HISTORICALLY BLACK, DIGITALLY FORWARD
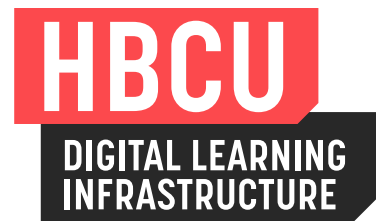
CO-DESIGNING DIGITAL LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HBCUS

COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

HBCU DIGITAL LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE

COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

KEY TAKEAWAYS

HBCUs PROVIDE A MODEL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

HBCUs exemplify how focused support and community-building can significantly enhance student achievement and should be studied and emulated by other higher education institutions for better student outcomes.

STUDENT IDENTITY COMPLEXITY

HBCU students possess a spectrum of intersecting identities that inform their unique needs and potential barriers to success, requiring a culturally responsive and identity-affirming approach to student support which HBCUs provide.

MULTIFACETED SUPPORT

Support systems must be as diverse and complex as the students to address historical and systemic barriers. Focused attention must be given to prevalent issues like economic circumstances and mental health challenges from current and past events and trauma impacting students' educational journeys.

SYSTEMIC UNDERFUNDING HAS LED TO TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE DEBT

Historically institutionalized systemic underfunding has resulted in significant technology infrastructure deficits and a widening digital divide. Hindering the ability of HBCUs to provide current and effective digital tools for education, especially AI.

SYSTEMIC UNDERFUNDING HAS LED TO EMPLOYEE CAPACITY GAPS

Chronic underfunding of HBCUs also manifests as gaps in employee capacity, hindering an institution's provisioning of adequate personnel, support, and resources for their diverse student body.

Photo courtesy of Langston University

CONTENTS

RECOGNIZING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Current State of HBCUs

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) consistently create unmatched opportunities for their Black students. While the COVID-19 pandemic shed light on long-standing inequities among postsecondary institutions, HBCUs continue to navigate the compounding impact of chronic underfunding while consistently delivering unparalleled results for Black students in America. This inequitable distribution of funding limits HBCU access to the digital infrastructure and resourcing necessary to invest in talent development, address rapid technological advancements, and drive Black student success.

HBCUs are institutions that were established prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the principal mission of educating and providing access to higher education opportunities for Black Americans.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Contributing 20% of the nation's Black graduates, HBCUs make up a mere 3% of American colleges and universities. About a quarter of Black science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduates come from HBCUs, as reported by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), and 80 percent of Black judges, 50 percent of Black doctors, and 50 percent of Black lawyers in the US are HBCU graduates. By centering holistic student engagement and culturally-responsive curriculums, HBCUs excel in fostering post-graduate success characterized by economic and social mobility. To ensure that graduates, especially Black STEM graduates, are equipped to navigate the ever-evolving technological landscape, HBCU leadership must first address the institutional challenges associated with expanding, maintaining, and investing in the infrastructure of digital learning infrastructure.

The HBCU DLI Initiative

The HBCU Digital Learning Infrastructure (DLI) initiative, a multi-year effort in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, explored the insights, opportunities, resources, and functionality needed to support Black and HBCU learners in equitable digital learning innovation. Throughout the initiative, Complete College America (CCA) collaborated with six HBCUs and two advisory councils to co-design a blueprint for scaling future investment.

The HBCU DLI initiative aimed to explore and share the unique approach behind HBCU success, amplify their expertise, and create a common framework for understanding and expanding digital learning infrastructure at HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), while empowering students through a participatory co-design model.

2 ADVISORY COUNCILS

12	**7**	**15**
subject matter experts	HBCU administrators	students from HBCUs or HBCCs (Historically Black Community Colleges)

6 CO-DESIGN INSTITUTIONS

3	**2**	**1**
Urban	Rural	Private

During this initiative, HBCU partners and students demonstrated how equity in practice, not just in principle, promotes community engagement well beyond an institutional mission statement. HBCU administrators, faculty, and staff consistently develop deep connections and bonds with their learners, and it makes a significant impact. This 2015 HBCU Gallup poll showed how HBCU graduates, in contrast to non-HBCU Black college graduates, thrive in three elements of well-being: financial, purpose, and social. This foundational level of holistic student support is a clear example of why CCA believes HBCUs embody its four Pillars of Transformation (Purpose, Structure, Momentum, and Support). By centering student success through engagement and belonging, HBCUs demonstrate how postsecondary institutions can provide purpose, structure, momentum, and support to advance higher education and digital learning everywhere. Therefore, the HBCU model of innovative, learner-centered success must be more widely acknowledged, adopted, and scaled to improve equitable learner outcomes.

For more info: CCA's 4 Pillars of Transformation

CCA's VISION:

The HBCU DLI initiative set out to ensure HBCUs have access to the technology necessary to create digital learning environments where, much like in-person learning, Black learners can hone skills that allow them to fully participate and thrive in an increasingly digital world. To actualize this vision, HBCUs must serve as postsecondary institutional role models in co-designing an intentional, inclusive, and impactful blueprint for DLI expansion. At its foundation, this initiative seeks the betterment of higher education everywhere for every Black learner, the diverse student populations within HBCUs, and, ultimately, for all students.

Virginia State University	Wiley College	Xavier University of Louisiana	Coppin State University	Langston University	Mississippi Valley State University
Petersburg, VA	Marshall, TX	New Orleans, LA	Baltimore, MD	Langston, OK	Itta Bena, MS

HBCUs: Safe Welcoming Spaces, Student-centric Nature and Values

Like most HBCUs, the six HBCUs selected to collaborate on the HBCU DLI initiative were founded to provide culturally safe spaces and support the intellectual and social development of Black students. Today, the need for these culturally safe spaces remains paramount for Black students and only continues to grow for other students who find their identities, feelings, and viewpoints dismissed amidst continued targeting and attacks that span across race, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation.

Many HBCUs have experienced significant increases and surges in enrollment which can be largely attributed to their student-centric nature and values. In 2022, HBCUs had 26% of students identify as non-Black, with a notable rise among Latinx students, continuing a now decade-long trend. As noted in a 2023 HBCU prospect student survey, this increase in non-Black student enrollment at HBCUs reflects a deeper craving, especially for students of color, for an educational environment that immerses students in a holistic curriculum that imparts the cultural and historical essence of Black learning,

Rather than being rewarded and recognized for consistently outpacing peer institutions in student success indicators, HBCUs are chronically underfunded. A combination of systemic racism embedded in federal and state funding allocations and historic neglect has directly resulted in preventable closures, outdated technology infrastructures, understaffed institutions, and underpaid employees. In this environment of "make more with less," HBCU employees often shoulder the weight of multiple roles, all while keeping student wellness at the core of their work.

See: Public and Private Investments and Divestments in HBCUs report

Inadequate Funding: Staffing Constraints and Student Needs

"We've run into a situation where folks are wearing multiple hats. They're doing admissions, they're in financial aid, and they're trying to address student affairs issues all at once. So, it's difficult. There just aren't enough people to effectively handle everything. We have to schedule our time very carefully just to meet student needs, which isn't ideal."

Dr. Tashia Bradley
COO and VP for Administration
Wiley College

Covid-19 Pandemic's Lingering Effects on Students

Despite the national rollback of COVID precautions, the long-term side-effects of COVID-19 continue to plague most learners at HBCUs, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as well as other postsecondary institutions across the nation. Students across the U.S. continue to navigate an array of systemic and seemingly insurmountable obstacles — racial inequality, socio-economic disparities, and limited access to mental health resources, in addition to the real-life implications of a digital divide. The need for sufficient bandwidth, access to modern technology, and resources to train faculty and staff were a few of the needs mentioned by HBCU students, including those who served on our Student Advisory Council during the initiative. Anything short of a fully funded technology infrastructure redesign that incorporates equitable digital technologies threatens to deepen the chasm of educational access and opportunity.

As institutions strive to support increased student needs, greater funding is necessary. Initially, the pandemic highlighted the critical importance of internet and broadband access, today we add on the need to have adequate access to digital devices and resources, including AI. The shift to online learning also spotlighted the critical role of federal and state governments, innovative technology companies, and philanthropic organizations to collaborate with HBCUs to make the systemic changes necessary to enable equitable digital education and futures nationwide. In the meantime, HBCU communities are actively remixing the digital narrative and are once again demonstrating their steadfast commitment to equity when it comes to digital student success and belonging.

