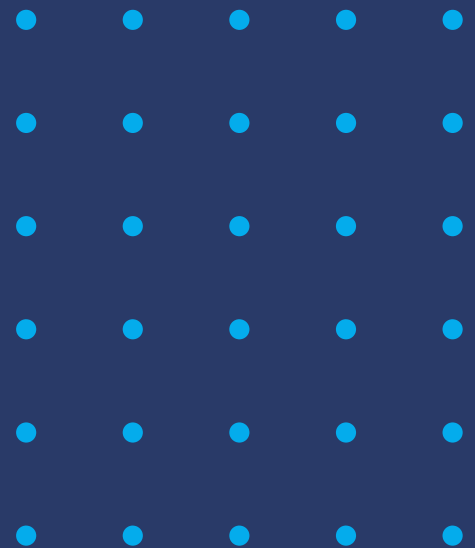




# Guide to HBCUs

## Historically Black Colleges and Universities



---

WRITTEN BY COLLEGEWISE COUNSELOR  
**Christopher Logan**

Copyright © 2025 by Collegewise

This edition is designed to be emailed to fellow students, parents, and counselors and viewed on-screen to save trees.

You are given the unlimited right to distribute this guide electronically (via email, your website, or any other means). You can print out pages and put them in your office for your students. You can include the link in a newsletter, send the guide to parents in your school community, hand it out at an event for students or parents, and generally share it with anyone who is interested. But you may not alter this guide in any way, or charge for it, without written permission from Collegewise.

First Edition  
March 2025

## About the Author



**Christopher Logan**

Christopher Logan is a Master Counselor and one of the Counseling Team Leads at Collegewise, where they guide a team of expert counselors and work directly with a select group of students. Widely regarded for their deep expertise in college admissions, Christopher combines hands-on counseling with high-level thought leadership that shapes the way the industry understands access, equity, and the evolving admissions landscape.

Each year, Christopher authors extensively researched white papers and guides for Collegewise, several of which have received national recognition. Their 2023 publication examining the history and implications of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on race in college admissions was featured in graduate-level counselor training courses at institutions such as UCLA. Here are some of Christopher's recent publications:

[Race-Based Affirmative Action in College Admissions](#)

[Understanding Early College Application Deadlines](#)

[Creativity in STEM](#)

[A Step-by-Step Guide to Medical School](#)

[Guide to Women's Colleges](#)

# Notes From the Author

The landscape of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is evolving in response to major social, political, and economic shifts. In recent years, HBCUs have experienced **a resurgence in interest**, fueled by the national conversation on race, the impact of the Supreme Court's *Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. Harvard & UNC* decision, and growing recognition of the role HBCUs play in producing Black professionals and leaders. At the same time, challenges remain, from financial pressures to political efforts that threaten diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives on college campuses.

This **2025 edition** of the HBCU guide aims to provide a **comprehensive, up-to-date** resource for students, families, and educators navigating HBCU admissions. While this is the **first edition** of this guide, it builds on years of research, firsthand conversations with HBCU admissions officers, students, and alumni, and my own experience as a college counselor advising students on HBCUs. The guide takes a **holistic approach**, not only listing schools and admissions information but also addressing **HBCUs' role in Black professional success**, financial aid opportunities, and the ongoing policy shifts shaping these institutions.

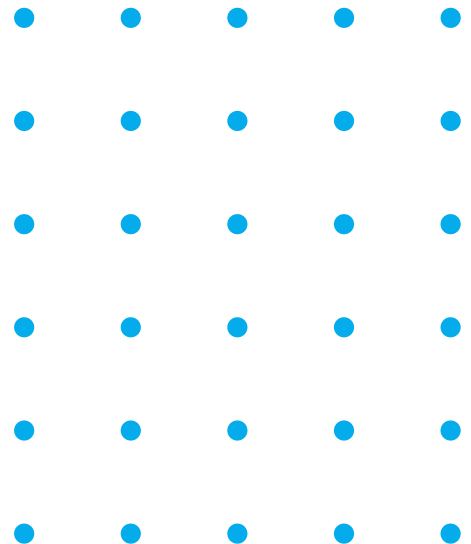
In this edition, I have paid particular attention to:

- The **surge in applications and enrollment** at many HBCUs following the rollback of affirmative action at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).
- The **impact of federal and state policy changes** affecting HBCU funding, diversity programs, and student support services.
- The **role of HBCUs in producing Black doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other professionals**, highlighting the disproportionate influence of these institutions on key industries.
- Expanded information on **how to apply to HBCUs**, including details on both the Common Application and the Common Black College Application (CBCA), to simplify the process for prospective students.

## Notes From the Author - cont.

HBCUs have always been **centers of Black excellence, community, and resilience**, and their impact on higher education and beyond continues to grow. Whether you are a student considering an HBCU, a counselor supporting applicants, or simply someone curious about these historic institutions, I hope this guide provides the **knowledge and clarity** you need to make informed decisions.

HBCUs have shaped **past, present, and future generations of leaders**—this guide is here to ensure that every student who wants to be part of that legacy has the tools to do so.



## Where Does This Information Come From?

This guide to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is the result of extensive research, professional experience, and firsthand conversations with admissions officers, students, and alumni. While I did not personally attend an HBCU, I am a Black college counselor with deep personal and professional ties to these institutions. Many of my family members and close friends are proud HBCU graduates, and through my work, I have advised numerous students who have explored, applied to, and enrolled at HBCUs. As president of the Southern California chapter of the Yale Black Alumni Association for over five years, I've also helped build bridges between HBCU alumni networks and my own, further expanding my insight into the transformative power of these colleges and the communities they cultivate.

