteen presidents (approximately 37 percent) of all UNCF presidents completed a majority of the open-ended items on the *Exemplary Transformational Leadership Presidential Survey*. Of that sampling, 10 respondents were male presidents (71 percent of respondents) and four were female presidents (29 percent).

It is worth noting that more than half (57 percent) of all the female presidents of UNCF-member institutions answered a majority of the open-ended survey items. Just 32 percent of all the male presidents answered a majority of the survey items.


Sixteen presidents (42 percent of total UNCF presidents) completed the demographics section of the survey.

### Analysis

Thematic coding of the qualitative data was accomplished using the Survey Monkey computer program, along with additional manual coding by research team members. The detailed findings and interpretation of the data are presented in the following section.

<sup>20</sup> The data were entered into an electronic online version of the survey on the Survey Monkey system.





All 14 of the definitions of a transformational leader either overtly stated or clearly implied as the primary concept the idea of an individual who facilitates positive “change” or empowers others to create change for the better.



## DETAILED SURVEY FINDINGS

The findings from the survey are based on the thematic coding of the respondents’ answers to the 10 open-ended survey items and the compilation of the quantitative data derived from the responses to the three demographic survey items.

### Item 1: Please provide your definition of the term “transformational leader.”

*A transformational leader is one who seeks to create positive change in institutions, culture and people. The leader will select change strategies that are consensus building, vision sharing, mission pursuing, and community building. The leader seeks to develop ownership and spiritual connection between affected individuals and the future of the institution.—  
President No. 7*

*The transformational leader is one who leads through constructive empowerment which enables and motivates followership to a higher vision, calling and purpose. Transformational leaders are inspired and inspiring and effective at communicating and modeling the behaviors necessary to share and create buy-in to an institutional vision and desired outcomes.—President No. 11*

Fourteen of the presidents at UNCF-member institutions responded to survey Item 1. All 14 of the responses were aligned, to varying degrees, with the accepted definitions of “transformational leader” in the literature on the topic. The two responses quoted above--among the most cogent and thoughtful--include specific terms that recurred in nearly all the responses: Vision... Visionary... Inspires... Inspirational. Variations of the word “vision” appeared in seven (50 percent) of the presidents’ responses, while the word “inspire” appears in various forms in six (43 percent) responses.

All 14 of the definitions of a transformational leader either overtly stated or clearly implied as the primary concept the idea of an individual who facilitates positive “change” or empowers others to create change for the better. In fact, in even the two most cryptic responses, “change” was the key term. Respondent No. 13 said a transformational leader is “One who changes the course of an organization.” Respondent No. 14 stated such a person is “One able to make easily discernible positive change.” Change is at the core of the definition given by Respondent No. 2, even though the word “change” is never used:

*A transformational leader is one who is able to empower their team so that they can become better individually, as well as collectively, in order to redefine their organization into something fundamentally different than before.*

A truly transformational leader does not act unilaterally but strives to encourage collective actions, or buy-in, to actions meant to move the institution forward. The definitions of 10 of the 14 respondents (71 percent) referred to the centrality of the transformational leader being able to motivate others to work together to carry out a collective mission.



**Item 2: In your opinion, what are the characteristics necessary for an individual to be an exemplary “transformational leader,” specifically at a historically black college or university?**



Fourteen of the respondents answered the second survey question. All but two of the respondents reiterated the characteristics they had noted in their definitions in response to Item 1. Most are characteristics that a transformational leader in any context would have: adaptive, admiration, articulate, charismatic, compassion, courage, creative, data-driven, empathy, ethical principles, excellent communicator, flexible and visual, honesty, inspiring, integrity, intelligence,

knowledgeable, listening skills, loyalty, mission-focus, motivational, passion, pathos, respect for employees, risk taker, selfless, sense of purpose, trustworthiness, and visionary.

Two respondents went beyond the standard characteristics in their articulation of attributes they believe are especially necessary for an exemplary transformational leader at an HBCU: heritage and dedication to the historic mission of HBCUs to provide access to under-resourced and underserved students.

*One who embraces his/her heritage with pride and empowers others through sharing that knowledge. One who studies the heartbeat of the students AND faculty in order to catapult progress.—President No. 10*

*Exemplary transformational leaders, particularly at HBCUs, are visionary, adaptive, creative, outstanding resource managers (human and financial) who are able to effectively understand the complexities, and often peculiar dynamics, of the students, people and communities that find a connection with and a pathway to the institution that they lead. With a strong commitment to the historic mission of HBCUs, they are able to stimulate organizational change and strike a chord of collaboration and collegiality which resonates collectively and to each individual in the learning community.—President No. 11*

**Item 3: How would you describe your leadership style/behavior at this time in your institutional history?**

Thirteen of the UNCF presidents responded to Item 3. Keeping in mind that the responses are self-reported, 11 (85 percent) described themselves as transformational or “participatory” leaders. Involving stakeholders in community building that includes bringing new members into the fold along with new ideas emerged from the presidential respondents. Overall the presidents suggested that their leadership styles include sharing the decision-making process that affects the institution. The term “participatory leadership” seemed to be used to convey that concept and emerged in 14 percent of the responses. The word “transformational” emerged in 28 percent of the responses. The word “visionary” appeared in 21 percent of the responses.

Three of the presidents (23 percent) describe traits that blend characteristics of transformational and transactional leadership--a facilitator seeking to prepare the way for the next president; a collaborative visionary who is approachable; the sprocket at the center of the wheel.

**Item 4: Please cite up to three recent decisions that you operationally describe as transformational actions undertaken in your role as president at your current institution.**

Fourteen presidents responded in some way to this survey item. Eleven presidents provided examples of recent decisions they described as transformational actions. Three presidents indicated that they had not made recent decisions that could be called transformational actions.

As noted in Table 1, the presidents’ responses to this item can be placed in five categories:

- Academic Enterprise Initiatives
- Organizational and Administrative Change Initiatives
- Fiscal Management and Fundraising
- Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives
- No New Initiatives Enacted



The majority of the decisions the presidents describe as transformational actions can be placed in the categories of **Academic Enterprise Initiatives** (seven presidents described a total of 11 transformational actions); **Organizational and Administrative Change Initiatives** (six presidents described a total of nine transformational actions); and **Fiscal Management and Fundraising** (five presidents described a total of eight transformational actions).

Only two presidents each named one recent decision (two total) that they believe was a transformational action that can be placed in the category **Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives**.

*Academic Enterprise Initiatives*

President No. 3 cited the “creation of a global consortium of African-Universities for faculty exchange” as an example of a transformational action.