> *"The playing field is not level today: On average, Black Americans are paid less and they have less access to computers, broadband and digital skills than white Americans."*
>
> Source: *Axios*
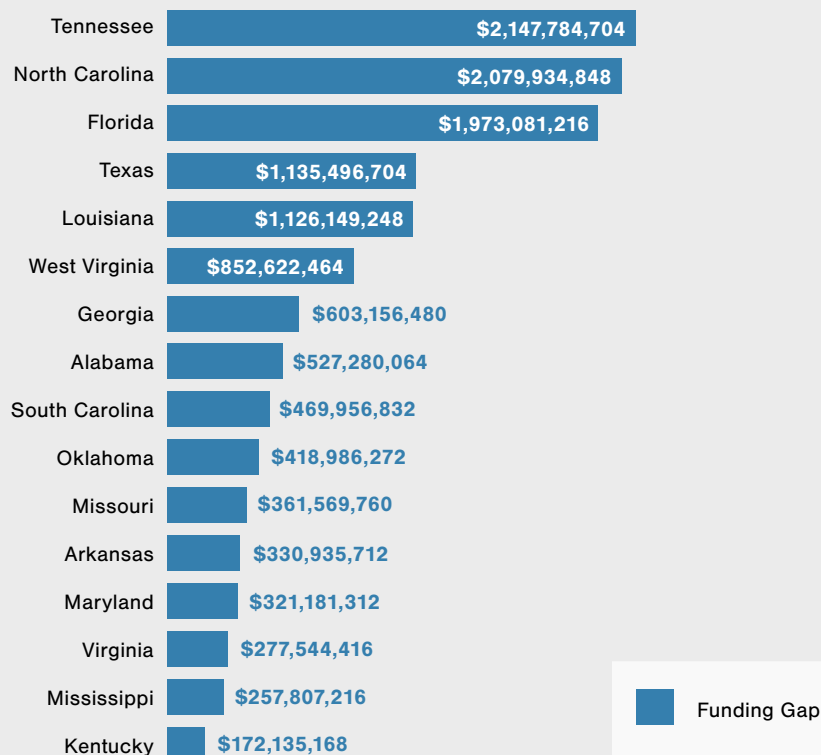
Historic Underfunding of Infrastructure

It is time to increase appropriations for HBCUs so they finally receive their fair share of higher education dollars. Increased capital funding will allow HBCUs to invest in technology to maintain the structured, supported, superior student experience that leads to higher completion rates. It will allow HBCUs to offer programs of study relevant and ready for a virtual world of machine learning and large language models. Appropriate levels of funding will allow HBCUs to develop models of online support and connection—models that lead to higher completion rates—so other institutions can learn from and adopt them.

"HBCUs must execute a more challenging technology pivot with fewer capital and personnel resources."

Quote from DLI Policy Brief

State Underfunding of Land-Grant HBCUs

A new federal analysis documents how much historically Black land-grant universities in 16 states were underfunded from 1987 to 2020, compared to the level of funding their traditionally white counterparts received. The Biden-Harris Administration is calling on those states to fund the universities equitably. Only Ohio and Delaware have equitably funded their land-grant HBCUs.

State	Funding Gap
Tennessee	$2,147,784,704
North Carolina	$2,079,934,848
Florida	$1,973,081,216
Texas	$1,135,496,704
Louisiana	$1,126,149,248
West Virginia	$852,622,464
Georgia	$603,156,480
Alabama	$527,280,064
South Carolina	$469,956,832
Oklahoma	$418,986,272
Missouri	$361,569,760
Arkansas	$330,935,712
Maryland	$321,181,312
Virginia	$277,544,416
Mississippi	$257,807,216
Kentucky	$172,135,168

Source: Department of Education Data • Katherine Knott | Inside Higher Ed

$12B
amount of underfunding due to HBCUs across 16 states
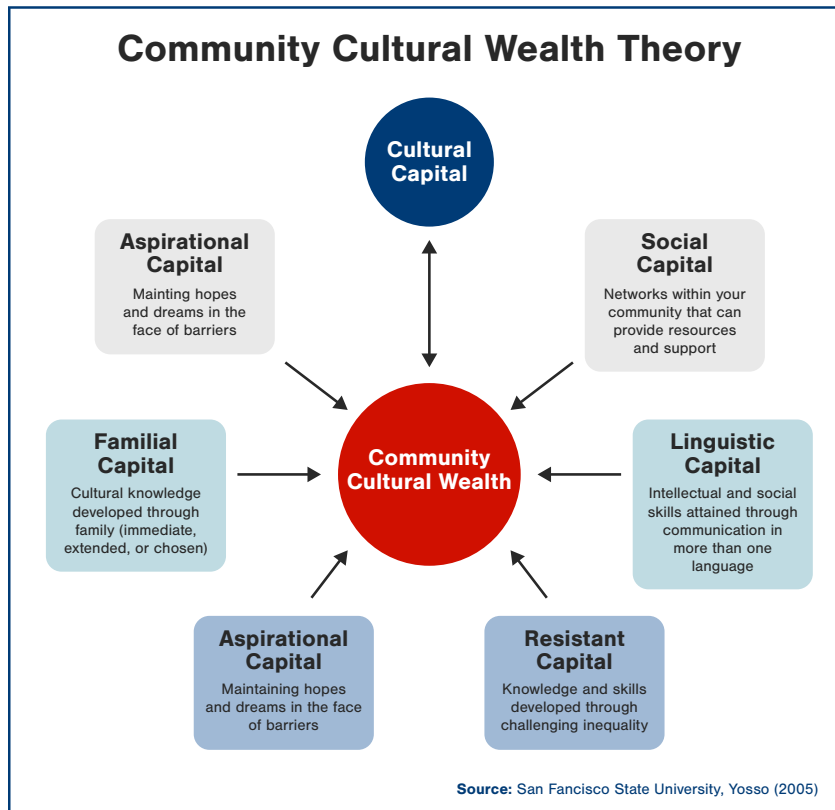
$13B
funding disparity among HBCU Land-grant institutions

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

The U.S. Department of Education calls attention to the underfunding of historically Black land-grant universities, a gap of $13 billion over 30 years (1987-2020).

Digital Student Success Powered by Community

HBCUs drive student success by recognizing how students innately bring community cultural wealth to their institutions. In her foundational Cultural Wealth Model, Dr. Tara J. Yosso recognizes six forms of "Community Cultural Wealth" that BILPOC (Black, Indigenous, Latin, and People of Color) can draw upon, including familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, linguistic capital, cultural capital, and aspirational capital.

Community Cultural Wealth Theory

Cultural Capital

Aspirational Capital
Mainting hopes and dreams in the face of barriers

Social Capital
Networks within your community that can provide resources and support

Familial Capital
Cultural knowledge developed through family (immediate, extended, or chosen)

Community Cultural Wealth

Linguistic Capital
Intellectual and social skills attained through communication in more than one language

Aspirational Capital
Maintaining hopes and dreams in the face of barriers

Resistant Capital
Knowledge and skills developed through challenging inequality

Source: San Fancisco State University, Yosso (2005)

INFORMING AND IDEATING

The HBCU DLI Mission

1. Explore and share the distinctive approach behind HBCU success

2. Amplify the expertise of HBCUs in the industry as role models for culturally responsive educators, dynamic educational institutions and caring communities

3. Create a common blueprint through which to understand scaling DLI infrastructure at HBCUs (DLI Taxonomy Framework)

4. Expand the framework into recommendations and tools that peer institutions can use to understand their DLI status and prioritize future investments

5. Create a common framework for understanding, designing, and expanding DLI at postsecondary institutions, especially for those who look to support Black and other learners of diverse backgrounds (DLI Audit Tool)

6. Co-design with and empower HBCU students to use their voice to co-create their digital futures as well as a lasting living framework for student belonging to pass on to future generations of learners

This report centers on the results and observations of Phase II-IV of the initiative. Read an overview of the design and development of the initial phases of the HBCU DLI initiative.