Beyond individual advising, I have worked on a broader scale to ensure more students receive informed guidance about HBCUs. I partnered with the **New York City Public Library system** to train their staff on how to support students interested in applying to HBCUs, expanding access to vital college knowledge in public spaces.

This guide is the first edition, but it draws heavily from **ongoing research, historical context, and direct engagement** with HBCU admissions officers, students, and alumni. Additionally, I have closely studied the **impact of recent legal and policy changes**, including the Supreme Court's Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. Harvard & UNC case, to analyze how shifts in affirmative action and DEI policies are shaping HBCU admissions.

## Where Does This Information Come From? - cont.

The primary goal of this guide is to **raise awareness** about the quality, variety, and critical role of HBCUs in higher education. Too often, misconceptions about HBCUs persist, and many students, educators, and families lack comprehensive, accurate information about these institutions. This guide seeks to **dispel myths**, provide a clear and thorough overview of HBCUs, and **offer practical support** for students interested in exploring and applying to these schools. Like HBCUs themselves, this guide is about **access, empowerment, and excellence**—ensuring that every student, whether they ultimately attend an HBCU or not, has the resources they need to make an informed college decision.



## What's ahead

This guide covers a lot of ground, and you may already know exactly what info you need. If that's the case, feel free to jump right in. Here's what's ahead:

# Table of Contents

<b>9</b>	<b>Current List of HBCUs</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Looking Ahead: The Changing Landscape of HBCUs</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Political and Policy Shifts Impacting HBCUs</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>HBCUs as Engines of Black Professional Success</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Researching HBCUs</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Questions to Ask About HBCUs</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Understanding Campus Culture</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>How Do I Differentiate HBCUs?</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>Common Qualities of Strong HBCU Applicants</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>Life After an HBCU: Careers and Networking</b>
<b>31</b>	<b>Notable HBCU Alumni and Their Impact</b>
<b>35</b>	<b>Applying to an HBCU</b>
<b>38</b>	<b>Financial Aid and Scholarships for HBCU Students</b>
<b>42</b>	<b>Want More?</b>



## Current List of HBCUs

As of March 2025, there are approximately 101 active Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States, spanning 19 states and Washington, D.C. These institutions range from large public universities, such as North Carolina A&T State University and Florida A&M University, to smaller private colleges like Spelman College and Morehouse College. Some HBCUs specialize in medical and legal education, such as Howard University College of Medicine and Southern University Law Center, while others focus on liberal arts, STEM, and professional fields.

### Alabama

- Alabama A&M University
- Alabama State University
- Bishop State Community College
- Gadsden State Community College
- J.F. Drake State Technical College
- Lawson State Community College
- Miles College
- Oakwood University
- Selma University
- Shelton State Community College
- Stillman College
- Talladega College
- Tuskegee University

### Arkansas

- Arkansas Baptist College
- Philander Smith College
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

### California

- Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science

### Delaware

- Delaware State University

### District of Columbia

- Howard University
- University of the District of Columbia

### Florida

- Bethune-Cookman University
- Edward Waters University
- Florida A&M University
- Florida Memorial University

## Current List of HBCUs - cont.

### Georgia

- Albany State University
- Clark Atlanta University
- Fort Valley State University
- Interdenominational Theological Center
- Morehouse College
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Morris Brown College
- Paine College
- Savannah State University
- Spelman College

### Kentucky

- Kentucky State University

### Louisiana

- Dillard University
- Grambling State University
- Southern University and A&M College
- Southern University at New Orleans
- Southern University at Shreveport
- Xavier University of Louisiana

### Maryland

- Bowie State University
- Coppin State University
- Morgan State University
- University of Maryland Eastern Shore

### Michigan

- Lewis College of Business (reopened in 2022)

### Mississippi

- Alcorn State University
- Coahoma Community College
- Hinds Community College at Utica
- Jackson State University
- Mississippi Valley State University
- Rust College
- Tougaloo College

### Missouri

- Harris-Stowe State University
- Lincoln University

## Current List of HBCUs - cont.

### North Carolina

- Bennett College
- Elizabeth City State University
- Fayetteville State University
- Johnson C. Smith University
- Livingstone College
- North Carolina A&T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- St. Augustine's University
- Shaw University
- Winston-Salem State University

### Ohio

- Central State University
- Wilberforce University

### Oklahoma

- Langston University

### Pennsylvania

- Cheyney University of Pennsylvania
- Lincoln University

### South Carolina

- Allen University
- Benedict College
- Claflin University
- Clinton College
- Denmark Technical College
- Morris College
- South Carolina State University
- Voorhees University

### Tennessee

- American Baptist College
- Fisk University
- Knoxville College
- Lane College
- LeMoyne-Owen College
- Meharry Medical College
- Tennessee State University

### Texas

- Huston-Tillotson University
- Jarvis Christian University
- Paul Quinn College
- Prairie View A&M University
- Southwestern Christian College
- Texas College
- Texas Southern University
- Wiley College

## Current List of HBCUs - cont.

### Virginia

- Hampton University
- Norfolk State University
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Union University
- Virginia University of Lynchburg

### West Virginia

- Bluefield State University
- West Virginia State University



# Looking Ahead: The Changing Landscape of HBCUs

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have demonstrated resilience through decades of change. These institutions range from small private colleges to large public universities, mostly in the South, founded to educate Black Americans after emancipation. Over time, some HBCUs have closed or merged due to financial pressures, but the core mission of providing access to higher education and uplifting Black communities remains unwavering. Today, HBCUs enroll students of all races and backgrounds, though they continue to serve a predominantly Black student population.

**Enrollment trends** reveal both challenges and recent momentum. HBCU enrollment has grown in absolute numbers since the 1970s—[increasing over 54% between 1976 and 2022](#)—but HBCUs now educate a smaller share of Black college students than they once did. In 1976, 18% of Black college students attended HBCUs, [versus only about 9% by 2022](#). This decline in share reflects greater access of Black students to predominantly white institutions (PWIs) over the decades.