President No. 4 touted the following achievements:

*The overarching transformation has occurred in moving an institution from the complacency of being good to seeking to be the very best that it can be. Three areas manifest the transformation: 1) technology and the use of it at the College are on the leading edge of the industry; 2) the athletic program overachieves not only in winning, but in the attainment of academic awards; and 3) the campus has a high aesthetic quotient with no deferred maintenance.*

President No. 7 pointed to “the invention of our Global Leadership Academy along with its Global University and Business Development Center” as transformational actions. And President No. 12 cited the decisions to launch a “1. Capital improvements program—1st new construction in 28 years. 2. Reorganization of academic support programs. 3. Reorganization of honors program.”



*Organizational and Administrative Change Initiatives*

President No. 3 said that one of his three recent transformational actions was “reconstitution of the executive leadership team within the first 6 months of my presidency.”

President No. 6 wrote that the “hiring a Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs who understands industry and who can connect the liberal arts with industry” was

a transformational action. President No. 9 “[t]ransformed the Senior Executive Cabinet,” but did not provide details of how that transformation occurred or what the specific manifestations were.

*Fiscal Management and Fundraising*

In this category, President No. 1 conducted fundraising “that resulted in a new building,” while President No. 11 “instituted fiscal measures which placed the college in a strong operational and growth position.” Budget cuts and displaying of “fiscal acumen” were perceived as transformational actions by President No. 13.

*Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives*

A “precedent-setting study of the faith-life of our student body” was a transformational enrollment sustainability effort cited by President No. 3. President No. 11: “Increased student enrollment and retention by nearly 40 percent.”

*No New Initiatives Enacted*

Three presidents (Nos. 2, 5 and 10) said that they had not made decisions that could be called transformational actions. President No. 2 said that transformational decisions had been made years earlier and that no new ones had been made. President No. 5 stated: “I am only Interim and have not attempted to be a transformational leader.” And President No. 10 simply noted that the item was “n/a” (not applicable). In each of these cases, the presidents seem to act as transactional leaders, holding down the fort, maintaining the status quo at their institutions during challenging times.

**Table 1: Transformational Actions: Matrix of Emerging Themes from Presidential Responses to survey Item 4**

Fiscal Management and Fundraising	Organizational/Administrative Change Initiatives	Academic Enterprise Initiatives	Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives	No New Initiatives Enacted
P1, P1	P3	P1	P3	P2
P8, P8	P6,P6,P6	P3	P11	P5
P9	P8	P4		P10
P11	P9,P9	P7,P7,P7		
P13,P13	P13	P11		
	P14	P12,P12,P12		
		P14		

**Item 5: Cite three examples of how the downturn in the global economy impacted your decision making at your institution.**

As noted in Table 2, the responses to survey Item 5 were grouped into six categories based on recurring themes that speak to the economic impact on:

- Fiscal Management and Fundraising Initiatives
- Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives
- Personnel, Programs and/or Reduction in Services
- Organizational/Administrative Initiatives
- Academic Enterprise Initiatives
- No Economic Impact



Most of the examples given were related to Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives (six presidents and a total of seven examples). An equal number of presidents cited the impact of the economy on their decisions related to Fiscal Management and Fundraising Initiatives (six presidents cited a total of six examples) and Personnel, Programs and/or Reduction in Services (also six presidents for a total of six examples).

*Economic Impact on Fiscal Management and Fundraising Initiatives*

Because of the economic crisis, six presidents said they increased their efforts to better conserve and manage existing resources while more aggressively seeking funds from external sources.

President No. 1 was “forced to make cuts, reduce innovation that does not demonstrate revenue generation.” President No. 3 “created a Financial Efficiency Committee” and “a Business Development Advisory Committee.”

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### *Impact on Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives*

Since the economic viability of most HBCUs is dependent upon enrollment numbers and enrollment is linked to students' ability to pay tuition, it is no surprise that a high number of the responses to Item 5 were related to this topic. President Nos. 3, 7, 10 and 11 made decisions either to funnel more resources into scholarships for students or to develop new methods of raising and allocating funds to "maximize the impact" on students. President No. 9 "increased the number of recruiters and methods of recruiting." President No. 12 "lowered dorm fees for new dormitory."

### *Economic Impact on Personnel, Programs and/or Reduction in Services*

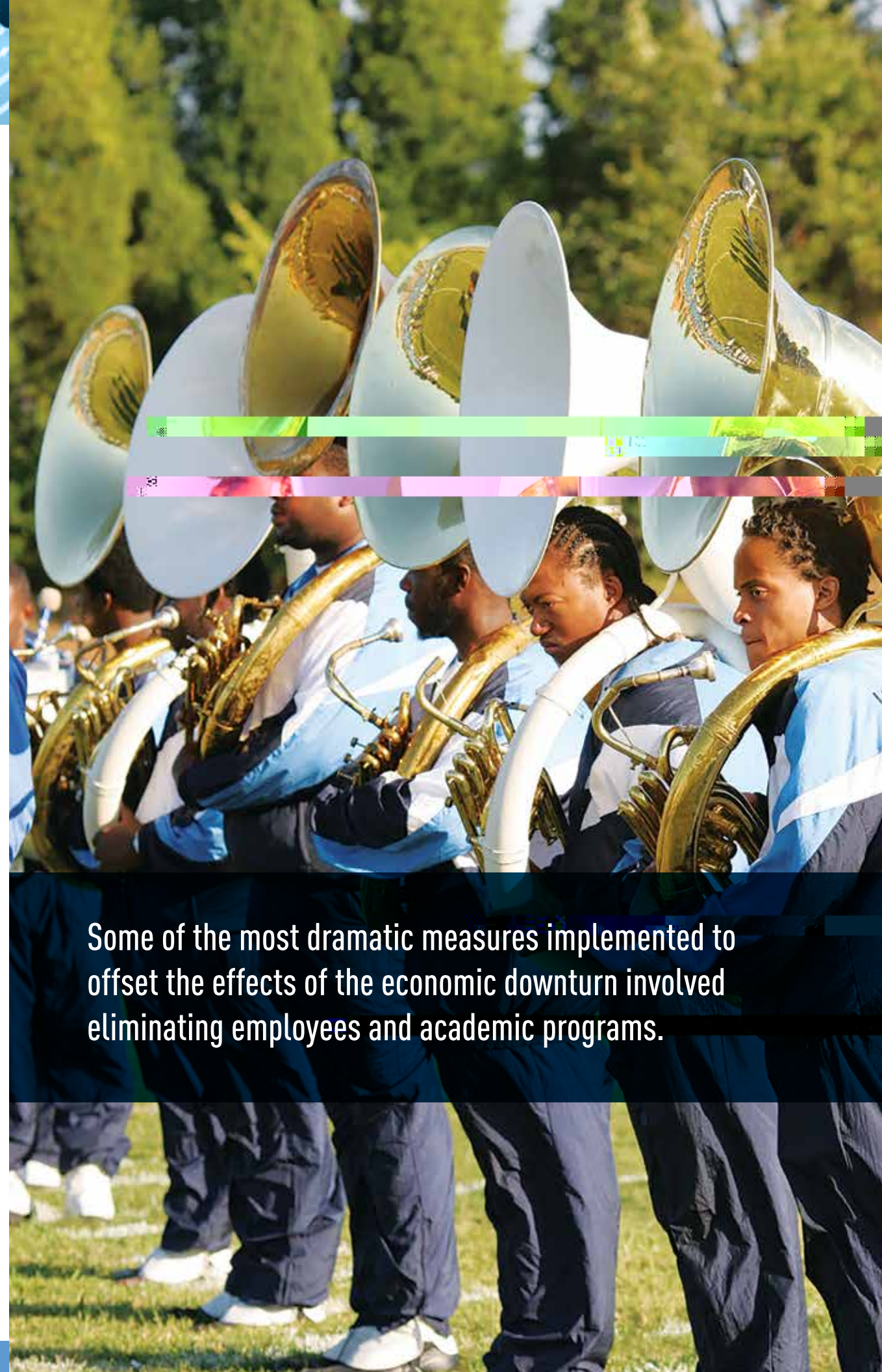
Some of the most dramatic measures implemented to offset the effects of the economic downturn involved eliminating employees and academic programs. Four presidents spoke to such changes. President No. 1 pointed to "elimination of contract workers and a hiring freeze. Reducing budget within all sectors." President No. 4 candidly stated there was a period of denial before deciding to eliminate employees to survive the economic downturn:

*Initially, we resisted the downturn, believing that we could protect our people's benefits, and our aspirations for the institution. Ultimately, the decision was made to downsize the workforce, reduce benefits for all, to slow plans for further campus development and the launch of new initiatives.*

President No. 7 revealed: "We had to engineer a significant layoff of personnel in order to enable continued viability."

The thoughtful and detailed examples provided by President No. 8 reflect strategies of both transactional and transformational leadership styles. The immediate aim was to weather the storm and maintain the status quo, but the long-term plan was to stabilize the institution in ways that would facilitate planning for a more dynamic future. Vision, transparency and inspiring confidence among stakeholders were key:

*My immediate thought was how to use this occurrence as an opportunity to position the College for growth and sustainability when the economy improves. And then I also considered how we might use the challenge as an opportunity to rid the College of less productive and less high performing areas. While both were not mutually exclusive thoughts, I took time to think about them in terms of what might be best for the College. I initially worked with the CFO to gather some basic facts regarding our financial position, looking at areas of opportunity. I then discussed with the administrative cabinet and persuaded them to help devise a strategy to engage the stakeholders, including trustees, shared honestly with them what we were facing and got their input.... I decided to meet with each sector to discuss the economic impact, share with them the results of everyone's input and share the cost savings approach we had decided was in the best interest of the College and those we serve. I did not want to give the appearance that we had made decisions that would affect all of us but did not value them enough to share those decisions face to face. I believed those decisions would serve the College well in the long run and wanted to express that to them.*



Some of the most dramatic measures implemented to offset the effects of the economic downturn involved eliminating employees and academic programs.

**Table 2 Impact of Economic Downturn: Matrix of Emerging Themes from Presidential Responses to Survey Item 5**

Economic Impact on Fiscal Management/Fundraising Initiatives	Economic Impact on Organizational/Administrative Initiatives	Economic Impact on Academic Enterprise Initiatives	Economic Impact on Recruitment and Enrollment Sustainability Initiatives	Economic Impact on Personnel, Programs, and/or Reduction In Services	No Economic Impact Indicated
P1	P1		P3	P1, P4	P2
P3	P3		P7	P5	P6
P6	P8	P8	P9	P6	
P7	P9,P9		P10	P7	
P11			P11, P11	P8	
P12			P12	P12	
P14					

**Item 6: Reflect upon an institutional challenge that has occurred over the past five years that caused you to demonstrate a transformational leadership behavior to seek a resolution. Were other stakeholders at your institution empowered to act for sustainability?**

Ten presidents responded to Item 6 with examples of a challenge that they said caused them to demonstrate transformational leadership behavior. President Nos. 4, 6, 7 and 8 elaborated on the examples of the ways they responded to the economic downturn noted in their responses to Item 5. To varying degrees, three of those presidents—Nos. 4, 7 and 8—provided some details of specific “transformational” behaviors.

For example, the response of President No. 4:

*The challenged economy resulted in a loss in the endowment and other sources that had traditionally been a source of perceived strength for the institution. The loss of assets and revenue led some stakeholders into a “Chicken Little syndrome.” However, in a multitude of decisions, actions were taken to manifest the ongoing pursuit of quality in facilities, hiring and retaining highly credential faculty, and staying out front in the acquisition and use of technology. The faces of these initiatives were those of administrators, staff, and faculty who would normally have responsibility in those areas.*

This president acknowledged the involvement of a network of stakeholders in seeing their institution through the period of economic challenge.

President No. 7 stressed the “we” in decisions and actions undertaken to help the institution weather the economic decline, noting that employees across the institution were encouraged to reaffirm their sense of community and take part in finding solutions:

*[The institutional challenge was] laying off over 50 members of the faculty, many of whom held great value. We provided our community with full information months before our action. We*

*sought many ways for each segment of our community to participate in seeking cost savings. We held many small and large meetings designed to console, comfort and re-consolidate our sense of community. We continued these meetings many months past the event. Finally, we took the opportunity to engage all parties, including the Board of Trustees, in the pursuit of a new strategic plan designed to enable institutional refit to a new economy.*

The respondent did not identify the specific roles of others in helping the institution survive the economic challenges; however, this president did provide more information about the process used to reach decisions.

Similarly, President No. 8 described a thoughtful process in which employees “at all levels were informed of the challenges and enlisted to offer suggestions.”

*The downturn in the economy forced us to take a closer look at our operations and make budgetary changes and other operational adjustments. My primary concern was to make needed operational adjustments without impacting the quality of the learning environment and adversely impact the well-being of many employees. The CFO and I had our thoughts but decisions of this magnitude would be more effective if those who would be impacted by them were also engaged in the process. Employees at all levels were informed of the challenges and enlisted to offer suggestions. We were able to institute a number of cost savings measures that served the institution very well. And most of the employees felt good about the results [and] expressed appreciation about the transparency of the process and willingness to engage all stakeholders in the process.*



The responses of President Nos. 7 and 8, more so than that of President No. 4, reflect transparency, solicitation of the ideas of stakeholders at all levels and incorporation of those ideas in the plan for addressing challenges. These are all strategies of a transformational leadership style. Such strategies reflect aspects of what Bass calls, as described above: 1) **Individualized Consideration**—the degree to which the leader attends to each follower’s needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower’s concerns and needs; and 2) **Intellectual Stimulation**—the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers’ ideas. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. They nurture and develop people who think independently.