- **Phase I:** Planning: Development of the DLI Framework
- **Phase II:** Data Collection: HBCU Site Visits
- **Phase III:** Institution Selection and Research: Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups
- **Phase IV:** Student Advisory Council: Co-Design and Technology Innovation

Designing the Future: Connecting with HBCUs and Centering around Students

Complete College America's HBCU DLI Initiative, supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is a comprehensive project guided by equity-centered methodologies. The project has progressed through multiple phases including selection, research, co-design, and scaling in collaboration with selected HBCUs and two advisory councils, including a panel of current HBCU students, collaborated to develop a framework for understanding role of technology in improving student engagement and educational experience. With this framework for assessment and expansion, institutions are given a blueprint for bringing community-driven digital learning infrastructures to their campuses, and to digital classrooms everywhere.

The key insights from the initial phase of work guide the recommendations and information laid out in this report. While the findings won't surprise many HBCU students, alumni, faculty, or staff, the confirmation and documentation of the insights is key to informing next steps for digital learning work at HBCUs.

Key insights from the initial phase of the work:

HBCU institutions excel by providing:
- affirming, supportive and engaging environments, and
- historically rooted commitment to meeting Black students' needs.

HBCUs work to overcome and are challenged by:
- inadequate bandwidth, technology infrastructure, including incompatible software and platform integration,
- data inoperability, and
- few technologies that contribute to and support the students' wellness and learning experience.

To thrive and address challenges, HBCUs must have sustained and adequate investments from government, non-profit, and private groups to:
- update and innovate infrastructure to meet academic and student success technology needs,
- create and sustain peer training opportunities for all institutional stakeholders, and
- expand and establish research centers and innovation hubs to attract future funding, employees, and students.

The Importance of Community and Campus Events

The insights noted above prompted CCA to prioritize the exploration of three areas (see figure on page 10) for innovation and collaboration — a centralized student portal, an integrated data platform and talent development — that align with institutional needs and center the familial and communal nature of HBCUs. One obvious example of this familial and communal culture at HBCUs is campus events, a feature that digital learning technologies often disregard, which is non-negotiable for HBCUs where cultural, educational, and, at times, impromptu events are the heartbeat of campus life.

Events are central to HBCUs and students, and should be equally central to digital technologies

HBCU Traditions:
- Battle of the Bands
- Homecoming
- Greek Life
- All-Star Academic Challenge
- Battle of the Brains
- Access to vital extracurricular and co-curricular activities to HBCUs

PROPEL

Campus Practice: Propel Center

HBCU Innovation Hub
HBCU Ecosystem that upskills and catapults Black talent through scholarships and institutional Investments

Photo courtesy of Xavier University

DLI Innovation Priorities

Based on the ideas, feedback, and CCA's collaborative conversations with students, faculty, and staff, the following innovation priorities emerged:

Centralized Learner Hub: *Student Portal*
- "Mobile first" approach, ensure optimal accessibility, and acknowledging varied digital access
- One tool with 24/7 access to administration, academics, and support services information, resources, and department contacts
- Centralization of resources for academic support, counseling, and advising services
- Access to vital extracurricular and co-curricular activities at HBCUs

Educational Insights: *Data Platform*
- Accessible and open-sourced data warehouse
- Minimize and eliminate redundant technology
- Transparent and institution-led analytic inputs and metrics

Learning and Teaching Network: *Talent Development*
- Peer community of practice
- Technology instruction and support
- Access to shared resources and services

> "We must look at technology to support, not to supplant."

Dr. Walter Kimbrough
Interim President, Talladega College
Appointed Executive in Residence,
USC Race and Equity Center
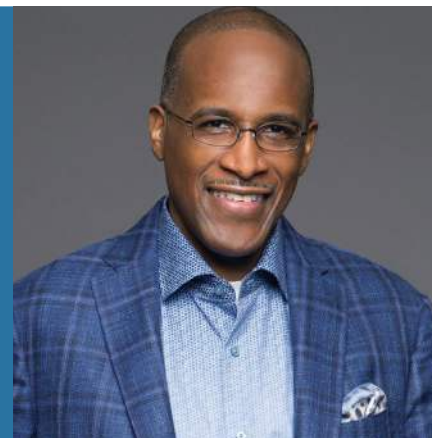
These three DLI innovation priorities:
1. recognize the holistic needs of HBCUs,
2. reflect the critical need to serve their students, and
3. recognize the need for a comprehensive investment approach to close the digital divide.

A literature review performed by WCET and The National Research Center for Distance Education and Technological Advances (DETA) on the impact of digital learning technologies found that of the hundreds of studies surveyed, only 17 included BILPOC students. This further underscores the need to center Black and other diverse learners in the development, implementation, and deployment of digital learning infrastructure.

Top HBCU Spend: Technology

Top spend among HBCUs of public and private funding from 2020 to 2022, versus all institutions whose top spend was lost revenue

The generous influx of public donations (and for some HBCUs private donations) to support HBCUs over the last few years has provided a rare opportunity for institutional investment in digital learning infrastructures for these institutions. Like their peers, HBCUs had little time to plan and far fewer resources, personnel, and expertise on campus to lead the charge. However, the DLI framework that emerged as HBCUs engineered digital solutions in real-time provided an important line of sight into the intentional decision-making embedded throughout the process.

FOUNDATION	**Vision**	**Policy**	**Communication**	**Planning & Change Management**	**Funding**
IT INFRASTRUCTURE	Connectivity & Access	Devices	IT Support & Maintenance	Security & Privacy	
DATA	Standards & Metrics (PDP)	Predictive Analytics	Architectue	Governance	Interoperatibilty
SOFTWARE & PLATFORMS	Tech Stack	Technology Applications	Integration		
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Training & On-boarding	Continuous Support	Professional Learning Communities	Talent Acquisition	
TEACHING & LEARNING	Courseware	LMS	Tutoring	Academic Support	Student Engagement
STUDENT SUPPORT	Alert Systems	Coaching & Advising	Wraparound & Wellness Services	Student Basic Needs	Single Information Portal
CULTURE & ENGAGEMENT	Social-Emotional Connection	Campus Life	Engagement & Belonging		

Row groupings (left margin): FOUNDATION; INSTITUTION (IT Infrastructure, Data, Software & Platforms); FACULTY & STAFF (Professional Development, Teaching & Learning); STUDENTS (Student Support, Culture & Engagement)

A roadmap by CCA, informed by co-design partners and funded by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Why technology planning?

- **Aligns technology goals with university goals.**
- **Prevents the duplication of systems.**
- **Helps to eliminate Saas Sprawl.**
- **Improves the opportunity for return on investment.**
- **Better understanding of IT on the campus.**

SOURCE: Complete College America YouTube Channel

FOUNDATION
Set the stage for leadership to engage with a successful digital transformation

INSTITUTION
Provide the necessary technical and structural supports

FACULTY AND STAFF:
Support adaptation, training and collaboration

STUDENTS:
Center supports systems on their wellness, aspirations, and learning styles

The Importance of Technology Planning

Coming out of our exploration of the three innovation priorities for Digital Learning Infrastructure, we directed our focus to the foundational components vital to establishing a robust digital learning ecosystem. Achieving equity and ensuring access to high-quality education in the digital era necessitate a comprehensive approach, integrating technological advancements, policy development, and community involvement. This section examines the essential elements that constitute an effective digital learning infrastructure, emphasizing strategic initiatives and key actions that can catalyze transformative progress in educational practices and outcomes.

DLI Audit & Assessment Tool

HBCUs are at the forefront of inclusive student success in higher education. Inspired by HBCU success stories and feedback from our Student Advisory Council, CCA has created an online DLI audit tool to amplify best practices and enhance equitable digital strategic planning within postsecondary institutions. Building on insights from the HBCU DLI taxonomy framework, this tool streamlines the assessment of an institution's current digital infrastructure and highlights how to prioritize areas needing institutional investment and expansion.

Visit the DLI assessment tool .at completecollege.org/dli-assessment.

Students are at the Heart of Successful Co-designs

In addition to this institutional audit process, it's crucial to recognize the evolving nature of the digital learning landscape at HBCUs and other postsecondary institutions. To effectively move from a discrete one-point-in-time consultation to a co-design collaboration necessitates the incorporation of continuous, dynamic feedback, particularly from those most impacted by these policies: students.