Yet, in the early 2020s HBCUs saw a **surge of renewed interest**. [Applications and freshman enrollments jumped significantly in the wake of the 2023 Supreme Court ban on affirmative action in college admissions](#). For example, Morehouse College saw a **34% increase in applications** in 2024, and Hampton University's applications rose from 13,000 to 17,000 for its Class of 2028. Many HBCUs reported double-digit growth in new student enrollment: Bethune-Cookman University's freshman class grew from 814 in fall 2023 to 1,150 in fall 2024. Overall, HBCU enrollments were up about **4% in spring 2024** even as many colleges elsewhere saw declines. Leaders attribute this "boom" to Black students seeking supportive campus environments amid changing national policies.

# Looking Ahead: The Changing Landscape of HBCUs - cont.

In short, HBCUs in 2025 are navigating a dynamic landscape—balancing historic missions with modern realities—and are experiencing a resurgence of interest that bodes well for their future.

## How Should This Information Affect Your Journey?

If you're a student, parent, or counselor, the key takeaway from this section is this: **HBCUs are not only relevant—they are rising.** In the face of legal, political, and social change, HBCUs have emerged as vital spaces for academic excellence, cultural affirmation, and student support. The current surge in applications and enrollment is not just a headline—it's a signal. More students are actively choosing HBCUs as their first-choice institutions, not as a backup or alternative.

When it comes to your college search, this means:

- **Students should take HBCUs seriously as competitive, mission-driven institutions** that may be more aligned with their values, identities, and goals than they realized.
- **Families should understand that HBCUs are seeing increasing demand**, so early research, strong applications, and attention to deadlines are more important than ever.
- **Counselors should actively include HBCUs in college planning conversations**—not as niche options, but as powerful and relevant choices that are shaping the future of higher education.

As interest in HBCUs continues to grow, the opportunities—and the competition—are growing too. By paying attention to these trends now, you're not just responding to the moment. You're getting ahead of it.

## Political and Policy Shifts Impacting HBCUs

Recent **political and policy shifts** have directly affected HBCUs, bringing both new support and new challenges. On the federal level, funding for HBCUs has seen renewed attention. In previous administrations, the White House has highlighted HBCUs' outsized impact and pushed for greater investment. [While comprising less than 3% of colleges, HBCUs produce about 13% of all Black college graduates.](#) Federal initiatives in the early 2020s responded to this importance: for instance, the [Biden administration announced an additional \\$1.3 billion in support for HBCUs](#) in 2023, aiming to strengthen their infrastructure and academic programs. Moreover, the Department of Education in 2023 [forgave approximately \\$1.6 billion in debt](#) from an HBCU Capital Finance Program, relieving many HBCUs of loans used for campus improvements.

These efforts acknowledge longstanding funding disparities—a 2023 analysis found that [historically Black land-grant HBCUs were underfunded by over \\$12 billion](#) since 1987 compared to their state's white land-grant universities. States like Tennessee and North Carolina alone had gaps exceeding \$2 billion each in support for their public HBCUs. In response, some state lawmakers and governors are beginning to address these inequities, proposing budget boosts and reparative funds to HBCUs. This influx of attention and money is aimed at leveling the playing field and ensuring HBCUs can continue their vital work.

## Political and Policy Shifts Impacting HBCUs - cont.

At the same time, **shifting legal and regulatory policies** have created uncertainty, particularly around diversity initiatives. The Supreme Court's 2023 decision ending affirmative action has led to broader interpretation of restrictions on race-conscious programs. In late 2024, the U.S. [Department of Education issued guidance cautioning colleges](#) (including HBCUs) to eliminate any practices considered **“illegal racial preferences” in scholarships, admissions, or programs**. Essentially, federal officials warned that certain diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts [could jeopardize funding](#) if they are seen as violating the new interpretation of the law, and that warning has only intensified under the current administration in 2025. This has alarmed HBCUs that rely on targeted scholarships and culturally specific support programs for their students. Students worry that the elimination of DEI programs feels like an attack on the inclusive environment that makes HBCUs special.

In addition to federal pressures, **state-level legislation** has impacted HBCUs, especially public ones. States such as [Florida and Texas](#) enacted laws in 2023 that restrict or defund DEI offices and courses at public colleges. Florida's SB 266, for instance, prohibits public universities (including FAMU) from spending money on programs that “advocate for diversity” or that involve certain social activism. Such laws not only curb programming but also cast a chilling effect on campus climate and academic freedom. HBCU leaders are navigating these political headwinds by reviewing policies, seeking legal remedies, and doubling down on private fundraising to sustain their missions.

On the whole, 2025 finds HBCUs at the nexus of political debates: gaining new investments and recognition on one hand, while defending their diversity-focused mission against regulatory rollbacks on the other.



# HBCUs as Engines of Black Professional Success

HBCUs have an outsized **impact on producing Black professionals**, continuing a legacy of leadership in key fields. Despite educating a minority of Black college students overall, HBCUs produce a disproportionate share of Black graduates in high-impact careers. **Today, roughly 70% of all Black doctors and dentists, 50% of all Black lawyers, 40% of Black engineers, and 80% of Black judges are alumni of HBCUs.**

Many HBCUs house renowned pre-professional programs; for example, Xavier University of Louisiana is nationally recognized for sending the most African American students to medical school, and Howard University's law school has a storied history of producing civil rights attorneys and judges. According to a White House analysis, HBCUs make up less than 3% of colleges but account for **13% of all Black students earning bachelor's degrees**—illustrating their efficiency in propelling students to graduation and beyond. HBCU graduates also lead in education and STEM fields: more than one-third of Black STEM Ph.D. holders earned their undergraduate degrees at an HBCU.



