

Diversity at HBCUs

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Although institutional diversity will provide students the intellectual, cultural, civic, religious and personal experiences of a range of students, reflecting the richness of this heterogeneous, pluralistic society, most Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) do not incorporate a diversity plan into their university strategic plans.

The lack of a diversity plan stems from the historical fact that HBCUs were originally established in the early and late 1800s, when Black Americans were not afforded the same educational opportunities as White Americans. This resulted in the building of numerous HBCUs to educate Black Americans. These institutions typically hired (if the professors were not founders) educated Black American professors to teach various academic courses.

In the later years, HBCUs began to enroll other ethnic groups to include Asians, Mexicans, Latinos and Africans, which called for the hiring of other ethnic professors. This interaction was thought to have included the necessary diversity so that students would learn the tolerance, co-existence and the spirit of shared values and common destinies that make America strong.

If all HBCUs would take the initiative to develop a plan to diversify their campuses, departments of journalism and mass communication that are required to develop and implement diversity plans would not experience the rigor and loss of time obtaining approval from higher administration.

Although it appears that most HBCUs want to diversify their campuses, good intentions do not substitute for a well-organized diversity plan that could benefit students of all nationalities and races.