The incorporation of student's voice within institutional changemaking is essential to aligning with the immediate DLI needs of HBCUs in addition to ensuring its effective scaling and impact. Using the insights from our Student Advisory Council, this initiative aims to encourage future investment in capacity-building and digital technologies, and to explore new opportunities to amplify and empower HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs. In the final phase of the initiative, the HBCU student voice was critical to ensuring that the strategies developed throughout the co-design process truly represent and meet the needs of the modern digital learner.

IN PRACTICE: Student Perspectives on Digital Infrastructure and Learning

In seeking to align digital learning infrastructure with feedback from students—especially those from HBCUs and MSIs—the HBCU DLI initiative sheds light on a complex fabric of necessities and aspirations. The culmination of this DLI initiative, informed by the voices of 15 Student Advisory Council members, reflects a nuanced understanding of this landscape. Students at HBCUs and MSIs have expressed the need for a balance between preserving their unique educational experiences and embracing technological advancements. They requested increased Wi-Fi bandwidth and curriculum that includes how to engage with modern digital trends (including AI) that bolster postgraduate student success. While the initiative's inception focused on the fundamentals of digital infrastructure—availability, awareness, and adoption—the mission has evolved to prioritize student voice above all else to better understand the power of student experience and community-centered care present in all facets of HBCU offerings, a level of care from which all learners should experience and benefit.

The students' feedback highlights a need for professional development, stronger digital communication, expanded broadband access, and AI-enhanced technologies to improve the overall quality of education and make it possible for institutions to both address immediate needs and evolve to fit future needs. This perspective aligns with the initiative's evolving objectives as well as findings from the prior HBCU DLI "Progress and Insights Report." As digital infrastructure continues to integrate within classrooms, daily life, and the workplace, these strategies help materialize a future in which digital empowerment and personalized support through various digital technologies are recognized as integral to student success.

During their co-design engagement, the students explored the opportunities and current challenges of their colleges and universities while the institutions worked in tandem to craft and design digital innovation to further support their success. Opportunities to invest in digital learning infrastructure (i.e.. platform integration, learning management systems, data sharing dashboards, technology training, early alert systems,

Critical Questions Explored:

- Student perspectives on HBCU/MSI DLI
- Co-design for enhancing DLI investment OR innovating DLI investment with student solutions
- HBCU/MSI successes via student-driven enhancements

Student Demographics:

- 53% female-identifying
- 47% male-identifying
- 80% Black
- 13% Biracial
- 7% Latina/x
- 13% LGBTQIA+
- 7% Parenting student

Represented Identities and Lived Experiences:

- Rural, community college, reverse-transfer, immigrant, LGBTQIA+, parenting adult-learner, part-time, working, and Pell-awarded

HBCU students aim high and they rarely miss. They are keeping their eyes ahead to help pave a smoother road for future students.

enhanced broadband access) are viewed by students as tools to increase efficiency and maximized productivity, not to replace face-to-face student engagement across campuses. The desire among students to improve connectivity and preserve the unique HBCU/MSI experience remained paramount throughout. Each work session, focus group, or panel discussion included conversations about the deeply entrenched sense of belonging and service and the "HBCU/MSI Experience," embedded in their campus cultures. Understanding the unique capability of HBCUs to improve digital infrastructures on their campuses is critical to creating student success strategies for campuses nationwide.

The Complexity of Being Student Centered in an Intersectional Way

HBCU students are not a monolith. They are composed of multi-dimensional identities that cannot be grouped into neat buckets. In describing the student-centricity of the HBCU experience, it doesn't mean centering tropes of the stereotypical Black student; it means centering each students' unique identity in a culturally responsive and identity affirming way.

> **Examples from student work of different facets of identity that presented potential barriers to success:**
>
> "...it's not that my Blackness or my woman-ness wasn't salient. It was that the barrier that showed up for me the most in college was income. Because it's the thing that had me working two, three jobs while trying to go to school. It's the thing I was hyper aware of. For students, whatever is prevalent for them can shift.'" - Shonda Goward

Incorporating the diverse student voice in the co-design of learning technology ensures that the digital tools used support the unique ways HBCU learners and learners of all backgrounds engage with and succeed in their educational journeys. The HBCU DLI initiative required transparency with the students about historical underfunding. Acknowledging these difficult truths is not just about being open about the systemic barriers, but also about empowering students. It contextualizes their educational journey, offering a deeper understanding of the significance of their achievements in the face of the systemic under-resourcing of the institutions they attend. Perhaps most importantly, this transparency often contributes to a shared sense of collective purpose and the motivation to advocate for equitable educational technology funding and resources for all students.

When the information about chronic underfunding was shared during the HBCU DLI initiative, it became apparent that, although the students were mostly unaware of the situation, no one expressed real shock. The students noted that, across their educational experiences, faculty and staff would also benefit from the same DLI investments that students themselves need.

Involving students as collaborators in the technology design process has several benefits. Firstly, it reduces friction and builds trust. If it's for the benefit of students, there is no need for an institution to create mystery around the introduction of new policies and practices around digital learning. Institutional leadership must communicate clearly about its benefits and intended use. Secondly, student voice should be part of any co-design and co-development in order to foster a sense of agency and connect students to the success of the technology. These best practices are foundational strategies for creating solutions that are not only inclusive but also empower the entire learning community. This approach mirrors the ethos of HBCUs, which prioritize inclusivity and empowerment in relationships through their institutional practices.

> STRENGTH: **Knowing When Someone is in Need**
>
> *"They check in on us if they haven't heard anything in a bit. They might even show up at your door, and they often know what you are groing through. That's big!"*
>
> *— Student Advisory Council Member*

Student Advisory Council Activities:

- 12-month engagement
- 7 virtual sessions, including 3 summer workshops
- 2 in-person events
- Keynote speaker
- Shark tank style pitches
- Presentations
- Publication

From Exploitative Engagements to Sustainable Support

All too often when external entities or vendors engage with HBCUs, they engage in counter-productive practices where the benefit to the technology vendor is greater than the benefit to the administrator, faculty, staff, student, or institution. This unfortunately often shows up in partnerships and, ultimately, vendor contracts that prioritize external commercial and business interests over the long-term usability, sustainability and educational interests of HBCUs.

Technology vendors often have an implicit financial incentive to deprioritize meaningful collaboration with stakeholders, leading to solutions that do not adequately address the unique challenges and strengths of the HBCU campus. With this in mind, it is critical that HBCUs have the resources to build internal capacity and reduce dependency on external entities, empowering institutions to maintain greater control over their interests.

Intimately aware of chronic underfunding and limited budgets, HBCUs are understandably wary of purely profit-centered business vendors. Instead, they seek partnerships that offer real strategic benefits alongside mission alignment. This informed CCA's collaboration with The Ada Center to develop "Navigating Student Success Technology." Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this five-part curriculum builds on six years of student-centered insights to help HBCUs, MSIs, and other mission-driven institutions to scale tech infrastructures to support their student success and equity goals.

Who Can Use the FREE Navigating Student Success Technology curriculum?

Inspired by HBCU and MSI best practices, this curriculum is open to all institutions of higher learning and can be adapted to suit any college or university context. The curriculum can be used by professionals and leaders who work in student success, academic affairs, IT, or many other areas of a university.

- **Module 1:** How Can Student Success Technology Advance Institution Goals?
- **Module 2:** How Does My College Create a Student Success Technology Plan?
- **Module 3:** What Do Students Think About Our Technology?
- **Module 4:** How Should We Approach Buying New Technology?
- **Module 5:** How Can We Effectively Implement Technology Projects?

For more info or to sign up, visit here.

Creating Co-design Spaces with Students

The HBCU DLI initiative advocates for prioritizing student involvement within the co-design process in order to ensure long-term student engagement and wellbeing. Co-designing spaces that resonate with students' needs and diverse identities sets the stage for genuine participation and collaboration. By soliciting feedback regularly, respecting their time, and communicating proactively to avoid unwanted surprises, institutional leadership commits to represent diverse student voice, fostering long-term engagement and driving strong student outcomes.

Creating spaces for co-design with students requires intentional efforts to reflect their identities and foster rapport. This begins with selecting appropriate event locations, food, music, activities, and staffing that resonate with their backgrounds and preferences, creating a welcoming environment. Providing a space where students feel comfortable being themselves is crucial, allowing them to express their identities to engage authentically with the design process. Sharing personal stories, including struggles and moments of joy or goofiness, helps to build trust and mutual understanding, creating a supportive atmosphere for collaboration and open communication.

