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“Predominantly Black Institutions account for 3% of all postsecondary institutions, yet enroll 9% of all Black college students.”

Executive Summary

Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) account for 3% of all postsecondary institutions, yet enroll 9% of all Black college students (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2018). These institutions provide an avenue for educational access and opportunity for many Black students pursuing higher education. Despite the growing number of PBIs and the number of Black students they educate, these institutions still remain one of the least researched Minority Serving Institution (MSI) types in the country. The very limited literature that does exist on PBIs is not extensive, and in many cases, the scholarship simply mentions PBIs amidst a discussion on other more researched MSIs. Much of the literature does not delve into how these institutions are supporting their students, how they are continuing to strive, despite limited resources, and the value these institutions add to the overall higher education landscape.

As the number of African Americans enrolling in colleges and universities steadily increases and as institutions shift towards creating more inclusive environments for all students, there is a need for further exploration of how PBIs are evolving to best accommodate the marginalized groups they serve, particularly low-income Black students. This research brief will examine five PBIs that have received federal funding to enhance institutional capacity to support more low-income Black students, and highlight how these institutions are providing educational opportunity to Black students.





PBI Status Supports Student Success

By President Patricia McGuire
Trinity Washington University

For at least the last two decades in jurisdictions around the country, policymakers and philanthropists have joined forces to create programs that encourage low income students to attend college. In cities like the District of Columbia where the majority of low income students are African American, the college access movement received support from public initiatives like the D.C. Tuition Assistance Grant Program (DC-TAG), and private programs like the D.C. College Access Program (DC-CAP). Grants and student support from these and similar programs accelerated the pace of demographic change in some colleges and universities, particularly those on the leading edge of strategic change. Annual projections from the National Center for Education Statistics have long forecast a leveling-out of the rate of enrollment of white students in higher education while the pace of enrollment of Black and Hispanic students grows dramatically. (NCES, Projections of Education Statistics, published annually) As the forecasts become reality and campus populations change, a number of colleges and universities are becoming Predominantly Black Institutions.

Trinity Washington University in the District of Columbia is an example of a private institution that experienced a paradigm shift in student demographics starting in the 1990's and continuing to the present day. One of the nation's few remaining historic Catholic women's colleges, this once predominantly White institution began to focus intensively on serving the needs of the women of the District of Columbia as part of its strategic reorganization in the 1990's. With the support of DC-TAG and DC-CAP among others, Trinity's enrollment grew substantially. With more than half of the student body from D.C., and another 30% from nearby Prince Georges County, Trinity's student population soon grew to about 65% African American, largely low income students with a median family income of about \$25,000.

As many institutions that have experienced similar changes have learned, a dramatic demographic change to serve a majority of low income African American students also requires change in curricula and programs, support services and financial aid in order to create an environment for student success. These students require significant grant support well beyond Pell grants and state or local grants, and yet the institutions that are on the leading edge of enrolling large populations of students of color are less likely to have significant endowments than more elite schools. With most of the institution's available resources devoted to financial aid, additional grant support for improvement of programs and infrastructure becomes urgent to sustain the quality of the academic experience.

The U.S. Department of Education's Predominantly Black Institutions grant program provides such support. In 2016, Trinity sought designation as a PBI in order to secure grant support for new laboratories and development of the Nursing program as well as other academic innovations. With the PBI support, Trinity's students are now able to learn with state-of-the-art equipment — a full simulation lab for Nursing, advanced imaging microscopes, and more pervasive technology. The results of this grant support are clear: more Black students at Trinity are enrolling and succeeding in the sciences and in Nursing; the NCLEX scores of Trinity's Nursing graduates have surpassed the 80% threshold, and science majors are securing prestigious summer research internships at major laboratories and post-graduate fellowships as well. The success fostered by the PBI program has led to additional philanthropic investment in Trinity's programs including a major grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute for inclusive excellence in the sciences to encourage more low income women of color to enroll and graduate as science majors, and a series of Mellon grants to create the same kind of inclusive excellence emphases in Arts and Humanities.

Predominantly Black Institutions can and should be exemplars of powerful innovation to ensure success for students who have, too often, experienced academic marginalization. The support of the PBI grant program makes it possible to engage institutional change with quality and a clear focus on excellent outcomes for Black students.

The Emergence of PBIs

Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) were first recognized by Congress in 2007 and were incorporated into the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in 2008. Under the Strengthening Predominantly Black Institutions Program managed by the Department of Education (DOE), eligible institutions are permitted to apply for federal funding to expand their capacity to support low- and middle-income Black collegians.