## HBCUs as Engines of Black Professional Success - cont.

This pipeline effect is especially notable in medicine: [HBCUs are “an essential engine in the production of Black physicians” in the U.S.](#) Institutions like Howard University College of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, and Morehouse School of Medicine have trained large portions of the Black doctors practicing today. The legal profession shows a similar pattern—from Thurgood Marshall (the first Black Supreme Court Justice, a Howard alumnus) to scores of judges and attorneys, HBCU law schools and pre-law programs continue to produce leaders of the bench and bar.

Simply put, HBCUs punch far above their weight in creating Black excellence in professions, helping to diversify industries that were historically closed to African Americans. This legacy is a point of pride and a compelling reason many students choose HBCUs as a launchpad for careers in medicine, law, engineering, education, and beyond.

These outcomes aren’t just the result of strong academic programs—they reflect a unique combination of mission, culture, and community. HBCUs were built to serve, support, and uplift Black students, and that ethos is felt in every corner of campus life. Faculty and staff often go beyond academics to invest in their students’ growth as people and leaders. The relationships built at HBCUs—between students and professors, between peers, and with alumni—create a network of care and expectation. That sense of being seen, encouraged, and challenged in equal measure often provides students with the confidence and momentum to persist through challenges and aim higher than they might have elsewhere.

## HBCUs as Engines of Black Professional Success - cont.

Part of what makes this possible is the absence of many of the institutional barriers Black students still face at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). At some top-ranked PWIs, students of color continue to navigate subtle and overt racism, including being overlooked for research opportunities, encountering bias from faculty, or feeling isolated in classrooms where their perspectives are marginalized.

By contrast, HBCUs offer spaces where students can focus on excelling—not defending their presence. The result is a powerful environment where high expectations are paired with deep cultural understanding, and where students can access resources, mentorship, and opportunities without having to constantly push through systemic resistance. That freedom to thrive—not just survive—helps explain why HBCUs continue to produce such an extraordinary share of Black professionals.



## Researching HBCUs

Successful college research starts with understanding your own priorities. What matters to you? What makes you tick? What do you want out of college? These are big questions that may seem unrelated to researching Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), but effective college research starts with self-reflection. Before diving into what differentiates HBCUs from other schools (and what questions to ask), consider the following:



And I promise—this isn't just an abstract exercise. Colleges often ask, "Why are you applying here?" in their supplemental essays. The strongest responses come from a deep understanding of your needs, aspirations, and motivations. Whether you're starting your search or narrowing your list, here are a few questions to help guide your thinking:

- **What environments have allowed me to be at my best?** Maybe it's your debate team, youth group, science club, or summer internship. What made those environments a good fit for you? Identifying past successes can help you find the right college setting.
- **What qualities do my friends have in common?** This is a great way to understand what you seek in a college community. As you read descriptions of colleges and listen to current students, does it sound like a group you'd connect with?
- **What inspires me to be my best self?** Maybe it's organizing voter registration drives, leading a student club, or excelling in an HBCU summer program. College should be a time of growth. Thinking about when and where you're most motivated will help you replicate that experience in your future environment.

## Questions to Ask About HBCUs

Once you have some answers to those questions, it's time to start researching colleges. HBCUs place a strong emphasis on their **history and mission**. Their legacies—why they were founded, how they've evolved—continue to shape their campus cultures today. Understanding an HBCU's mission can be a great way to determine if it resonates with your values.

For example, **Howard University** describes itself as “a dynamic and inclusive institution committed to preparing leaders for America and the global community.” **Spelman College** emphasizes its commitment to “academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and the intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of its students.” **North Carolina A&T State University** prides itself on “cultivating excellence and fostering a culture of innovation and service.” HBCUs tend to have a strong sense of **purpose and identity**, which can be inspiring for students who are looking for that in their college experience.

Next, explore student perspectives. Many HBCUs offer virtual student panels, social media Q&As, and live events hosted by admissions offices. These are great opportunities to hear directly from students about life on campus. If you can attend an event (virtually or in person), consider asking:

- **What most surprised you about attending an HBCU?**
- **What were the biggest factors in your decision to attend your college?**
- **What qualities do students who thrive here seem to have in common?**
- **What have been the most popular campus events recently?**
- **What's one thing you've learned to live with because you love everything else about this college?**



# Understanding Campus Culture

HBCUs often have **close-knit communities**, but the culture of each campus varies. Some are more activist-driven, others have strong traditions, and some have unique academic partnerships with larger universities. Student organizations, traditions, and campus events will give you clues about what makes each college distinct.

While HBCUs share historical roots, they are not all the same. In the next section, I'll break down some of the biggest factors that differentiate them—including **admissions policies, academic offerings, and social activism**—to help you find the right fit.



# How Do I Differentiate HBCUs?

For as much as HBCUs have in common, they also vary widely in **their policies, cultures, and academic offerings**. Understanding these differences is key to finding the right fit and strengthening your applications. The more you understand what makes a school unique—especially among its HBCU peers—the better equipped you'll be to articulate why you're applying and why you belong there.

## Admissions Policies

While HBCUs were originally founded to serve Black students, today they are **racially diverse and legally required to be open to students of all races**. Admissions policies at HBCUs are similar to other colleges, but with a few unique considerations:

- **Test-Optional Policies:** Many HBCUs are test-optional, meaning you do not have to submit SAT/ACT scores. Schools like Howard, Spelman, and Xavier have adopted flexible policies to encourage applications from a wide range of students.
- **The Common Black College Application (CBCA):** Over 50 HBCUs accept this single application for a flat fee of \$35, making it one of the most accessible ways to apply to multiple HBCUs at once.
- **The Common Application (Common App):** Many HBCUs, including Howard, Spelman, and Morehouse, accept the Common App, making it easier to apply alongside other colleges you may be considering.
- **Holistic Review:** Many HBCUs place **strong emphasis on the whole student**—your leadership, service, and potential—rather than just test scores and GPAs.