Additionally, asking for feedback early and often is essential for empowering students and ensuring their voices are heard throughout the DLI co-design process. Incorporating their input into the work demonstrates a commitment to representing their perspectives and priorities. Flexibility and adaptability are key, recognizing students' schedules and competing priorities helps to minimize disruptions and maximize their participation. There are enough daily stressors in these students' lives, so it's important to communicate each step of the co-design process, avoiding surprises and providing clear expectations to foster a sense of ownership and confidence in their contributions. A space for co-design has to be both intentional and consistent to promote meaningful collaboration and empower students to direct their educational experiences and future endeavors.

Additional Student Perspectives & Common Themes

It is difficult to fully capture the wealth of experiential knowledge discussed throughout conversations with the HBCU DLI Student Advisory Council. They shared personal anecdotes and challenges, as well as expressed their aspirations and concerns. Students must be empowered to take ownership of their student experience and co-design technology in partnership with their institution. This transition from transactional to transformational engagement with HBCU students is the key to creating improved collaboration and impactful outcomes.

Several common themes have emerged from conversations with the members of the Student Advisory Council, shedding light on the factors that facilitate a conducive digital learning environment and what impedes it. Acknowledging the strides made in digital infrastructure development, students commended their institutions on their increased investments in digital learning to aid in expanding access to higher learning. Digital resources have not only driven inclusion, but also have helped reduce the costs associated with textbooks and materials for some of their courses. Similarly, hybrid learning models offer much-needed flexibility to accommodate responsibilities and schedules, and innovative technology applications simplify the learning processes, making note-taking, studying, and collaboration more accessible than ever before.

For students and HBCU institutions, CCA DLI consultants became trusted partners in ensuring the care, concern, and support needed for successful DLI co-designs and implementation.

WORKSHOP SPOTLIGHT

Keynote Speaker:
Delali Dzirasa
Founder, Fearless Tech,
Speaker at April 2023 SAC
Birmingham, Alabama event

One of the initiative's workshops featured Fearless Tech founder Delali Dzirasa on how to co-design with soul. Student Advisory Council members created their recommendations for improving student academic supports and the types of technology they see as vital supplements to enhance the student experience.

Artist's rendering of what students want from their interactions with staff
Source: *The Sketch Effect*

What's Working

- The availability of "always-on" support has further empowered students, providing expansive and continuous academic support, eliminating physical barriers to basic services
- Technology's role in deepening the care and support for students is unmistakable within HBCUs, with digitization making services more accessible and 24-hour tutoring removing time constraints
- The introduction of new technologies, particularly AI and automation, promises to alleviate administrative burdens, potentially reducing errors and increasing efficiency

What's Not Working

- Adoption of digital technologies (including supportive chatbots, AI, etc.) is not without challenges or learning curves; many challenges are systemic and require broad investments for these colleges.
- Outdated systems, glitchy platforms, and limited training on the plethora of technology requirements contributes to resistance to the adoption of digital learning tools by HBCU students.
- Inequitable access to information and services remains a hurdle, with communication platforms and channels often being inefficient or nonexistent.
- The support infrastructure for faculty also requires broad investments as they require more training to leverage learning and administrative tools effectively.

The Importance of In-Person Experiences and Digital Community

Drawing from student insights, this report underscores the positive impact on students of the uniquely engaging and vibrant communities present on HBCU campuses. This community-centered impact can and should be replicable in any digital learning environment. Thoughtful deployment of technology "for HBCUs, by HBCUs" and "for students, by students" must be at the forefront of this work. HBCU leaders must be the ones who lead their postsecondary counterparts in learning how to build and support in-person and digital learning communities for Black students and all students of diverse backgrounds.

HBCU Hallmark: In-Person Authentic Experiences and Campus Events for Community, Belonging and Family

Throughout the project, administrators, faculty, staff, and students voiced that the sense of community, belonging, and family—hallmarks of the HBCU experience—must be replicated in the increasingly online and digital campus experience. Yet in setting out to create an equitable future, the past cannot be entirely left behind, especially as certain cultural histories are only shared within the halls of HBCUs and should be integrated into future DLI and curriculum planning.

Unlike other institutions of higher education, it is not uncommon for Black learners at HBCUs to be on a first-name basis with senior administrators or have an affectionate nickname for faculty or staff who support or advise them. When the members of the Student Advisory Council were asked to name a person who was pivotal to their success, the roles of the 23 people named broke down as follows: 43% were faculty, 22% senior administrators, and 13% were resident advisors (RAs).

> **HBCU STRENGTH: Feels like "Home"**
>
> *"I love my college because it is a home where I feel safe, and can be unapologetically me, greatness starts here."*
>
> *— Student Advisory Council Member*

Students Know of the Voids That Can Exist Within Technology

For the Student Advisory Council, the biggest concern was a connection to a credible source of knowledge, and the ability to self-service to meet varying student needs from day-to-day or year-to-year. Students hesitated to view technology as the sole solution or "silver bullet" to solve everything, and yet they recognize it is essential for student success. Often, there are too many dead ends or places where information doesn't flow, and students often do not get the guidance, support, or technologies that they need.

"Will we lose human touch if we get too close to technology? HBCUs are known to give us a personalized touch that we just do not receive at other educational institutions."

Improvement/Investment Needed: Information Equity

- "You shouldn't have to be well-known to receive opportunities."
- "The staff in career services and the library in the Academic Center for Excellence are the best at meeting you where you're at and guiding you to the right track. Can technology?"

Improvement/Investment Needed: Reliable Information & Data

- "We have multiple event and student success technology yet it's confusing to know when to use which one, and some have different information which is frustrating."
- "There are often incorrect or out-of-date course offerings (posted)."
- "For FAFSA preparation and financial aid portion of the process, it is not uncommon for people to be misled regarding funds. This is a big issue... and I have been misled by information online."

Improvement/Investment Needed: Supportive Mental Resources

- "Technology can't support you when you need help with stress and to help you emotionally. When you try to reach someone to address something quickly, sometimes technology really can't help you and can very much be a bad thing at that moment."
- "Not enough opportunities for introverts to express their talents and engage."
- "Lots of people don't talk about the effect of grief on a student in their academic and social life."

Campus Practice: Instructional Technologists | Wiley College

New staff assist faculty in adapting their courses to support the accessibility and learning styles of students to increase engagement and multi-media.

Campus Practice: Technology Champions | Virginia State University

Recruited and trained champions (paid with stipends) who provided training and instruction to faculty, staff, and students on various campus technology tools.

Campus Practice: Connecting Systems | Wiley College

The administration added additional SIS modules to enable technology to connect and talk to each other, so staff and other administrators are all connected via the same tool.

Campus Practice: FAQ Student Videos | Xavier University of New Orleans

Short interactive videos provide students with information on how to register, drop a course, and access resources and campus tools.

Student Needs: Technology Types, Classroom Development, and Mental Support

Students expressed their needs across three areas: technology types, classroom development, and mental health support. These categories reflect key aspects of a holistic educational experience, combining the latest in technology, effective teaching methods, and robust support systems in the ways that can help.

Digital Tools:
Educational Technology Needs (Physical)

Teaching and Learning:
Pedagogical Development (Physical)

Support and Encouragement:
Student Wellbeing and Motivation (Mental)

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) exhibit compares the lives of Black and white people in Birmingham, including a white classroom and Black classroom in 1942.

