

Chapter 7

Shared Governance and Collective Bargaining: Can It Advance Faculty Satisfaction, Governance and Accountability at HBCUs?

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ABSTRACT

The mobilization of workers through unionization has deep historical roots within American society, more so in the northern regions than in the southern region of this country. Despite these historical roots, some sectors of the American population (i.e., minorities in general and African Americans in particular) who have experienced various forms of discrimination have not fully participated in the unionization movement. In fact, on some HBCU campuses, faculty have no mechanism to participate in the governance of their own university. With the survival and destiny of HBCUs at stake, HBCU faculty must be proactive and engaged to create their own representative voice. This chapter will examine shared governance and leadership, as well as collective bargaining, as agents for faculty representation and conduits for change. Specifically, the development of faculty voice will be discussed as a form of advocacy for meaningful participation and representation by HBCU faculty in decision-making at their universities.

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INTRODUCTION

The challenges facing Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are many and varied. Issues of accountability, cost, quality and effectiveness are constantly being discussed when evaluating HBCUs and their contribution to African Americans' access to higher education and achievement. In today's shifting higher education public agenda, concerns about HBCUs and their effectiveness are especially relevant with individual states' and the federal government's increased focus on accountability for all higher education institutions. State after state has developed matrices to measure predetermined performance outcomes. HBCUs are now being criticized for their performance on these metrics, as well as for their graduation and retention rates. This criticism ignores the fact that for the past few decades African Americans have made "notable progress" in the area of access to higher education than ever before (Delgado, 2000). However, unfortunately, as a group, HBCUs have failed to obtain the "gold ring" (a college education) for the majority of their constituency.

This criticism of HBCUs is buttressed by statistics concerning their college graduation rates. A recent nationwide survey noted that although African American graduation rates have improved by three percentage points over the past two years, the overall graduation rate remains at an average of forty-two percent, a figure that is twenty percentage points below the sixty-two percent rate for white students ("Black Student," 2015). Further, the report in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (JBHE) (2015) also noted that African-American enrollments at the vast majority of our nation's highest ranked colleges and universities have shown significant improvement over the past quarter-century ("Black Student," 2015)

The graduation rates of students who attend HBCUs tend to be much lower than the graduation rate for African American students at the nation's highest-ranked institutions during the same period of observation (JBHE, 2015). This lack of progress further reinforces the positions of HBCU opponents who often question the effectiveness of HBCUs, institutions which were established and whose primary mission is to educate African American students.

However, there is hope. The graduation rate at a number of HBCUs (e.g., Spelman and Morehouse) is well above the nationwide average for African American students, ("Black Student," 2015). Unfortunately, half of all African American students who attend HBCUs do not go on to earn a degree with the lowest graduation rates reported for the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and Texas Southern University (TSU). At UDC only 7 percent of entering freshmen go on to earn a bachelor's degree; while fourteen percent of entering freshmen students at TSU completes a bachelor's degree.

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