Curiously, although President No. 6 noted that economic challenges manifested as a decrease in financial aid (quite possibly as a result of unexpected restrictions on Parent PLUS loans), the response indicates what a transformational leader should do, not what was done.

*Dwindling financial aid has been a major recent institutional challenge. A transformational leader will be one to secure other sources of funding.*



Two of the respondents—President Nos. 12 and 13—identified accreditation issues as major challenges addressed through transformational decisions and actions. However, only one of the two, President No. 12, provided specific details:

*We were placed on SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools] probation for six months, which was an unjust blow to the campus. I took the position of working collegially with SACS while also informing the campus community of the unjustness of the decision (which was for one-time irregularities because of a pledge default and a loan prepayment penalty).*

The answers of two respondents (President Nos. 1 and 11) focused directly on student issues. President No. 1 stated that he showed transformational leadership in “working with students to demonstrate innovation in decision making related to conflict resolution.” However, the respondent did not state what those innovations were. President No. 11 provided more information about decisions and behavior meant to improve student retention and persistence to graduation:

*In addition to the creation and development of the Holistic College, we also created what we called “Holistic College Day,” a watershed moment in the life of the college where we declared war on stereotypical behaviors and decided instead to “Defy the Odds.” The campus community was invited to join, to participate, to change. It worked!*



However, the president did not explain how these measures improved student retention and persistence to graduation.

Four presidents (President Nos. 2, 5, 10 and 14) did not address the survey item at all. President No. 2, for example, stated: “I am not sure the question applies. I don’t see transformational leadership as something to be done in a crisis of challenge. It should ideally be

thoughtful. Responding to challenge to me is just leadership.”

**Item 7: From your perspective and perception of transformational leadership, please share an assessed need for an academic innovation at your institution and discuss how you have used (or will use) transformational leadership behavior(s) to address that need.**

Twelve of the respondents confirmed need in the area of academic innovation.

The most detailed discussions focused on rallying faculty and other stakeholders to assess specific programs and work to develop plans for:

- Better preparing students for careers of the future
- Online learning
- Revamping of educational programs to provide new revenue streams
- Improving students’ performance in academic fundamentals

**Preparation for Careers**

Three respondents—President Nos. 2, 7 and 9—talked about the need to innovate to better prepare students for careers. President No. 2 provided a thoughtful response:

*Here there is a need to fundamentally transform the curriculum, with thoughts about what the needs of the country are in the next 25 years and how we can help meet those needs. The transformation would be to help empower faculty to become transformational leaders themselves, and if those employed are unable, to hire faculty who are already transformational leaders.*

President No. 7 described an assessment and planning process that involved both faculty and students:

*[We are] developing better career preparation in major programs. What we are doing is leading faculty and seniors in several disciplines to assess the post-graduate needs of students. They are empowered in each major to review and seek the means by which to address these concerns.*



President No. 9 stated that at his institution there would be efforts to “...engage in more vital partnerships while continuing to secure mutually beneficial relationships with employers who will embrace our students in securing internships and future jobs for our students and graduates.”

**Online Learning**

Only one respondent—President No. 3—talked about moving academic programs into the virtual realm. However, the response indicated that the discussion about this innovation was in a very early stage:

*We have assessed our need to create online delivery of our educational experience. Have already cast the vision and begun the collaboration with Provost and Academic VP.*

It is also worth noting that inclusion of faculty in the assessment efforts in preparation for an online academic program is not overtly stated by the respondent.

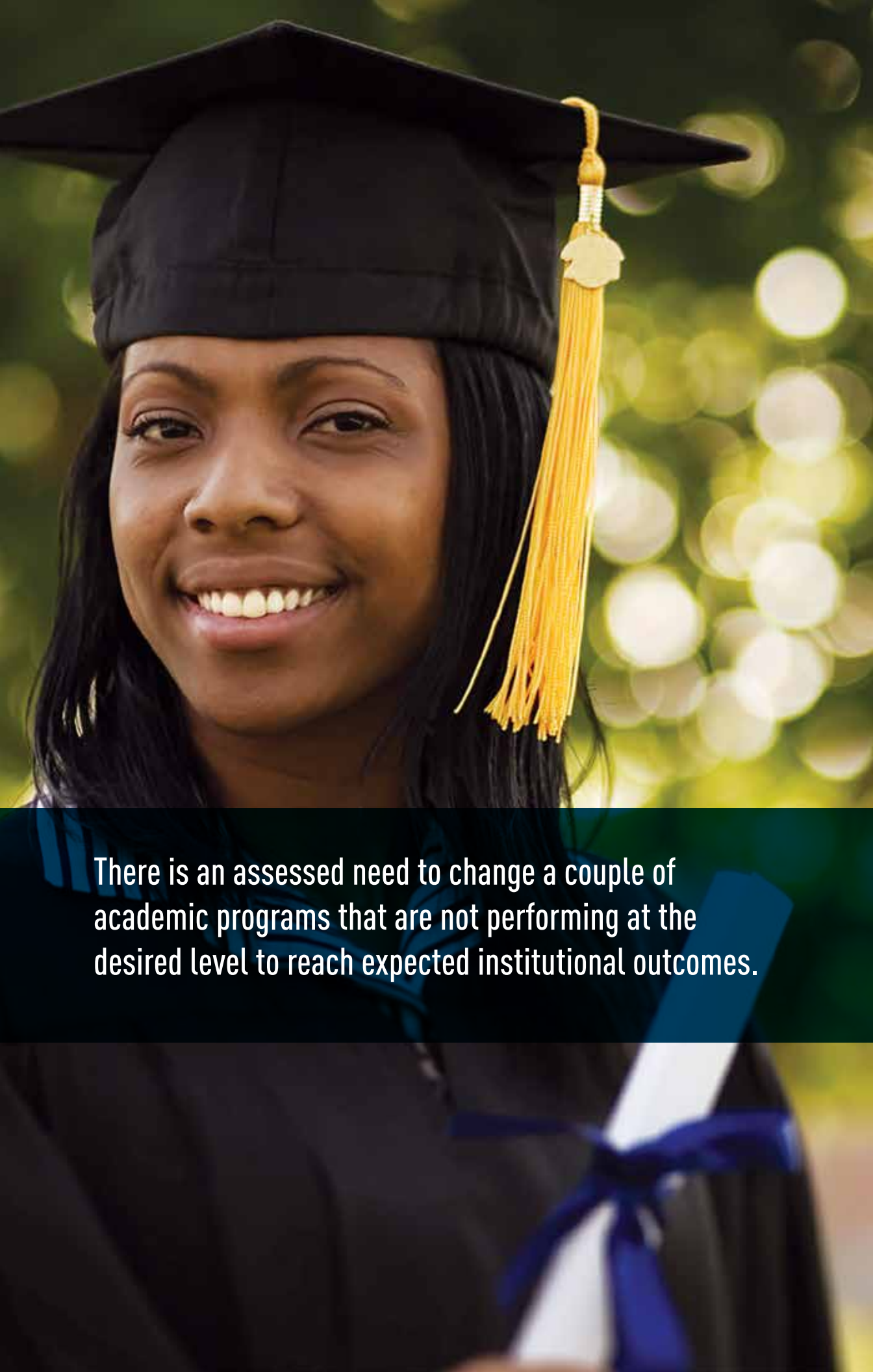
**Creation of New Revenue Streams**

President No. 6 was the only respondent to talk directly about a focus on innovation in academic programs in ways that would provide additional income for the institution

*The need is for additional revenue streams as state and federal funds are dwindling. The need is being addressed by moving faculty towards complementing industry and setting up for-profit centers to gain revenue that will assist in partnering with the community.*

**Academic Fundamentals**

Two respondents identified improvement of student performance in fundamental skills and academic programs as a need.