To be eligible for funding through the PBI program, institutions must have:

- an undergraduate full time enrollment (FTE) of at least 40% African American a low educational and general expenditure per FTE in comparison with the expenditure of other undergraduate institutions that offer similar instruction
- at least 1,000 undergraduate students
- an undergraduate FTE with 50% of students are degree-seeking low-income or first generation college students

Currently, there are 104 PBIs in the United States and many of these institutions are situated in the Southeast. Most of these institutions are two-year public community and technical colleges. Of the 100+ PBIs, some of these institutions have student populations where Black or African American students make up 90%, while the average percentage of Black students at these institutions hovers around 53%.

Although PBIs enroll a large population of Black and low-income students, these institutions are not Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs). In fact, according to the federal government, to be designated a PBI, institutions cannot be an HBCU nor an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). HBCUs are institutions founded prior to 1964 with the intent of providing education to Black Americans. Many PBIs were predominantly White institutions and are now designated as PBIs as a result of changes in the student body composition. Unlike HBCUs, PBIs do not have a mission of serving Black American students and many do not mention their current designation or Black students in their mission statements. However, similar to HBCUs, these institutions are providing access to higher education for many low-income and first generation Black students

who may not have access to higher education otherwise. Many PBIs are making an effort to better engage their Black student population and the funding from the PBI program has in many ways provided support to that end.

PBIs and Funding

The purpose of the PBI program is to strengthen eligible institutions to best serve the low- and middle-income Black American students on their campuses. By offering funding in the form of annual formula grants, grantees develop programs and institute initiatives that foster academic achievement and Black student persistence. These grants attempt to alleviate the financial constraints that may have an impact on an institution's ability to serve their student population.

PBIs are also eligible for five-year federal competitive grants under Title III, meant to expand the capacity of institutions that serve low-income students in the hopes of improving academic quality and overall institutional management. Under the PBI Competitive Grant, PBIs are eligible to apply for funding to establish programming with focal points in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM), health education, internationalization or globalization, teacher preparation, or improving educational outcomes of African-American males.

Another kind of PBI funding comes in the form of funding for master's degree programs. The Department of Education offers five eligible PBIs six-year grants (\$500,000 annually) to improve master's level graduate education in STEM. This program seeks to provide institutional financial support to develop projects aimed at bolstering the number of Black American graduate students in STEM, a field where minorities are often underrepresented. Funding for this grant program ended in 2014.

Funding Opportunities	Funding Purposes
Formula Funding	<p>PBI Program Formula Grants aim to “strengthen eligible institutions to plan, develop, undertake and implement programs to enhance the institution’s capacity to serve more low- and middle-income Black American students; to expand higher education opportunities for eligible students by encouraging college preparation and student persistence in secondary school and postsecondary education; and to strengthen the financial ability of the institution to serve the academic needs of these students.”</p> <p>Federal funds through the PBI program can be used for numerous initiatives, the full list can be found here.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Source: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbihea/index.html</p>
Competitive Grants	<p>The purpose of the PBI Competitive Grant Program is to support PBIs to establish or strengthen programs in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) • Health education • Internationalization or globalization • Teacher preparation; or • Improving educational outcomes of African-American males <p style="text-align: right;">Source: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbi/index.html</p>
Master’s Degree Grants	<p>Five PBIs were eligible to receive funding “to improve graduate education opportunities at the master’s level in mathematics, engineering, physical or natural sciences, computer science, information technology, nursing, allied health or other scientific disciplines where African American students are underrepresented.” The PBI Master’s Degree Program distributed it’s last award in 2014.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Source: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/pbimasters/index.html</p>

Research Question:

This research brief aims to answer the following questions:

1. How are Predominantly Black Institutions supporting their low-income and Black student population?
2. How have these PBIs used the funds provided by the Department of Education to address the challenges Black students face on their campus?

Approach:

I started this research by examining the DOE’s Predominantly Black Institutions website to identify institutions that have received funding

through the PBI program. Using the list of abstracts from the various grants awarded, I identified five institutions that have been awarded one of the three funding grants by the DOE since the inception of the PBI program. In an attempt to get a wide array of institutional types, I highlighted institutions that varied geographically and narrowed the list based on private and public institutions as well as variances in two-year institutions and four-year institutions. I scoured the websites of the five institutions to find evidence of PBI funding or mention of PBI status. Using keywords such as “PBI,” “PBI funding,” and “Predominantly Black Institutions Program,” I found information about the programs funded by each of these institutions. The search lead me to identify the following five institutions, Chicago State University, Trinity Washington University, Community College of Philadelphia, Georgia State Perimeter College, and Baton Rouge Community College.