Photo courtesy of Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

The Ideal Student Experience: Student Technology Solutions & Pitch Competition

As part of the HBCU DLI initiative, students participated in a pitch competition and challenge. They pooled their experiences and ideas to devise potential technology solutions aimed at enhancing digital learning and reflecting on what distinguishes their unique HBCU campuses — from social dynamics to racial consciousness. Tasked with advancing their digital learning infrastructure, they crafted tailored services addressing

	DIGITAL CLASSROOM ENHANCEMENT	STUDENT ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT	ACADEMIC ADVISING WITH AI	WELLNESS AND COACHING	HOLISTIC SUPPORT NETWORK
FOCUS	Increase use of digital tools in classrooms and engage students to create interactive elements and support their learning style preferences	To engage all students, including introverted or non-participatory students, in campus life by providing personalized event notifications to foster and encourage social and professional development and growth through matches	Streamline academic advising and course registration, addressing the issue of inconsistent and untimely support which can lead to delayed graduations and extra costs for students	Support the wellbeing of students by providing weekly encouragement and stress management tools	Addresses various student support needs, especially basic needs and other barriers to graduation by providing integrated support services and safety net
CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES	‣ Practical classroom applications ‣ Student participation in design ‣ Increase in classroom engagement	‣ Personalized activity notifications ‣ Integration into students' calendars ‣ Usability to connect with faculty, staff, alumni, and employers ‣ Digital ticketing for events, eliminating queues ‣ Inclusive of faculty and student use	‣ Triages need for in-person meetings based on provided info ‣ Minimizes risk of misinformation ‣ Provides assistance through a chatbot for real-time support ‣ Keeps track of important dates for students to plan ahead ‣ Flags for students' class availability to plan and support progression ‣ Personalizes academic pathway(s)	‣ Daily and weekly check-ins ‣ Well-being polls ‣ Motivation and personalized encouragement through messages, videos, or calls ‣ Aims to uplift, support and inspire students, particularly during challenging times to reduce stress levels	‣ Offers mental health support with professional recommendations and referrals to vetted, secure, and approved tools ‣ Support and community resourcing to obtain transportation and housing support and referrals ‣ Access to personal support such as childcare and caregiver options ‣ Enhance resource accessibility to shcedule care and support on campus or within the community

Note: Data was retrieved from student pitches to enhance campus technology and student services without revealing project details or names.

academic advising, social-emotional well-being, and family support, among other needs (detailed below). This collaborative effort, dedicated to enhancing student life through technology, set out to meet foundational and basic needs and support students translate their experience into the broader context of the world students are now navigating.

As the pitch competition ended, it was clear that the ideal student experience is one where technology bridges gaps—gaps in learning, support, and community that are often widened for Black and diverse learners by systemic inequities.

These diverse learners drew from their unique backgrounds to co-design and propose technological solutions that not only enhance digital learning but also tackle the broader spectrum of needs including mental health and financial support. These student-driven proposals and initiatives reflect a keen understanding that their needs, heightened by historical disparities, require comprehensive, culturally-responsive supports. The innovative solutions presented—ranging from digital classroom enhancements to a comprehensive support network— demonstrate a commitment to create a nurturing environment where all students, regardless of background, can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This collaboration is more than a response to current challenges; it's a proactive step towards inclusivity and equity in education, ensuring that every student has the tools and support necessary to succeed.

Empowering Learners: Aligning Student Needs with Digital Solutions

Technology has been on campuses for decades, though not equitably distributed. Advisory council members shared their thoughts on the adoption of new technology and DLI, incorporating already-existing technologies that, with some refinements and augmentation, could help meet the needs of all learners at their institution. As campus representatives, the second advisory council posed a question to the Student Advisory Council: What features would you prioritize and why? Students voiced their priorities clearly, shedding light on the enhancements they deem essential for enriching their academic journey. With this community feedback in mind, the Advisory Council delved into the preferred features that mirror the unique supports they need to enhance their HBCU experience.

HBCU enrollment was associated with a 35% reduction in the odds of metabolic syndrome.

Translation: Attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is linked to a 35% lower chance of developing metabolic syndrome, a group of conditions that increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. This suggests that HBCUs not only support academic success but also contribute to better overall health for their students.

Source: National Library of Medicine

Here is what HBCU students shared:

1. Students underscored the importance of financial planning and aid support, highlighting the urgency for transparent and accessible financial guidance.
2. Enrollment, retention, and engagement analytics emerged as pivotal in tracking and supporting students' academic progress.
3. Additionally, the demand for a centralized resource hub, career readiness tools, and community collaboration platforms further emphasizes the desire for an interconnected, supportive network that extends beyond mere academic support.

Student quotes that give insight to their preferences include:

Financial Support

"We need more frequent reminders and accessible information on handling our financial obligations... Maybe an app could show us how to manage payments and find grants or scholarships."

On the Importance of Analytics

"There should be more proactive engagement... technology should be pushing important updates and academic reminders to us when we actually need them."

On the Role of AI

"AI could serve as a good short-term solution for our needs, given our systemic underfunding... it doesn't take away from the HBCU culture, which we mostly get from our peers."

In essence, these technologies are not merely tools; they are lifelines that bolster the educational scaffolding for students facing everyday systemic challenges. Focusing on these prioritizing these accessibility features allows for the development of robust platforms that address the comprehensive needs of all HBCU students, ensuring their success in an ever-evolving academic landscape.

Findings & Key Takeaways

In studying and exploring the lived experiences of HBCU students, it became evident that true support of their academic and personal growth must acknowledge and address the complexity of their identities and the systemic challenges they face. The findings presented here reflect an in-depth understanding of these multifaceted needs and the institutional barriers that must be overcome. Below are key takeaways that encapsulate the crucial areas for improvement and the strides that need to be taken to foster an environment that is truly student-centered and conducive to the success of every learner.

Recognizing student identity complexity is critical: HBCU students possess a spectrum of intersecting identities that inform their unique needs and potential barriers to success, requiring the culturally responsive and identity-affirming approach to student support in which HBCUs excel.

Students need multifaceted support: Support systems must be as diverse and complex as the students themselves to address historical and systemic barriers effectively, with particular attention to prevalent issues like economic challenges and mental health challenges/stressors from current events, etc. impacting students' educational journeys.

Systemic underfunding has led to technology infrastructure debt: Prolonged systemic underfunding has resulted in significant technology infrastructure deficits, affecting the ability of HBCUs to provide current and effective digital tools for education. Until this is addressed, a digital divide, especially with AI, is a likely outcome.

Systemic underfunding has led to employee capacity gaps: Chronic underfunding of HBCUs also manifests as gaps in employee capacity, hindering the provision of adequate support and resources for the diverse student body.

III. COMMITTING TO NEXT STEPS

Recommendations

HBCUs exemplify culturally responsive, relevant, and identity-affirming care in education. To extend this ethos into the realm of technology, it is vital to not view technology as an all-encompassing solution, but as a tool to be infused with these core values through a multi-pronged and comprehensive approach.

Achieving this requires focusing on the needs of the mission-oriented and broad-access institutions and all their stakeholders. For HBCUs, this requires acknowledging the need to fully fund their technical infrastructures, access to comprehensive training and support, and a co-design approach with stakeholders, especially students, to ensure technological solutions are identity-affirming and equitable. These areas are interlinked and must continuously evolve to reflect and honor the fundamental principles that HBCUs stand for in this rapidly changing technological world.

CCA is equipped and ready to work with HBCUs and their partners and advocates to implement these recommendations.

*"Inspired by the comprehensive framework of servingness outlined in the recent AIR report, **any Digital Learning Infrastructure project for Black and minoritized learners should prioritize not only access to digital education but also equitable student outcomes.** By integrating strategies that address retention, completion, and institutional support, we aim to **build a digital learning environment that truly serves the diverse needs of our students."***

Future Research

One limitation of the HBCU DLI study was its short time frame. Longitudinal and future research would provide deeper insights into the sustained impact of technology on student success. Additionally, expanding the participant pool beyond the six co-design institutions would allow for a greater understanding of any technology's effectiveness, especially across diverse educational contexts.

Further research should investigate and implement co-design models with HBCUs, TCUs, and other institutions, assessing long-term technology impacts, stakeholder engagement, and educational equity. Research on sustaining these impacts and replicating successful models at other institutions is vital to establishing responsive and inclusive environments that translate into digital learning spaces. HBCU leadership and institutions, known for their student-ready co-design approaches, possess invaluable insights into fostering a sense of community that other institutions could greatly benefit from. HBCU leaders should act as role models for other institutions and higher education colleagues in developing robust community-building initiatives and student success strategies that align with equitable digital technology policies and practice, creating a culture where every student feels seen, heard, and integral to the community.

Opportunities for Additional Investigation & Research

The HBCU Digital Learning Initiative surfaced several key insights that are informing innovation and continuous improvement on college campuses and across state systems in the short-term. Beyond these actionable insights, the initiative has uncovered opportunities for on-going research and exploration to better understand the impact of the co-design process, cultural sustaining practices, the impact of engagement and belonging on student success, and the role of technology in enabling academic and cultural innovation.