There is an assessed need to change a couple of academic programs that are not performing at the desired level to reach expected institutional outcomes.

President No. 11 was the most specific:

*A team of academic leaders, under my direction, assessed the need to improve student academic performance. Reading is now the focus of our Quality Enhancement Plan. We have also launched technology to provide early intervention in student performance and behavior and created a culture of assessment and continuous quality improvement.*

The response of President No. 14 was cryptic:

*Increased emphasis on general education. Engaging faculty and other stakeholders.*

One respondent, President No. 8, noted the need to change “a couple of academic programs” but did not identify what those programs were. However, this president described a clear, thoughtful process for facilitating change that reflects a transformational leadership approach:

*There is an assessed need to change a couple of academic programs that are not performing at the desired level to reach expected institutional outcomes. We have formed a working task force, comprised of stakeholders, including other administrators external from the academic programs. We are engaging in focused discussions and enlisting recommendations/ suggestions from those who will be impacted. The key was to get them to understand the need for change and share the ownership of making needed change. It has been my experience that more people will support actions that they feel they have been a part of influencing.*

Two presidents did not provide a response to Item 7. (One respondent, President No. 4, emphatically answered: “No comment!!”) Two responses were especially vague and, at first glance, seemed to speak more to a pragmatic view than innovation: President No. 5 said: “If I were to stay here I would have to help the campus understand that it cannot be all things to all people.” President No. 13 simply noted a focus on “[r]eduction of positions and programs” without providing specifics of what positions and what programs were targeted. What is implied in both instances is that over time, the institutions have lacked intentionality in their academic offerings. Therefore, it could be argued that it would indeed be innovative in these contexts to take a hard look at the curriculum to identify the most and least effective offerings, and then to enhance, streamline or eliminate academic programs accordingly.

**Item 8: Using your perspective and perceptions of transformational leadership, how would you describe your approach to the empowerment of students at your institution in the last five years? Then please cite an example of a decision that would support your description.**

Eleven of the presidents surveyed answered this question, with the majority (seven presidents) stating that their approach was to provide intentional leadership development opportunities for students that focused on a combination of observation of top administrators in action; participation in student government organizations; and/or participation in college governing bodies (e.g., board of trustees) and/or special leadership initiatives.



One respondent (President No. 6) noted that students have been empowered as a result of increasing their knowledge base and sharpening their critical thinking skills. And still another respondent (President No. 11) referred to his institution's efforts to transform students into agents of change through intentional measures meant to ensure student engagement and accountability.

**Intentional Leadership Development Approach**

The eight respondents who relied on intentional leadership development opportunities to empower students (President Nos. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 14) stressed that the college administrations worked closely with the student government associations and created leadership development initiatives--whether as an informal discussion group or an official task force.

For example, President No. 7 said:

*A significant part of my approach to empowering students is transparency of actions and plans and assuring student involvement and input in all major decisions and actions. We have established a task force for review and implementation of a set of new core values derivative from our strategic plan and our cultural history. Students are the dominant component of this task force because we need to assure contemporary expression.*

While President No. 8 stated:

*The administrative cabinet is encouraged to work closely with the Student Government Association's leaders to keep them abreast of administrative decisions. The SGA has organized their officers and committees to correspond with an administrative office of the College.*

This president also worked with leadership of Greek organizations to help diffuse negative reactions to the decision to move Greek symbols from the center of campus. The campus chapters of Greek organizations initially planned to protest, but then:

*I asked for their suggestions and told them I needed their assistance and attention to this matter. They asked me to give them a few weeks. They came back in support of our decision and worked cooperatively with the administration to get the Greek symbols relocated to a mutually suitable area of the campus. The protest did not occur. Students are actively encouraged to be engaged in matters of the College.*



**Student Engagement and Accountability**

Citing the writings of James Burns, President No. 11 stated: "We seek, under my leadership of the Holistic College, to create a Total Learning Environment, which as Burns described, transforms and stimulates our students, faculty and staff to produce results beyond expectation." Thus, students become "change agents" through a high level of engagement and accountability.

*To cite an example of a decision which supports this decision, we look first to the contract of Student Engagement, which each prospective student is required to review and sign prior to college admission. These student are in turn assigned to a mentor and a Blue Bear Buddy to support their entry into the collegiate experience here and to help them establish a personal connection with the college and to sustain their ascent to social maturation while aiding in their effort to graduate.*

Three presidents did not respond to Item 8. President No. 4 said, "No comment." President No. 5 responded "N/A," and President No. 10 said, "No response."

**Item 9: From your perspective of transformational leadership behaviors, cite selected actions that you and other stakeholders have implemented during the last five years, either as part of your institution's strategic plan, or other planning process, that: a) have been intentionally initiated to promote a culture of transformation at your institution; and b) that you believe are/ will be quantitatively or qualitatively measurable examples of leadership vision.**

Ten of the presidents provided responses to this item, though only three fully responded to this item. These detailed and cogent responses focus on establishment of innovative academic entities (President Nos. 7 and 11) and a formal mechanism for collective planning (President No. 8) to promote a culture of transformation.