Chicago State University (Competitive Grant)

Chicago State University (CSU) is a small public four-year institution located in Chicago, Illinois. Having been established in 1867, CSU is the second oldest public university in Illinois. The institution currently has an enrollment of almost 3,500 students, 66% of which identify as Black American. CSU has been a recipient of PBI funding since the establishment of the program in 2008 and has used the program’s funds to strengthen their institution’s capacity to serve Black students.

Since 2011, CSU has been awarded \$600,000 annually to support the development of a Center for STEM Education and Research (CSER). According to CSU’s website, CSER’s purpose is to offer support and STEM programming for students at CSU and for those in the surrounding community in an effort to enhance the number of underrepresented minorities in STEM. CSER’s reach spans far beyond just CSU and addresses access to STEM for students in grades 6-12. CSER has partnerships with Chicago Public Schools, programs geared at increasing interest to math and science at both middle and high schools, and hosts activities such as annual science fairs in an attempt to improve perceptions of STEM accessibility amongst younger students. Although there are several initiatives geared at K-12 students, at CSER, faculty and student development in STEM are central to the mission of the Center.

The following programs are geared toward increasing STEM student success at CSU:

The Illinois Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (ILSAMP)

CSU is the lead institution for ILSAMP, a national alliance amongst institutions with a central goal of increasing underrepresented minority students in STEM. CSU’s ILSAMP is housed in CSER and provides faculty mentoring, opportunities for students to partake in STEM research, career advising, ongoing workshops related to general student success i.e. note-taking, identifying a mentor etc., international conferences, annual student research symposia, CSU’s Bridge to the Doctorate program, and access to a national consortium of peers within the Alliance.



Chicago State University
Chicago, IL

Public, 4-year institution
Established in 1867

Full Time Undergraduate Enrollment (Fall 2018): 3,462

Percent Receiving Pell Grant: 67%

Race and Ethnicity:

Black or African American: 66%

Hispanic or Latino: 8.7%

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.14%

Asian or Asian American: 0.2%

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: .02%

Source: 2018 Eligibility Matrix by the Office of Postsecondary Education

Bridge to the Doctorate


CSER’s Bridge to the Doctorate pipeline program supports graduate students, predominantly doctoral students, in STEM by developing cohorts and a network of peers that students can tap into as they pursue their degree.

CSER also hosts speaker series featuring STEM scholars and researchers, organizes GRE prep sessions, shares internship opportunities, and takes students on trips to local museums.

Despite receiving PBI funds and boasting an FTE of nearly 70% Black or African American, there is no direct mention on CSER’s website that the Center was established as an initiative to bolster low- and middle-income Black student success.

Trinity Washington University (Formula Grants)

Trinity Washington University (TWU) is a private, Roman Catholic, four-year university located in Washington, D.C. with Black students composing 64.6% of the student population. The institution was founded as a Catholic women’s college and their commitment to the education of women remains in the institution’s mission statement. Trinity Washington received its first formula grant as a PBI in 2016 to purchase laboratory equipment and additional technological equipment essential for conducting work in both science and nursing laboratories. According to TWU’s grant abstract, the modern equipment would strengthen their STEM academic programs and support the institution’s goal of expanding the number of Black students entering STEM professions and fields. TWU received a total of \$1,559,388 to date to support this initiative.



Trinity Washington University
Washington, D.C.

Private, 4-year institution
Established in 1897

Full Time Undergraduate Enrollment (Fall 2018): 1,592
Percent Receiving Pell Grant: 69%

Race and Ethnicity:

- Black or African American: 64.6%
- Hispanic or Latino: 24.9%
- Asian or Asian American: 1.1.%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.26%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.1%

Source: 2018 Eligibility Matrix by the Office of Postsecondary Education

Community College of Philadelphia (Competitive Grant)

Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) is a public open-admission, two-year college that was established in 1965 and is situated in the heart of Philadelphia, PA. The college has one main campus and three regional centers of learning and a total of 18,966 students, 46.4% of which are Black or African American. CCP received its first award from the PBI program in 2009 in the amount of \$600,000 (the first installment over 8 years) to establish the Center for Black Male Engagement (CME). CME was specifically developed to support and retain Black male students enrolled at the institution.