# How Do I Differentiate HBCUs? - cont.

## Social Activism & Campus Culture

HBCUs have historically been at the forefront of social change. From **the Greensboro Sit-Ins at North Carolina A&T** to **modern-day Black Lives Matter protests led by students at Howard and Spelman**, these institutions foster a spirit of activism.

However, campus activism and culture **vary widely** among schools. To research activism at an HBCU, consider:

- **Student Organizations:** Does the school have active NAACP chapters, voting rights coalitions, or advocacy groups?
- **Recent Events:** What kinds of speakers visit campus? Have there been student-led initiatives on issues like racial justice, economic equity, or LGBTQ+ inclusion?
- **Campus Climate:** Is the campus politically progressive, conservative, or somewhere in between? Schools like Howard and Morehouse are known for their activism, while some religiously affiliated HBCUs may have a different social culture.





# How Do I Differentiate HBCUs? - cont.

## Academic Programs & Specialties

HBCUs offer the standard range of **liberal arts and STEM** majors, but some have **unique specialties** that set them apart. Here are a few examples:

- **Pre-Med & Health Sciences:** Xavier University of Louisiana is the **#1 producer of Black medical school applicants** in the U.S. Meharry Medical College and Howard University College of Medicine train a **significant share of Black doctors**.
- **STEM & Engineering:** North Carolina A&T State University is the **largest producer of Black engineers** in the U.S., and Morgan State University is a leader in architecture and engineering.
- **Aviation & Aerospace:** Schools like Tuskegee University, Delaware State University, and Hampton University have **some of the only HBCU aviation programs** in the country.
- **Law & Public Policy:** Howard University School of Law has a long legacy of producing civil rights attorneys, and Southern University Law Center is known for training Black lawyers in Louisiana.

HBCUs are more than just institutions of learning; they are **engines of Black excellence**. Whether your passion is medicine, law, engineering, business, or the arts, HBCUs provide the foundation and networks to help you succeed.



# Common Qualities of Strong HBCU Applicants

HBCUs attract students with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations, but successful applicants often share some key traits that make them particularly well-suited for the unique opportunities and challenges of an HBCU education. These qualities not only help students thrive academically and socially but also prepare them to contribute meaningfully to the HBCU community and beyond.

- **Commitment to Community:** A strong desire to give back and uplift others is a defining characteristic of many HBCU students. Historically, HBCUs have been pillars of the Black community, training generations of leaders who return to their communities as educators, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and entrepreneurs. Successful applicants often have a demonstrated commitment to service, mentorship, activism, or advocacy. This might be through volunteering with local organizations, mentoring younger students, participating in faith-based initiatives, or engaging in social justice efforts. Many HBCU students and alumni express a deep sense of purpose, seeing their education not just as a path to personal success but as a way to uplift those around them.
- **Resilience & Growth:** Many HBCU students are first-generation college-goers or come from backgrounds where they have had to overcome obstacles—whether financial, social, or academic. HBCUs were founded to provide opportunities where none previously existed, and they continue to nurture students who show grit, perseverance, and the ability to adapt. Successful applicants often have personal stories of overcoming adversity, whether by balancing school and work, excelling despite a lack of resources, or finding ways to succeed in environments where they may have been underrepresented. The ability to persevere, grow from challenges, and remain motivated in the face of obstacles is a strong indicator of success at an HBCU.

## Common Qualities of Strong HBCU Applicants - cont.

- **Passion for Their Chosen Field:** Students who express a strong interest in their field and how they hope to use that interest to impact the world tend to thrive at HBCUs. Whether an applicant wants to become a doctor, lawyer, scientist, educator, or entrepreneur, HBCUs provide an empowering environment that nurtures ambition and social responsibility. Many HBCUs have strong pre-professional programs in medicine, law, engineering, and the arts, and applicants who can articulate their long-term goals—especially within the context of how their work might benefit their communities—stand out. Demonstrating curiosity, ambition, and a desire to make meaningful contributions to society through one’s chosen career path resonates deeply with HBCU admissions officers.
- **Leadership and Initiative:** HBCUs were founded by visionaries who challenged the status quo, and today they continue to attract students who take initiative and inspire others to do the same. This leadership might take the form of starting a club at school, taking on a leadership role in a religious or community organization, organizing a social justice initiative, or mentoring peers. At its core, leadership at HBCUs often means rallying others toward a shared goal and creating positive change for the collective good. It’s not just about standing out—it’s about lifting others up. Even students who may not have held formal titles but have shown initiative in their communities, schools, or workplaces are highly valued for their ability to mobilize, motivate, and move their communities forward.
- **Cultural Awareness and Pride:** While HBCUs are open to students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, they are deeply rooted in Black history, culture, and traditions. Students who are excited to engage with these elements—whether through coursework, campus activism, or participation in student organizations—tend to find a deep sense of belonging. Many applicants write about their desire to be in an environment where they can fully embrace and explore their cultural identity while also learning from peers with diverse perspectives.

# Life After an HBCU: Careers and Networking

Attending an HBCU is not just a four-year experience—it's a lifetime membership in a powerful **alumni network**. HBCU graduates often describe a deep, personal connection to their alma maters and fellow alumni. This translates into robust networking and career support after graduation. Many HBCUs have active alumni chapters in major cities that host networking events, offer mentorship to new graduates, and create pipelines into industries. It's common for an HBCU grad to get a foot in the door for a job or internship because they connected with "another HBCU alum" at a company who is eager to help them succeed. Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and nonprofits are increasingly recruiting at HBCUs to tap into diverse talent; as a result, career fairs on HBCU campuses often include a wide array of employers seeking to hire graduates.