President No. 7 cited the establishment of a Global Leadership Academy as the game changer:

*[The action implemented that promoted a culture of transformation is] (A) Development of the Global Leadership Academy which seeks to place a select group of high potential students deep inside current global learning paradigms, initiate and support student entrepreneurship, and create an internal community with a global footprint [and] (B) Engineering recruitment that creates a more racially, culturally, economically and internationally diverse student body that can form a permanent international cadre for global change.*

President No. 11 states that the multifaceted Holistic College approach, referred to in earlier responses, has proven to be the primary catalyst for transformational change:

*[a] We are and have been intentional about the full implementation of the Holistic College, which requires the full participation of the college community. The execution of this tool, which seeks to strengthen student persistence to graduation, also requires a culture of transformation and change to succeed. Our strategic plan and our institutional goals are transformational in nature and not transactional. There is no compromise, tradeoff or swapping the aims, vision, mission and values of the Holistic College experience. (b) Perhaps the best quantitatively and qualitatively measurable example of leadership vision is in our approach to sound fiscal management and creatively developing programs and opportunities to provide financial incentives for improved student performance. We endeavor to assist our students in making their collegiate experience with us more affordable while potentially mitigating exorbitant debt that students all too often find themselves faced with.*





President No. 8 said a recently established annual planning retreat that emphasizes shared responsibility and accountability has spurred a culture of perpetual institutional transformation

*We have instituted the President's Planning Retreat which occurs annually in May. This is an opportunity for the academic and support service sectors to come together with the President and administrative cabinet to review our goals and results. This was primarily designed to collectively assess our institutional effectiveness but it has been a process that is influencing changes in our campus culture, particularly our attitude toward shared responsibility and accountability. We are learning that we are accountable to each other and a strategic part of the whole that makes the institution more effective and sustainable.*

President No. 12 pointed to a physical change in the campus as spurring a culture of transformation: "New building project has changed the look of the campus, made us more competitive, and is physical manifestation of transformation. The change in campus climate can be quantitatively and qualitatively measured."

Four respondents chose not to answer this item. President No. 4 wrote an emphatic "No!!!" President No. 5, who was serving as president on a temporary basis, wrote "N/A." President No. 6 seemed to have misinterpreted the question: "The President does not implement an institution's strategic plan. That is the responsibility of the team working together." And President No. 10 did not write a response at all.

**Item 10: Please provide examples of how you personally have inspired the following stakeholders to embrace a transformative culture to advance the institution over the past five years. (One example per stakeholder group)**

**A. Alumni B. Faculty C. Staff D. Students**

Ten of the 14 presidents in the sampling (71 percent) responded to this last open-ended item. President Nos. 4, 5, 10 and 14 did not respond.



The examples provided by the 10 presidents who responded were in line with strategies embodied in a transformational leadership style. In particular, seven of the respondents stated they inspired stakeholders in all four categories through direct contact, communication with them and engaging in work that is important to the viability of their institutions. Some of the presidents also noted that they inspired by modeling desired behavior. As a result, the presidents believe that each group of stakeholders has become more responsive, productive, accountable and/or trusting. The following examples demonstrate the similar focuses of the responses:

### **Alumni**

President No. 2: "[I visited alumni in] key cities to energize them about the progress of the campus, using data."

President No. 7: "I am engaging groups of younger alumni in university initiatives and new academic ventures that are responsive to the values of the current student body as well as recent graduates."

President No. 8: "Through active engagement with the alumni to establish mutual trust, respect, value and purpose, the giving by alumni in terms of dollars and service has measurably increased. Active engagement with alumni include public meetings where my vision is shared, personal participation in their activities, follow-up telephone conversations, handwritten notes, and other communication on occasions of memorable events and particularly death of loved ones. Alumni giving has grown from 13% to over 30%. Alumni are more active in other activities and volunteer to support the College in myriad service roles."

President No. 9: "Broadened the lines of communication with Alumni; engaged in more activities sponsored by Alumni,"

President No. 11: "Communication is the key to transformational leadership. Open communication and conversations on the vision and aims of the Holistic College experience have been particularly useful and purposeful. A significant result of these conversations and meetings has been the establishment of a \$1 million campaign to support the execution of the Holistic experience and revitalizing the campus in major capital improvements."

### **Faculty**

President No. 2: "[I provided] faculty more opportunities for faculty development, especially opportunities to network with faculty brought in for special programs/conferences."

President No. 3: "[I inspired faculty] to participate in greater scholarship by modeling and inviting faculty into scholarly productivity."

President No. 7: "[I inspire by] engaging faculty in several roundtables on critical university issues at the onset of strategic planning and then forming task forces of faculty around each of their named issues to develop action plans and recommendations to the planning team."

President No. 8: "I have shared my vision with the faculty in public ceremonies, engaged them in conversations about their thoughts and reactions and involved them in decision-making about the College as standard practice. Through transparent, honest and consistent leadership, the faculty no longer see the administration and faculty as 'them and us,' which was a persistent challenge earlier in my leadership. They generally feel included, which was and remains my aim."

President No. 9: "[I] hired qualified, diverse faculty members with terminal degrees to deliver the highest quality of education and to maintain our competitiveness among other institutions; embrace their innovative ideas which play a vital role for academic and overall advancement of the institution."

President No. 11: "I have become a faculty member. I teach a class designed to help freshmen understand the circumstances of the teaching and learning experience faculty face daily and to better understand how to more effectively create pathways of success for our students. This, I

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believe, ultimately improves the rate of persistence to graduation and helps our students realize the fulfillment of their college aspirations.”

### **Staff**

President No. 2: “[I] pursue excellence through personal contact and conversation from office to office.”

President No. 7: “Staff members have been engaged in leading faculty and staff giving campaigns and are part of the team that develops and executes each semester’s opening faculty and staff institute of training and planning.”

President No. 8: “I have used the same approach with the staff at all levels to establish trust. I believe trust is a powerful ingredient in transformational leadership. If you are not trusted, it makes it far more difficult to transform the culture. I use an open door approach and walking around management to get to know staff and allow them to get to know me better other than the person they see and hear at organized, more formal ceremonies and settings.”

President No. 11: “I was recently able to inspire the staff and faculty to engage in a weekend spent improving the campus’ appearance. It was a bonding moment for participants and enabled them to develop a better appreciation of the work performed by our physical plant staff.”

