

2019 Congressional Accomplishments for HBCUs

Ensuring a Better FUTURE for Students and Families: In December 2019, the President signed the FUTURE Act into law. As amended, this bipartisan legislation, which was co-led by Senator Scott in the Senate and Congressman Walker in the House, has secured permanent funding for HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, in addition to taking a pivotal first step towards simplifying the FAFSA.

Strengthening Our National Security: Thanks in part to a bipartisan letter led by Sen. Scott and Congressman Mark Walker's efforts as a NDAA Conferee, the Department of Defense's HBCU/Minority Institution (MI) program will receive a \$12.296 million funding boost over fiscal year (FY) 2019 levels for FY 2020, increasing access to pipelines to opportunity for aspiring leaders, researchers, and innovators from HBCUs and other MSIs. These additional resources will enhance HBCU and MSI participation in the Department's research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) programs and activities.

Promoting Proactive Partnerships: In February 2019, the Senate unanimously passed Sen. Scott's bipartisan HBCU PARTNERS Act, which seeks to build upon President Trump's HBCU-focused executive actions by directing federal agencies to submit and publish annual reports on programs, partnerships, and activities related to HBCUs. A companion bill, co-led by Congressman Walker, awaits action in the House.

Reinforcing Strategic Relationships: In February 2020, the House unanimously supported legislation to strengthen engagement between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the HBCU Community. Congressman Walker, as a Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, worked to garner support of the HBCU Homeland Security Partnerships Act to facilitate collaboration between DHS and HBCUs to achieve their shared goals.

Protecting Our Historical Legacy: In March 2019, Congress enacted legislation reauthorizing the vital HBCU Historic Preservation Program through FY 2025. Managed by the National Park Service, this program provides financial support for projects aimed at preserving historic buildings and sites. Sen. Scott cosponsored a version of the bill that was included in the legislative package that ultimately passed.

Finalizing Regulatory Relief for Institutions: In Fall 2019, the Trump Administration finalized its rewrite of the Education Department's borrower defense to repayment (BDR) regulations, substantially improving upon the onerous Obama Administration BDR rules, which had generated significant concerns among many HBCU leaders. Sen. Scott co-led a letter of support for the proposed version of the updated Trump Administration rulemaking, a targeted and balanced approach to assessing the financial responsibility of postsecondary institutions and protecting students from serious fraud.

Providing a Pell Grant Plus-Up: For the 2020-2021 academic year, the maximum Pell grant award will rise to \$6,345, a \$150-per-student increase over the year before. More than 70% of HBCU students rely on Pell grants to help to fund their postsecondary education.

Maintaining Year-Round Pell Access: In response to discussions held during their First Annual HBCU Fly-In in 2017, Sen. Scott and Rep. Walker co-led a letter requesting that year-round Pell grant access

be included in the next appropriations bill. Thanks to their efforts, each subsequent year has seen continued year-round Pell availability, benefiting scores of HBCU students.

Enhancing the HBCU Capital Financing Program: The FY 2020 spending packages enacted an expansion of the HBCU Capital Financing Program that builds upon changes secured through bipartisan efforts co-led by Sen. Scott in 2018. The FY 2020 bill increases the overall funding level for the program to \$46.484 million, \$6 million above the FY 2019 level, in addition to codifying targeted programmatic changes to guarantee that both private and public institutions can benefit from the package's deferment provisions.

Achieving Constructive Resource Levels Across the Board: Due in part to a bipartisan letter to the Appropriations Committee that Sen. Perdue co-led and Sen. Scott signed, FY 2020 will see record funding levels for a number of HBCU-focused federal programs. The Strengthening HBCUs program is funded at \$324.792 million, more than \$42 million higher than the FY 2019 enacted level. Additionally, the HBCU Professional and Graduate Institutions program saw a nearly \$11 million increase, the Masters Degree Programs at HBCUs received a roughly \$1.3 million boost, and NIH's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) earned a \$21.133 million increase, among other notable gains.

Expanding 529 Plan Flexibility: The SECURE Act, which was enacted in December 2019, will provide students and families with new flexibilities around 529 plans, allowing them to utilize up to \$10,000 from such a plan to make student loan payments, in addition to permitting 529 funds to be directed towards expenses associated with apprenticeship programs. Sen. Scott led a letter to Senate leadership in Fall 2019 urging Leader McConnell to take swift action on the SECURE Act. His letter has been cited as a key factor in ensuring the bill's inclusion in the year-end spending packages.

Bolstering Retirement Security for Graduate Students: The SECURE Act also included a bipartisan provision co-led by Sen. Scott that will allow graduate students to place taxable stipend or fellowship income into Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), removing a major hurdle to retirement savings and security. At least 27 HBCUs offer graduate programs.

Celebrating UNCF's 75th Anniversary: In the Spring of 2019, the Senate unanimously agreed to a resolution led by Sen. Scott to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Negro College Fund. The resolution passed with a bipartisan group of 25 cosponsors, representing a total of 21 different states, in a strong show of support for HBCUs across the country.

Increasing Small Business Opportunities for HBCU Students: In July 2019, Senator Scott and Senator Coons introduced the PROMISE Act. This legislation, which was included in the pending SBA reauthorization, retools how the Small Business Administration engages with HBCUs, thus providing students at HBCUs with increased educational resources on how small businesses operate.