The **bond among HBCU alumni** is sometimes playfully compared to a fraternity/sorority—they have each other's backs. This can be a crucial asset in fields where Black professionals are underrepresented, providing a sense of community and advocacy in the workplace.

In terms of **career outcomes**, studies show that HBCU alumni thrive in many ways. A Gallup-Purdue survey found that Black HBCU graduates reported [higher well-being and engagement at work than Black graduates from non-HBCUs](#). They were more likely to feel their college prepared them for life after college and to strongly agree that their university was the perfect place for them. This satisfaction often correlates with career confidence.

## Life After an HBCU: Careers and Networking - cont.

HBCU grads enter a wide range of professions—education, business, engineering, healthcare, the arts, military service, and more—and they often rise to leadership roles. Employers note that HBCU alumni frequently have had **practical leadership experience** on campus (such as leading student organizations or initiatives) and bring strong interpersonal skills and cultural competency to the workplace.

Economically, HBCUs have been shown to boost social mobility. Research by the United Negro College Fund found that HBCU graduates working full-time throughout their careers can expect to earn **56% more in additional lifetime income** than if they had not attended an HBCU. Part of this gain is because HBCUs graduate a high number of Pell-eligible, first-generation students who otherwise might not have completed college—effectively launching them into higher income brackets.



## Life After an HBCU: Careers and Networking - cont.

Another aspect of post-HBCU success is the **preparation for graduate and professional schools**. HBCUs are among the top feeder schools for Black students who go on to earn PhDs, MDs, and other advanced degrees. For example, over half of Black doctoral degree holders in science and engineering earned their bachelor's at an HBCU. Graduates credit the mentorship and research opportunities they had at HBCUs for giving them the confidence and foundation to excel in grad school.

Finally, life after an HBCU often comes with a strong sense of **giving back**. Alumni frequently return to campus to speak, recruit, or mentor. The tight-knit community fosters a responsibility to lift others as one climbs.

Prominent HBCU alumni philanthropists (such as Hank Aaron and Oprah Winfrey) have donated millions to their alma maters, and even everyday alumni contribute whatever they can to scholarship funds each year. This cycle of support helps future generations and reinforces the enduring value of the HBCU experience. In summary, HBCU alumni not only achieve success in their careers, but they also carry forward a legacy of leadership, community, and cultural pride that benefits them personally and professionally long after graduation.



# Notable HBCU Alumni and Their Impact

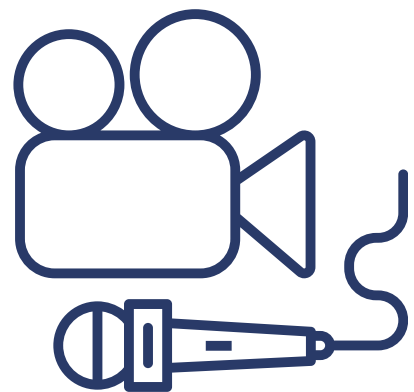
One of the best measures of HBCUs' success is the **achievements of their alumni**. Over 150 years, HBCUs have produced generations of leaders, innovators, and trailblazers in virtually every field. Here are just a few notable HBCU alumni and the impact they've made in various industries:

- **Politics and Civil Rights:** HBCUs have been a launchpad for changemakers in government, civil rights, and public service.
  - *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and leader of the Civil Rights Movement, was a Morehouse College graduate.
  - *Thurgood Marshall*, a graduate of Lincoln University and Howard University School of Law, argued *Brown v. Board of Education* and became the first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice.
  - *Kamala Harris*, Howard University alumna, made history as the first Black (and first female) Vice President of the United States.
  - Countless other public servants hail from HBCUs, including civil rights icon *John Lewis* (American Baptist College and Fisk University), former U.S. Secretary of Education *Rod Paige* (Jackson State), and current U.S. Senator *Raphael Warnock* (Morehouse).



## Notable HBCU Alumni and Their Impact - cont.

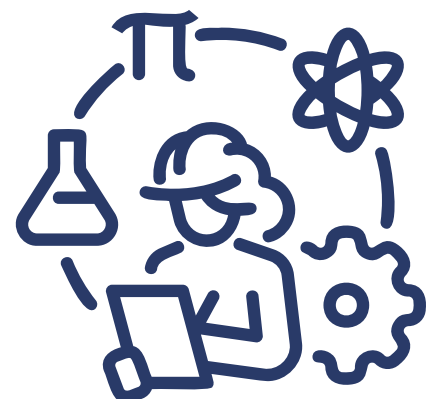
- **Literature and Media:** [HBCUs have shaped Black voices in arts and media.](#)
  - *Toni Morrison*, Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, attended Howard University, where she honed her literary voice.
  - *Oprah Winfrey*, media mogul, philanthropist, and one of the world's most influential women, is a proud alumna of Tennessee State University.
  - In journalism, *Roland Martin* (Texas A&M, an HBCU) and *Tamron Hall* (Temple University for undergrad, but she often credits her time at an HBCU for grad school influence) are prominent national media figures.
  - HBCUs have also produced legendary entertainers: *Spike Lee* (Morehouse) became an award-winning filmmaker, and *Phylicia Rashad* (Howard) a Tony-winning actress and now dean of Howard's College of Fine Arts.