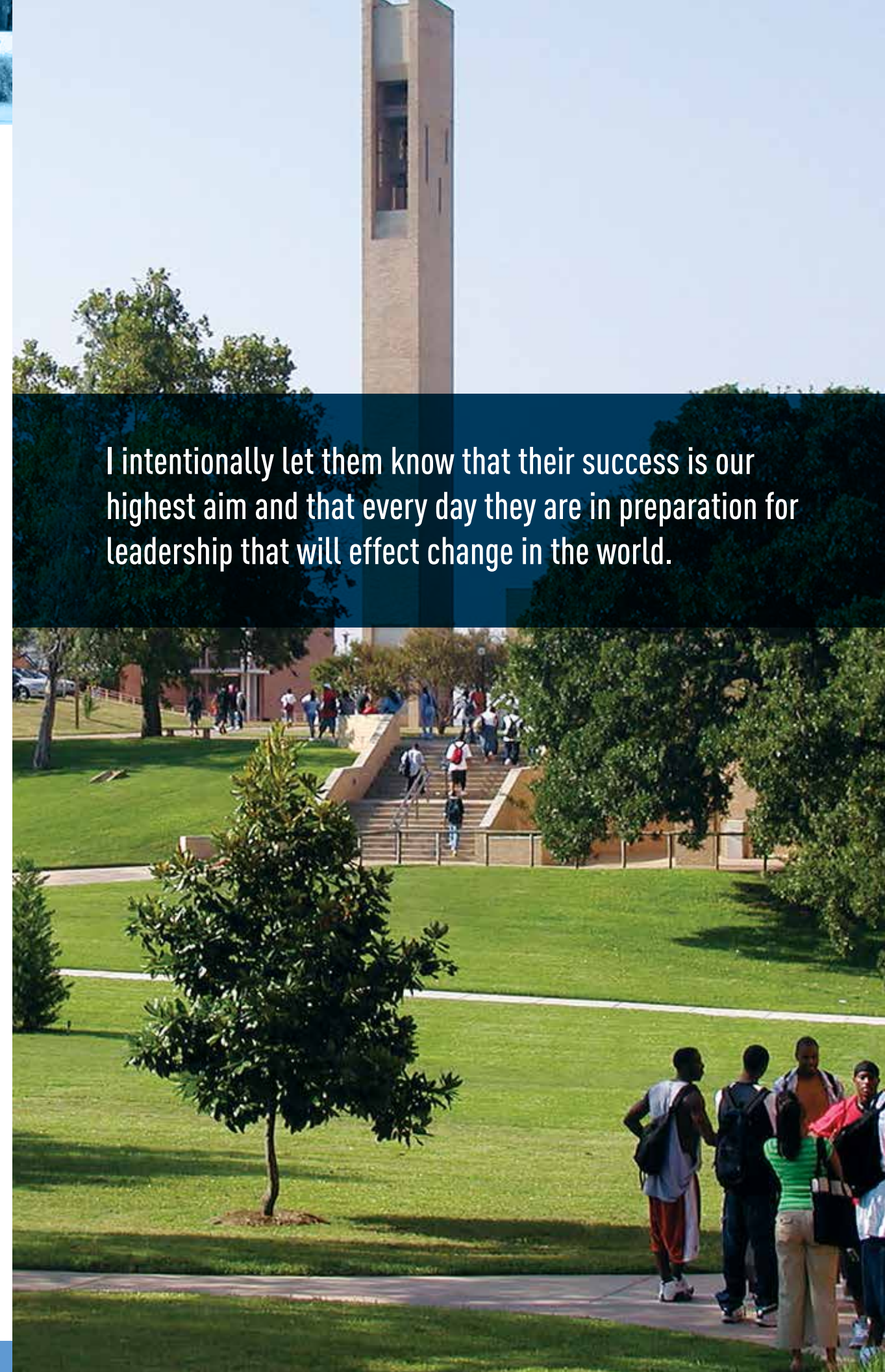
President No. 12: “I have organized a staff council to embrace the theme of students first. The staff council, encouraged by me, is 2 years old.”

### **Students**

President No. 2: “[I am] providing new opportunities for student engagement (special programs targeted by gender, special topics, etc.).”

President No. 7: “Students have been placed in core positions in the execution of the new strategic plan and participate directly as developers of new programs.”

President No. 8: “I have shared my vision with the students and my expectations for them during and after their matriculation at the College. I intentionally let them know that their success is our highest aim and that every day they are in preparation for leadership that will effect change in the world. I use each opportunity with them as teachable ones, meaning that I listen to them, communicate with them as though they are adults, respect their opinions even when I might not agree with them, share openly and honestly with them any issues of disagreement, guide them to the more appropriate action if needed and through words and deeds, let them know that I care and believe in them. As a result, they are more willing to discuss concerns with all of us and share the responsibility of correcting any adverse situation that might occur. I use a specific incident of outbreak of mold in one of the dorms as an example of how the above described relationship served to help embrace a transformative culture. We did not minimize the problem or deny [it] but engaged them in learning more about the causes of mold by exposing them to experts in the field, minimizing the tensions and engaging them in the immediate and sustained solutions.”



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**Data from Demographic Survey Items**

The transformational leadership survey instrument was designed with three items constructed to obtain demographic data on the participant presidents: **Gender**, **Age** and **Length of Tenure at Current Institution**. The participants are identified based upon the anonymous methodology and participant label codes cited in the methodology section of this report. Sixteen of the 38 presidents in the UNCF network at the time of the survey responded to the three demographics survey items.

**Gender**

Of the 16 respondents to the three demographics items, five (31 percent) were females and 11 (69 percent) were males.

**Age Ranges**

Seven age ranges were included in the survey instrument. The respondents were asked to select the age range that most closely aligns with their age at the time of the survey. The following is a breakdown of the responses of the 16 presidents who completed this section of the survey:

**35-40:** One of the 16 respondents selected this age range, which was 6.3 percent of the total responses (N=16). Of the total for the age range 35 to 40, 100 percent were female (n=1) and 0 percent were male (n=0).

**41-45:** A total of two of the 16 respondents selected this age range, which was 12.5 percent of the total responses (N=16). Of the total for the age range 41 to 45, 50 percent were female (n=1) and 50 percent were male (n=1).

**46-60:** A total of four of the 16 respondents selected this age range, which was 25 percent of the total responses (N=16). Of the total for the age range 46 to 60, 50 percent were female (n=2) and 50 percent were male (n=2).

**61-65:** A total of five of the 16 respondents selected this age range, which was 31.3 percent of the total responses (N=16). Of the total for the age range 61 to 65, 20 percent were female (n=1) and 80 percent were male (n=4).

**65-70:** A total of three of the 16 respondents selected this age range, which was 18.8 percent of the total responses (N=16). Of the total for the age range 65 to 70, 0 percent were female (n=0) and 100 percent were male (n=3).

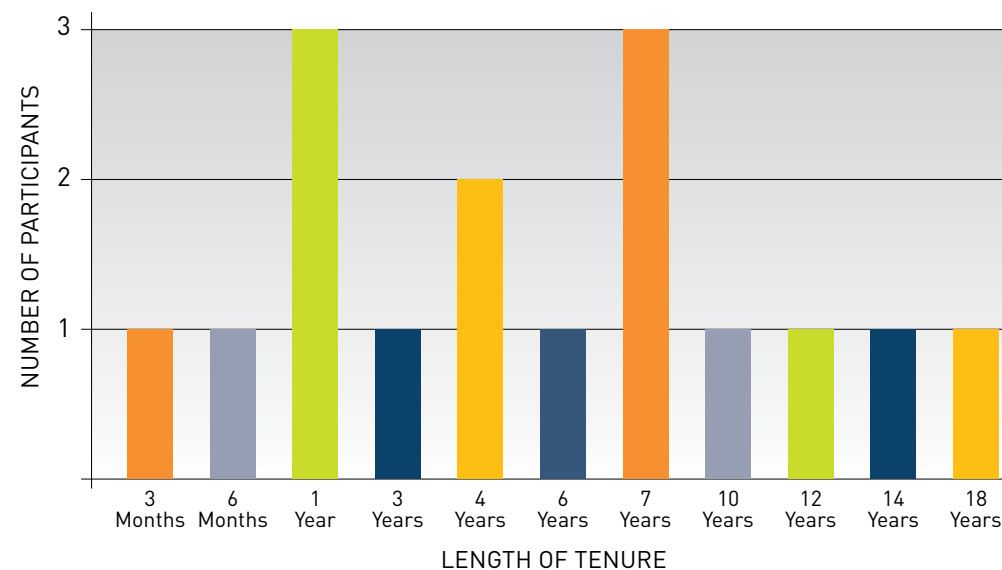
**70-80:** A total of one of the 16 respondents selected this age range, which was 6.3 percent of the total responses (N=16). Of the total for the age range 70 to 80, 0 percent were female (n=0) and 100 percent were male (n=1).

