

Publications

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White House Issues New Executive Order on HBCUs: What You Need to Know

On April 23, 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order entitled “White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” The purpose of the order is to make sure Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) “remain integral to American students’ pursuit of prosperity and wellbeing, providing the pathway to a career and a better life.”

The order establishes the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Initiative) to be housed in the Executive Office of the President and led by an Executive Director designated by the President. The Initiative is intended to help deliver high-quality education and to foster HBCU excellence. In particular:

- The Initiative will prioritize private-sector partnerships, institutional development and workforce preparation in high-growth industries like technology, healthcare, manufacturing and finance.
- It will enhance HBCUs’ capabilities by supporting implementation of the HBCU Partners Act, fostering research and program excellence, improving affordability and retention and building pipelines for students to attend HBCUs.
- The Initiative will work to address barriers to HBCUs receiving certain federal and state grant dollars to improve their competitiveness for R&D funding.
- The Initiative will convene an annual White House Summit on HBCUs to foster collaboration and address key priorities for HBCU success.
- The President relocated the Initiative to the White House to ensure direct oversight and prioritization.

The order establishes the President’s Board of Advisors on HBCUs. Its mission is to fulfill the provisions of the HBCU Partners Act [Public Law 116-270], which was signed into law by President Trump in his first term. The Act requires agencies that closely work with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to develop plans for increasing engagement with these critical institutions and gives Congress oversight responsibility to make sure those plans are being honored. The Board shall consist of representatives of a variety of sectors, such as philanthropy, education, business, finance, entrepreneurship, innovation, private foundations and current HBCU presidents. It is required to advise the

Related People

- Julius W. Hobson, Jr.

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President through the Initiative.

The Department of Education is required to provide funding and administrative support for the Board. The Executive Director must submit an annual progress report to the President summarizing the Federal government's impact on HBCUs and providing recommendations for improvement.

This order repeals Executive Order 14041, the "White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity Through Historically Black Colleges and Universities."

HBCU Background

Historically Black colleges and universities were first established in the post-Civil War period of Reconstruction (1865-1877). The purpose was to provide an education for newly freed Black Americans. Some of the institutions started as primary educational entities and gradually progressed to become postsecondary colleges and universities. There was a second wave of institutions created after the congressional enactment of the Second Morrill Act. The law required segregated southern states to provide Black Americans with public higher education schools in order to receive benefits under the Act. Today, there are just over 100 HBCUs, most of which are located in the southern United States.

Prior White House HBCU Initiatives (U.S. Department of Education)

On August 8, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed Executive Order 12232, which directed the Secretary of Education to "implement a Federal initiative designed to achieve a significant increase in the participation by historically Black colleges and universities in Federally sponsored programs." The order specified that "...initiative shall seek to identify, reduce, and eliminate barriers which may have unfairly resulted in reduced participation in, and reduced benefits from, federally sponsored programs."

On September 15, 1981, President Ronald Reagan, under Executive Order 12320, reestablished the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which expanded the previous program and set into motion a government wide effort to strengthen our nation's HBCUs.

On April 28, 1989, President George H.W. Bush signed Executive Order 12677, reestablished the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, directing among other things, "The Director of the Office of Personnel Management, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Labor, shall develop a program to improve recruitment and participation of graduates and undergraduate students of historically Black colleges and universities in part-time and summer positions in the Federal Government."

On November 1, 1993, President William Clinton signed Executive Order 12876. This executive order reestablished the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, required a senior level executive in each agency to have oversight in implementing the order, and that the Office of Management and Budget be involved in monitoring implementation of the order.

On Feb. 12, 2002, President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13256. This executive order reestablished the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and transferred the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities to the Office of the Secretary within the U.S. Department of Education. Previously, the White House Initiative was housed in the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education.

On February 10, 2010, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13532. This executive order renewed the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and demonstrated the President's strong appreciation for the historic role these institutions have played in educating our citizens and the Administration's commitment to assisting HBCUs with accomplishing their mission. This order maintained the Initiative be housed within the Office of the Under Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education.

On February 27, 2017, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13779. This executive order reestablished the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and be housed in the Executive Office of the President and led by an Executive Director designated by the President.

On September 3, 2021, President Joseph Biden signed Executive Order 14041. This executive order reestablished the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities within the U.S. Department of Education under the direction of an executive director. This order aimed to advance educational equity, excellence, and economic opportunity in partnership with HBCUs and to ensure that they had the resources and support to continue to thrive for generations to come.