Opportunity 1: Efficacy & Impact of the Co-Design Process
The co-design process is a unique and promising model for engaging a broader group of stakeholders – especially students – in developing new ideas and solutions to challenges on college campuses. Co-design stands in stark contrast to the more common "top-down" approach that reserves decisions making for senior leaders. Research into impact of co-design relative to other problems solving and change management frameworks, especially the efficacy of specific practices withing the model, could inform future efforts to address systemic problems.

Opportunity 2: AI & Personalized Student Support

This initiative began before the popularization of large language models (LLMs) following the public release of OpenAI's ChatGPT and other similar tools. Since their release, the potential for AI to impact every aspect of the student experience has become a wide-spread topic for discussion and experimentation. AI-done-right has the potential to address many of the opportunities surfaced during this initiative, including: personalized learning, holistic student support, coaching and advising, career services, and easier access to information across campus. These applications, of course, should be scrutinized through rigorous research to ensure efficacy and mitigate harm.

Opportunity 3: The Impact of Engagement & Belonging

As this report highlights, students at HBCUs said the culture of engagement and belonging was critical to their success. These hard-to-measure experiences deserve far more research given the anecdotal evidence for the impact on student success. It's possible that a framework for measuring and evaluating metrics beyond the traditional measures of student success will yield new insights into ways that campus culture can support student success

Opportunity 4: Impact of Co-Design on Equity & Inclusion

Future investigations should also focus on how the co-design approach can advance equity in education. Quantitative and qualitative studies are necessary to evaluate if this approach helps overcome systemic biases and barriers, leading to more equitable educational experiences for underrepresented minority students.

Opportunity 5: Indicators of Success for Tech Vendor– Institution Partnerships

A recurring theme in this work was the importance of reliable third-party partnerships with technology vendors in enabling institutions to provide meaningful digital experiences across teaching and learning and student affairs. While a wide range of success factors were raised, it's clear that there is more work to do to understand the specific elements of successful partnerships that lead to sustainability and success.

Opportunity 6: Building Community Beyond HBCUs

The undeniable success of HBCUs in supporting the college and career goals of Black students is worthy of additional study. Where possible, the factors that lead to disproportionate success rates relative to PWIs should be described in a ways that enable equity-focused institutions to learn and implement best practices that lead to dramatic improvements in success rates for Black college students.

In essence, the future of research in this area lies in embracing the holistic and collaborative ethos that has marked the successes of the HBCU DLI. Focusing on long-term, equitable partnerships that recognize and value the contributions of all stakeholders positions higher education to usher in an era of educational technology that is as responsive and dynamic as the communities it serves.

The co-design approach with HBCUs (and other institutions) has shown promise for enhancing educational technologies. Future research areas include:

- **Contextual Relevance:** Assessing the long-term impact of co-designed technologies and their influence on student success within their cultural and academic context.

- **Empowerment and Investment:** Identifying effective engagement strategies for HBCU stakeholders in the co-design process to ensure ownership and digital solution adoption.

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Investigating how co-design may address educational inequities and support underrepresented minority students.

- **Tailored Solutions:** Evaluating the fit between technology solutions and the unique goals and teaching methods of HBCUs.

- **Study Long-Term Partnerships:** Analyzing the evolution of ongoing collaborations between HBCUs and tech developers for sustained improvement and support.

- **Evaluate Ongoing Support Models:** Identifying best practices for continuous technical and pedagogical support post-implementation in HBCUs.

- **HBCU Success Model Template:** Comparing the application of the HBCU co-design model in different HBCUs and MSIs and their respective challenges and successes.

- **Develop Frameworks for Inclusivity:** Crafting frameworks for inclusive digital learning co-design for application in diverse educational environments.

- **Measure Impact on Student Engagement:** Examining the effects of co-design and community-building on student involvement and success outcomes across a variety of institutions.

This future research will continue to support the collaborative ethos of the HBCU DLI initiative, fostering educational technology that resonates with the needs of all learners everywhere.

APPENDIX

I.   Co-Design Institutions

The participating colleges and universities represent two and four-year institutions in rural and urban settings. Regionally, the institutions are in the southeast, southwest, mid-west, and mid-Atlantic United States. Listed below are the institutions represented by the Student Advisory Council:

Coppin University:

Coppin was founded in 1900 at what was then called Colored High School (later named Douglass High School) on Pennsylvania Avenue by the Baltimore City School Board who initiated a one-year training course for the preparation of African American elementary school teachers. By 1902, the training program was expanded to a two-year Normal Department within the high school, and seven years later it was separated from the high school and given its own principal.

In 1926, this facility for teacher training was named Fanny Jackson Coppin Normal School in honor of the outstanding African American woman who was a pioneer in teacher education. Fanny Jackson Coppin was born a slave in Washington, D.C. She gained her freedom, graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio, and founded the Philadelphia Institute that was the forerunner of Cheyney State University.

Coppin was officially renamed Coppin State College, and in 1967 the first Bachelor of Arts degree was conferred. In 1988, the College became part of the newly organized University of Maryland System (now the University System of Maryland.)

Langston University:

Langston University is the only historically black college or university (HBCU) in the state of Oklahoma. Langston opened its doors in 1897 to 41 students on a single campus; today serves approximately 3,000 students on three unique campuses providing a robust educational experience that prepares students for leadership in the career of their choosing. (70% of the student body are first-generation students).

Mississippi Valley State University:

Legislation authorizing the establishment of Mississippi Vocational College was enacted by the Mississippi Legislature in 1946. The express purpose for the new college was to train teachers for rural and elementary schools and to provide vocational training. In 1964, the name changed to Mississippi Valley State College, and in 1974, The Valley became Mississippi Valley State University. The name changes reflect the expanding mission and program offerings of the University.

Virginia State University:

VSU is founded on March 6, 1882, when the state legislature passed a bill to charter the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. The bill was sponsored by

Delegate Alfred W. Harris, a Black attorney whose offices were in Petersburg, but lived and represented Dinwiddie County in the General Assembly. After a 19-month delay due to a hostile lawsuit, the institute finally opened its doors on October 1, 1883.

Wiley College:

In 1873, less than eight years after all hostilities were quieted from the Civil War, the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church founded Wiley College near Marshall, Texas for the purpose of allowing Negro youth the opportunity to pursue higher learning in the arts, sciences and other professions. Named in honor of Bishop Isaac William Wiley, an outstanding minister, medical missionary and educator, Wiley College was founded during turbulent times for Blacks in America. Although African American males were given the right to vote in 1870, intimidation of America's newest citizens in the form of violence increased. The U.S. Supreme Court helped pave the way for segregation with the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision that approved of the "separate but equal" doctrine.

Xavier University of Louisiana:

Being America's only Historically Black and Catholic University is just the first of the distinctions that have set Xavier University of Louisiana apart for more than eight decades. Xavier's origins date back to 1915, when then Mother Katharine Drexel, a former Philadelphia socialite who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and devoted her life to the education of African Americans and Native Americans, opened a high school on the site previously occupied by Southern University. A Normal School, offering one of the few career fields (teaching) open to Blacks at the time, was added two years later. Ten years later, in 1925, Xavier University of Louisiana became a reality when the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences was established. The first degrees were awarded three years later. In 1927, a College of Pharmacy was opened.