## Notable HBCU Alumni and Their Impact - cont.

- **Science, Technology, and Medicine:** Many Black scientists and healthcare leaders began at HBCUs.
  - Katherine Johnson, the NASA mathematician whose calculations were critical to the Apollo missions, was a graduate of West Virginia State University (an HBCU).
  - Dr. Charles Drew, pioneer of blood plasma storage, attended Amherst but later chaired surgery at Howard University, contributing greatly to medicine through Howard's medical school.
  - Modern examples include Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett (University of Maryland Baltimore County, an honors program linked to HBCUs) who helped develop the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, and Dr. Alexa Canady (Fisk University for undergrad), who became the first Black female neurosurgeon.
  - HBCUs like Xavier, Howard, and Morgan State have funneled many of their alumni into top medical and graduate programs, producing leaders in research and healthcare. Notably, Dr. Regina Benjamin (Xavier alumna) served as U.S. Surgeon General, and Dr. David Satcher (Morehouse School of Medicine) was also a U.S. Surgeon General, highlighting HBCUs' impact on public health leadership.



## Notable HBCU Alumni and Their Impact - cont.

- **Business and Education:** In corporate America, HBCU grads are making their mark.
  - *Rosalind Brewer*, a Spelman College alumna, has served as CEO of Walgreens (one of very few Black female Fortune 500 CEOs) and formerly COO of Starbucks.
  - *Kenneth Frazier*, alumnus of Penn State (not an HBCU), credits influence from HBCU mentors and became CEO of Merck; meanwhile, *Dave Steward* (Central Missouri State, not an HBCU) became a Black billionaire entrepreneur who generously supports HBCUs.
  - In the entrepreneurial realm, *Janice Bryant Howroyd* (North Carolina A&T) became the first Black woman to build a billion-dollar company (Act-1 Group).
- **Education** is another sphere with HBCU footprints:
  - *Booker T. Washington* (Hampton Institute graduate) founded Tuskegee University and was a leading educator.
  - *Mary McLeod Bethune* (who studied at Scotia Seminary, a precursor to Barber-Scotia College) founded Bethune-Cookman University and advised U.S. presidents on minority education. Many school principals, college presidents, and professors are HBCU alumni, continuing the cycle of educating future generations.

These examples barely scratch the surface; from *athletics* (NFL legends like Jerry Rice of Mississippi Valley State, and track star Wilma Rudolph of Tennessee State) to *music* (singer Erykah Badu of Grambling State, and opera singer Leontyne Price of Wilberforce) and beyond, HBCU alumni have excelled. Their achievements underscore the value of HBCU education in nurturing talent and ambition. As a community, HBCU grads carry forward a legacy of excellence: they often credit their colleges with giving them confidence, cultural pride, and a network that propelled them to make history.

# Applying to HBCUs

Embarking on the journey to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) involves understanding the application processes available. Two primary avenues facilitate applications to multiple HBCUs: the Common Application (Common App) and the Common Black College Application (CBCA). Each offers unique benefits tailored to prospective students.

## HBCUs Participating in the Common Application

The Common App is a centralized platform allowing students to apply to multiple colleges and universities with a single application. Several HBCUs accept the Common App, streamlining the application process for prospective students. Notable participating HBCUs include:

- **Howard University**
- **Spelman College**
- **Morehouse College**
- **Tuskegee University**
- **Florida A&M University**
- **North Carolina A&T State University**
- **Xavier University of Louisiana**

It's important to note that the list of participating institutions may change; therefore, it's advisable to consult the current year's list on the Common App website for the most up-to-date information.

## Applying to HBCUs - cont.

### Overview of the Common Black College Application (CBCA)

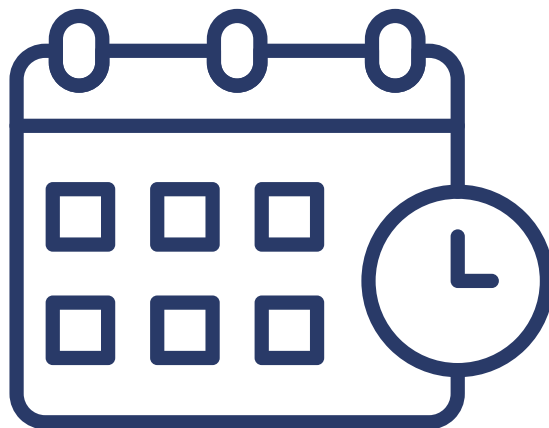
The CBCA offers a streamlined and cost-effective method to apply to numerous HBCUs simultaneously. Key aspects of the CBCA include:

- **Participating Institutions:** The CBCA collaborates with over 50 HBCUs across the United States, providing a broad spectrum of options for applicants.
- **Application Fee:** A one-time, non-refundable fee of \$20 allows students to apply to all member institutions, significantly reducing the financial burden associated with multiple applications.
- **Application Process:**
  - **Registration:** Create an account on the CBCA website.
  - **Application Completion:** Fill out the application form with the required educational information.
  - **Fee Payment:** Submit the \$20 application fee via PayPal or by mailing a money order.
  - **Transcript Submission:** Request that your school counselor upload your official transcript through the CBCA platform.
  - **Test Scores:** Upload standardized test scores (if available) through your student dashboard. Note that some member institutions may be test-optional; it's recommended to verify specific requirements with each institution.
- **Top Four Choices:** While the application is made available to all member institutions, applicants are prompted to select their top four choices. Some institutions may prioritize processing applications where they are listed among these top choices.

## Applying to HBCUs - cont.

### Key Deadlines and Benefits

- **Deadlines:** Application deadlines vary by institution. It's crucial to check each HBCU's admissions page for specific dates to ensure timely submission.
- **Benefits:**
  - **Cost-Effectiveness:** The CBCA's flat fee structure offers a financially accessible option for applying to multiple HBCUs.
  - **Efficiency:** Both the Common App and CBCA simplify the application process, allowing students to apply to multiple institutions without repetitive data entry.