CME offers the following supports:

- coaches that help ease the transition from high school to college, provide holistic advising, and act as advocates to Black males on campus.
- space to access technology and an isolated location to study.
- access to learning specialists to provide academic support
- access to a network of Black male students at CCP
- opportunities to attend social events amongst network peers
- leadership, skill set, and career preparation training
- access to a Summer Enrichment Program

CME’s Summer Enrichment Program

The Summer Enrichment Program is an enhanced pre-college orientation program for incoming Black male students that takes place the summer prior to enrolling at CCP. The program provides participants with tips and methods to best thrive on campus. Those who successfully complete the program become members of CME.

CME and the initiatives the Center produces is geared toward improving Black male success, one of the goals of the PBI program. With the use of intentional imagery, i.e. Black males on the front page of the site and mention of Black male students in the first sentence of the Center’s purpose, CCP takes a more deliberate and visible approach to increasing low- and middle-income Black student success.



Community College of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA


Public, 2-year institution
Established in 1867

Full Time Undergraduate Enrollment (Fall 2018): 18,966
Percent Receiving Pell Grant: 63%

Race and Ethnicity:

- Black or African American: 46.4%
- Hispanic or Latino: 8.7%
- Asian or Asian American: 7.7%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.3%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.3%

Source: 2018 Eligibility Matrix by the Office of Postsecondary Education



Georgia State University, Perimeter College
Decatur, GA

Public, 2-year institution
Established in 1867

Full Time Undergraduate Enrollment (Fall 2018): 21,088
Percent Receiving Pell Grant: 44%

Race and Ethnicity:

- Black or African American: 43%
- Hispanic or Latino: 10.2%
- Asian or Asian American: 8.4%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.2%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.1%

Source: 2018 Eligibility Matrix by the Office of Postsecondary Education

Georgia State University, Perimeter College (Competitive Grant)


In 2015, Georgia State University, Perimeter College (Perimeter College) received the largest single gift of the institution’s 54-year history from the Department of Education through the PBI program. Perimeter College is a public two-year institution within the Georgia State system that has a 43% Black student population. The institution was granted \$3 million to establish a program to support students in remedial math courses using academic success coaches. The program is an extension of a project previously funded through the PBI program known as Project RAISE (Raising Achievement and Increasing Success in Education) that employs individualized academic coaches to help students excel and succeed in math courses and offers tips on studying, time management, and goal setting.

Baton Rouge Community College (Formula Grant)

Established in June 1995, Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) is a small, public community college located in Baton Rouge, LA. Despite the institution being relatively new, BRCC boasts a total population of 7,800 students, 43% of which are Black students. After identifying a lower retention rate and graduation rate amongst African American students on campus, the institution applied for the PBI formula grant in 2016. With a goal of providing direct support to high-need, financially challenged Black students on campus, the institution developed a unique way to identify and intervene in the academic lives of struggling students.

Funding from the PBI program has allowed BRCC to establish an African American Resource Office (AARO). The AARO will improve African American retention and completion rates and aims to reduce the number of African American students in developmental courses using a degree

tracking and audit system. The grant abstract reveals that the system will be paired with intrusive advising, early intervention tools, academic boot camps, and an internal referral process between the AARO, counseling, and advising. The program aims to support highly aided students and was particularly developed to address the distinct challenges of African American students on campus.



Baton Rouge Community College
Baton Rouge, LA

Public, 2-year institution
Established in 1995

Full Time Undergraduate Enrollment (Fall 2018): 7,823
Percent Receiving Pell Grant: 49%

Race and Ethnicity:

- Black or African American: 43.2%
- Hispanic or Latino: 5%
- Asian or Asian American: 1.8%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.3%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.1%

Source: 2018 Eligibility Matrix by the Office of Postsecondary Education

Conclusion:

Despite only educating 9% of Black students, PBIs are often excluded from national discussions on higher education. There is also a dire need for an expansion in research on the impact these institutions are making on the students they serve. These institutions are crafting an academic milieu that promotes Black student success, provides direct support to first generation and low-income students, and tackle some of the nation’s

largest challenges facing Black collegians. PBIs are providing access to many students who may not otherwise enroll in college and preparing the next generation of Black college graduates. The PBI funding has enabled many of these institutions to enact transformative programming and initiatives, yet there is still a need for increased financial support of these colleges and universities.

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