**Over 80:** A total of 0 (0 percent) of the 16 respondents to the demographics section of the survey selected this age range.

**Length of Tenure as President of Current Institution**

At the time of the survey, the length of tenure of the 16 respondents in the sampling of UNCF presidents ranged from three months (one participant) to 18 years (one participant). Twelve of the respondents (75 percent) had served as president of their institutions for less than 10 years, and four (25 percent) had served for 10 or more years.

**Summary**



## A MONOGRAPH



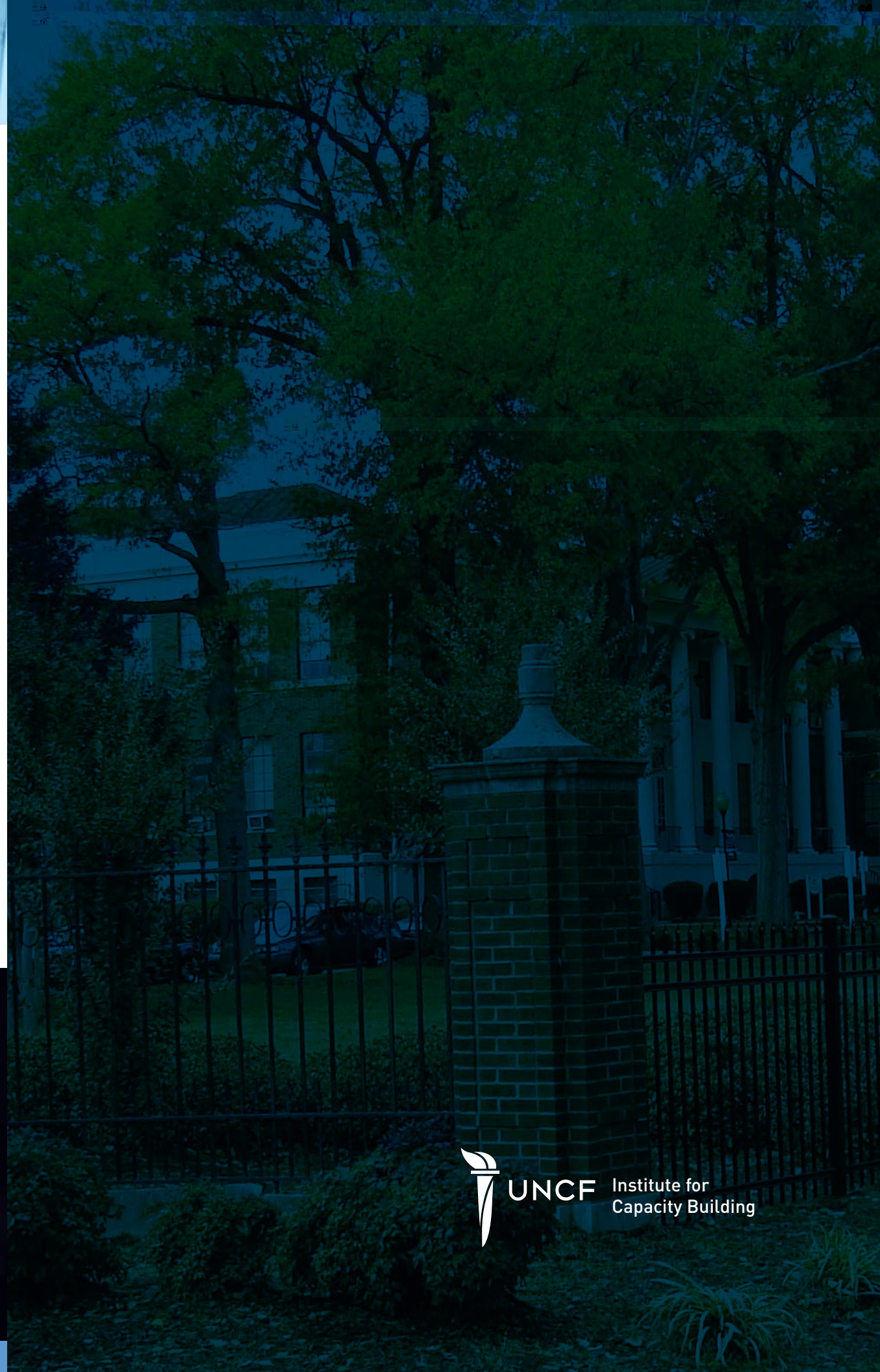
### CONCLUSION

Over time, a hallmark of the most successful HBCU presidents has been their ability to consistently lead their institutions in creating experiences that prepare students well for the rigors of graduate study and enable graduates to excel in their chosen careers. While HBCU presidents continue to achieve their aim, it has become increasingly difficult during the second decade of the 21st century.

The presidents of private HBCUs surveyed in this study describe how they have had to lead their institutions across terrain that has grown increasingly rugged as a result of the downturn in the economy and changes in the ways higher education is defined and delivered. As they negotiate this precarious landscape, they strive to obtain and maintain a delicate balance between decisions to ensure the survival and stability of their institutions and actions meant to transform their institutions' cultures, academic programs and day-to-day operations for the better. The desired outcomes? They strive to increase enrollment and resources and, ultimately, to prepare students to excel in careers yet to be created.

These presidents see a transformational leadership style as vital to achieving their goals. However, their responses to survey items indicate that for them transformational change is an incremental process that involves implementing both transactional and transformational leadership strategies—sometimes alternately, and at other times simultaneously.

From the perspective of these chief executive officers, achieving success for their institutions is not a solitary venture. The test of their leadership is the degree to which they can inspire stakeholders across the academic enterprise to work together to both realize a revitalized vision and to rededicate themselves to their longstanding missions to provide higher education for students from underserved and under-resourced communities.





**Perspectives on Exemplary Transformational Leadership Among  
Presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities**

**A Monograph**



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