# Financial Aid and Scholarships for HBCU Students

Financing a college education is a crucial concern for many HBCU students, and these institutions work hard to make college **affordable and accessible**. A large proportion of HBCU students come from low- and middle-income families, so financial aid utilization is high. In the 2021-22 academic year, [more than 85% of undergraduate HBCU students received some form of grant aid \(federal, state, local, or institutional\)](#), which is higher than the national average. On average, an HBCU undergraduate received about \$11,000 in grant aid that year. One cornerstone of aid is the **Federal Pell Grant**—61% of HBCU undergrads were Pell recipients in 2021-22, reflecting the many students from lower-income backgrounds. States also often provide need-based grants that can be used at their public HBCUs (and sometimes private ones). For example, Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship can significantly reduce costs for students attending public HBCUs like Albany State or Fort Valley State.

HBCUs themselves offer institutional scholarships, both merit-based and need-based. Some of the more prestigious HBCUs (Howard, Spelman, Morehouse, etc.) have competitive merit scholarships that cover large portions of tuition for high-achieving students (such as Howard’s Capstone Scholars or Spelman’s Dean’s Scholarships). Many HBCUs use a portion of their endowment or Title III federal funds to support need-based aid, recognizing that affordability is key to their mission.

## Financial Aid and Scholarships for HBCU Students - cont.

Additionally, there are **scholarship programs specifically for HBCU students** provided by external organizations. [The United Negro College Fund \(UNCF\)](#) is a major scholarship source, especially for students at private HBCUs: UNCF and its partners award **over \$100 million in scholarships each year** to thousands of HBCU students. Similarly, the [Thurgood Marshall College Fund \(TMCF\)](#) provides scholarships and emergency funds for students at public HBCUs, often in partnership with corporations. Large companies and foundations have also created scholarship initiatives in recent years targeting HBCUs; for instance, programs like Apple's HBCU Scholars, the *Gates Millennium Scholars*\* (which many HBCU students have won), and regional alumni chapter scholarships that support local students going to HBCUs.

Beyond grants and scholarships, HBCU students can and do use federal student loans to cover remaining costs: about 54% borrow federal loans as undergrads. HBCU families have historically also relied on Parent PLUS loans at higher rates to fill financial gaps, which has raised concerns about debt. In response, the federal government has provided some relief: During the COVID-19 pandemic, billions in debt held by HBCUs (not individual students, but the schools themselves) were forgiven, indirectly helping students by freeing up institutional resources. Some HBCUs have also started initiatives to stabilize costs, like freezing tuition or offering more work-study positions on campus.

*\*has been replaced with [The Gates Scholarship](#) following its 20-year lifespan.*

## Financial Aid and Scholarships for HBCU Students - cont.

Importantly, the cost of attendance at HBCUs tends to be lower than that of comparable non-HBCUs. In-state tuition at public HBCUs is often a bargain, and even private HBCUs often have lower tuition than private non-HBCUs, making them attractive for cost-conscious students. For example, Tougaloo College and Prairie View A&M University both emphasize that their tuition is among the most affordable in their states.

Students considering HBCUs should absolutely file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to maximize their aid eligibility, and look into the many **scholarships designated for HBCU attendees**. With the combination of Pell Grants, state aid, institutional aid, UNCF/TMCF scholarships, and manageable loans, an HBCU education can often be obtained with minimal out-of-pocket cost, especially relative to the lifelong benefits it provides. Financial aid officers at HBCUs are typically very experienced in assembling packages that make attendance possible, reflecting the colleges' commitment to not letting cost be a barrier to any talented student.





# Financial Aid and Scholarships for HBCU Students - cont.

## So What Should You Do With This Information?

If paying for college is one of your biggest concerns, you're not alone. And the good news is: there are real, tangible ways to make an HBCU education affordable. Many students and families are surprised to learn just how much financial support is available through federal and state aid, institutional scholarships, and national programs created specifically for HBCU students. Here's what to do next:

- **File the FAFSA** as early as possible in your senior year (it opens each fall). Even if you're not sure you'll qualify for aid, it's essential for unlocking most types of support.
- **Research the scholarships offered directly by the HBCUs on your list.** Many schools post scholarship opportunities on their admissions or financial aid websites. Make note of the eligibility requirements and deadlines—they often differ from the admissions deadlines.
- **Look into external scholarships specifically for HBCU students,** including through the UNCF, TMCF, and community or corporate organizations. Many of these can be stacked on top of other aid.
- **Talk to an HBCU admissions officer or financial aid advisor.** These folks are usually very experienced at helping students navigate cost and aid options—and they want to help.

Most importantly, **don't assume you can't afford college until you've explored every option.** HBCUs were built to expand access, and they continue to work hard to keep college affordable. If you're willing to do the research, ask questions, and apply for aid, the financial path to an HBCU degree may be more attainable than you think.

## Want More?

With more than 25 years of college counseling and tutoring experience, [Collegewise](#) has been at the forefront of providing families, schools, and non-profits with up-to-date, honest admissions advice. We believe that applying to university should be an exciting time, not a stressful, anxiety-ridden rite of passage. We know that providing expert-written, well-researched information is one way to do so!

Since we opened our doors in 1999, our expert advisors and tutors have guided more than 30,000 students to successful admissions and testing outcomes. We take great care in our work, from our paid counseling programs to our complimentary resources. Our team of experts pools their 500+ years of admissions expertise to drive student success. Our resources have been downloaded by over 100,000 readers, and we thank you for downloading this one!

**Start with a free consultation today!**



 [info@collegewise.com](mailto:info@collegewise.com)

 [collegewise.com](https://collegewise.com)

 (888) 648-9473