II.   Advisory Board

Danette Adams, Director of Student Leadership & Engagement, Clark Atlanta University

MJ Bishop, Vice President of Integrative Learning Design, University of Maryland Global Campus

Gregory T. Busch, Former President & CEO, Mesalands Community College

Melanie Carter, Associate Provost & Director, Center for HBCU Research, leadership, & Policy, Howard

Illya Davis, Professor & Director, New Student & Transition Programs, Morehouse College

F. Janelle Hannah Jefferson, Alliance Engagement Director, Complete College America

Vistasp Karbhari, Professor & Immediate Past President, University of Texas - Arlington

Walter Kimbrough, Interim President, Talladega College

Bobbie Knight, President, Miles College

Aisha N. Lowe, Executive Vice Chancellor for Equitable Student Learning, California Community Colleges

Erin Lynch, President, Quality Education for Minorities Network

Grace Mukupa, Policy Director, Complete College America

Nadrea Njoku, Assistant Vice President, Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, UNCF

Claudia Rankins, Senior Research Associate, PRISSEM

Deborah Santiago, CEO & Co-Founder, Excelencia in Education

Demetrice Smith, Director for Student Support & Engagement, Noodle

Terik Tidwell, Advisor, Managing Partner, 642 Partners

Tasha Washington, Dean of Retention & Placement, Stillman College

Sarah Zauner, Founder & Executive Director, ADA Center

III. Student Advisory Council

Briggs, Barry* – Alabama State University

Davis, Kingston – Wiley College

Dirie, Sofia* – Coppin State University

Driggs, Trinity* – Coppin State University

Evans, Parris – Langston University

Haye, Kailyn* – Virginia State University

Joseph, Russell – Denmark Technical College

Kemp, Tamia* – Miles College

Landy, Karleigh – Xavier University of Louisiana

Montgomery, Jaylyn – Central Carolina Technical College

Peoples, JaMya – Mississippi Valley State University

Prieto Morales, Maria* – Virginia State University

Stewart, Mililani* – Lawson State Community College

Washington, DAndre – Wallace Community College Selma

Whisenhunt, Jalen – Alabama State University

***** As of publication, these students have graduated. Congratulations!

The DLI Student Advisory Council (SAC), consisting of 16 members, from 13 institutions, was assembled to provide expert guidance and insights relative to student success at HBCUs and more broadly at MSIs, training and implementing the DLI Co-Design process. The Student Advisory Council members all attended 13 institutions (Coppin State University, Langston University, Mississippi Valley State University, Virginia State University, Wiley College, Xavier University, Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Central Carolina Technical College, Denmark Technical College, Miles College, Wallace Community College, and Lawson State Community College) designated as MSIs (2 Historically Black Community College, 2 Predominately Black Community Colleges, 9 Historically Black Colleges & Universities). Nine of the SAC members were students at one of the 6 HBCUs in the initial HBCU DLI study. Demographically, 12(80%) identified as Black/African American, (2)13% as biracial, and 1 (7%) as Latinx. The Student Advisory Council members were comprised of 87% public non-profit and 23% private non-profit. The percentage of SAC members attending two-year institutions equaled 30%, with HBCU's comprising 75%.

IV. Resources & Frameworks

- Briggs, C and Briggs, S, "Co-Designing Digital Student Success – Student Advisory Council Insights", Internal HBCU DLI Follow-up Report, (February 2024).

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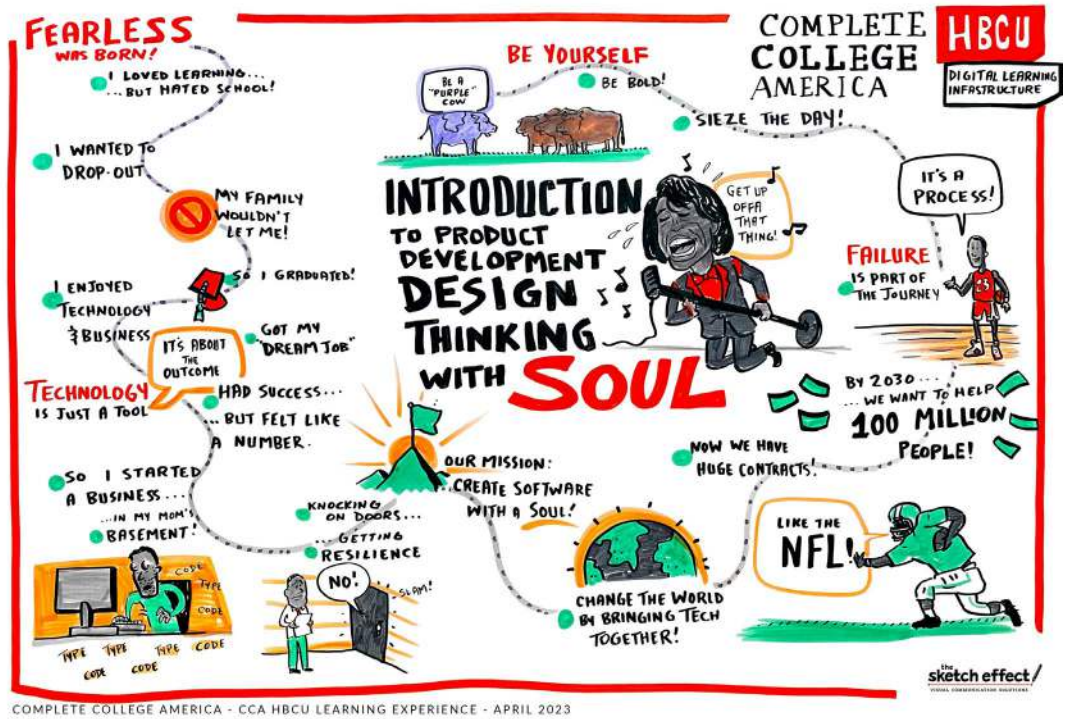
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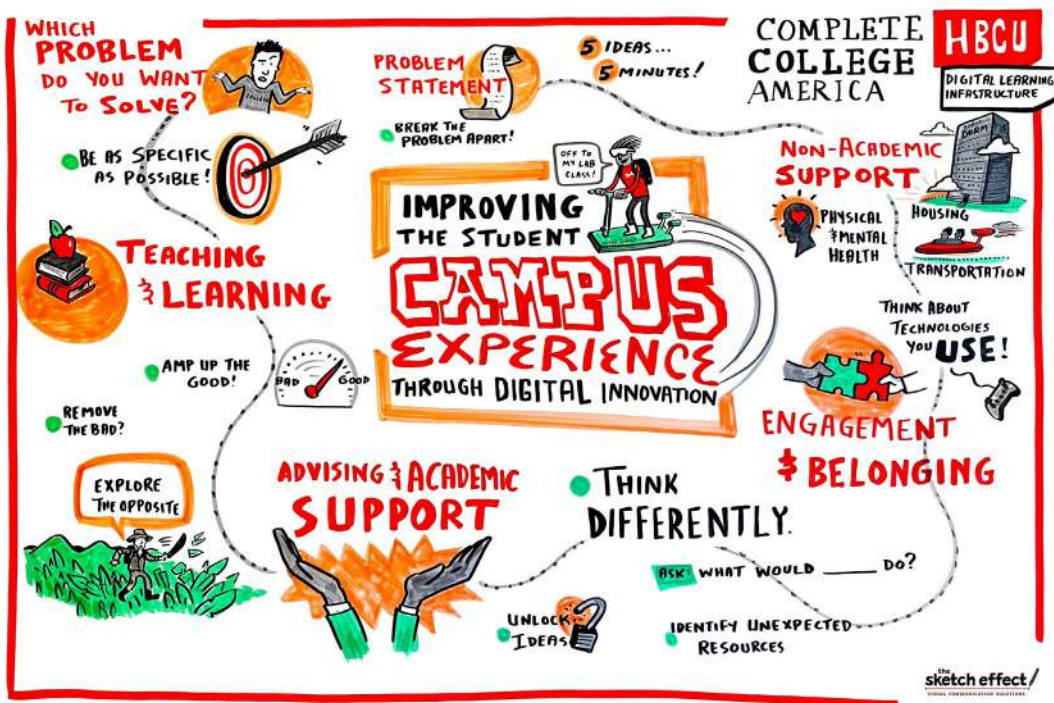
COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA - CCA HBCU LEARNING EXPERIENCE - APRIL 2023

VI.   Birmingham Video Reel

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CO-DESIGN INSTITUTIONS

Coppin State University

Langston University

Mississippi Valley State University

Virginia State University

Wiley College

Xavier University of New Orleans

ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Alabama A & M University

Alabama State University

Bishop State Community College

Central Carolina Technical College

Claflin University

Clark Atlanta University

Delaware State University

Denmark Technical College

Dillard University

Drake State Community College

Florida A&M University

Grambling State University

Howard University

Jackson State University

Johnson C. Smith University

Lawson State Community College

Miles College

Morehouse College

North Carolina A & T State University

Paul Quinn College

Prairie View A & M University

Spelman College

Stillman College

Talladega College

Tuskegee University

University of the District of Columbia

University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UM - Eastern Shore)

Wallace Community College

Winston-Salem State University

This list is ordered alphabetically by the full name of each institution.

COMMUNICATIONS PARTNER

Friday