



TMCF COVID-19 HBCU Emergency Fund

"It's an unfortunate reality that some of our most vulnerable students face the most hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Many of these students do not have a safety net. Any financial loss they or their families experience may force them to drop out of college. Others lack access to computers and high-speed Internet, which makes online and remote learning challenging, if not impossible. Meanwhile, our students who have children have sudden and ongoing childcare needs that could make the completion of college courses difficult. It is incumbent on all of us to try to mitigate these concerns so our deserving students can continue to work toward achieving their dreams."

- TMCF member-school Winston-Salem State University CFO

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, colleges and universities have closed their campuses, told students to return home, and moved to online instruction. These necessary actions may force HBCU students to drop out, due to financial hardship and lack of access to the required technology. Over 72% of HBCU students are Pell Grant eligible (family income less than \$20,000 per year), and 43% rely on jobs to cover basic living expenses. HBCUs themselves do not have the infrastructure to support students, deliver online coursework, retain today's students and ensure that next year's students enroll. To support HBCUs and their students, TMCF created its **TMCF's COVID-19 HBCU Emergency Fund**, which will cover HBCU student short-term costs due to the COVID-19 school closures, and provide HBCU medium and long-term financial support.

HBCU Student Short-Term Needs:

- **Emergency funding** to cover unanticipated relocation costs, food, shelter, and
- **Access to technology to support online education**, including mobile phones with hotspots to support online learning in the place of internet access, laptops, and access to e-textbooks. One TMCF member-school reports that 15% of its student body does not have access to the internet in their homes.

Student Fund Distribution Plan: TMCF is working with each HBCU's Foundation to identify and vet students with needs in these target areas, and verify students' need and status. TMCF will send funds to each Foundation via ACH in the amount of verified student need based on submitted receipts or invoices, to disburse to directly to the students, thus not impacting students' financial aid packages.

In addition, students need **mental health support**, due to the health crisis, stress of the sudden changes, lack of resources, and/or homelessness caused by college dorm closures. Some colleges continue to house those students who self-identified as not being able to return home, but many others did not – and are in limbo with friends.

TMCF COVID-19 HBCU Medium and Long-Term Needs:

HBCUs – institutions that are highly dependent on tuition-based revenue – experienced an immediate loss of revenue due closures and refunding room and board money to students. Most of these expenses will be covered by federal CARES Act funds. Nevertheless, HBCUs continue to incur unexpected costs as they pivot to online learning. Most HBCUs do not have the infrastructure to support a true online education, and their faculty do not have the required hardware. Faculty also are unsure how to assess knowledge and skill acquisition or award grades. This can erode student retention, which will impact institutional financial viability and accreditation.

TMCF has identified the following **HBCU institutional needs due to COVID-19:**

1. **Online education infrastructure, training and hardware** that will allow HBCUs to deliver content, assess student knowledge and skill acquisition, and assessment that will support student academic progression and graduation in accredited programs. This would include appropriate technology for faculty to deliver classes, as well as training for online course delivery and online assessments.
2. **State-of-the-art enrollment and engagement technology** that allows schools to continue to be engaged with their current students and the students they have recruited for the 2020-21 academic year. Being highly tuition dependent institutions, HBCUs must recruit, enroll, and retain students each year in order to be financially viable, which is also an accreditation issue. Yet, HBCUs lag behind larger institutions in using technology to manage enrollment efficiently and to engage current and potential students.

In the **short-term** HBCUs face challenges of supporting a large percentage of low-income students (up to 90% at some HBCUs) as they manage the COVID-19 health crisis – from unexpected costs to technology access – while providing online education for the having an online education infrastructure. In the **medium-term**, HBCUs must support students so they complete the semester and do not drop out. **Long-term**, HBCUs face the challenges of students not returning to campus in the fall, either dropping out of school or transferring to another school's online program, or not enrolling for their first year of college. All of these challenges require funding for infrastructure, equipment, training, and mental health support that HBCUs do not have the funding to meet. For more information or to contribute contact emergency@tmcf.org.