

## *A Note from the Guest Editor . . .*

Beacons of light, hope, and forward progress—those are the words that come to mind when I visit historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) throughout the country. I have had the opportunity to visit many—a personal interest of mine since graduating from Fisk and Howard Universities. While on campus, I make time to visit their libraries, bookstores, and student unions—taking my time to study the art on the walls and to read the historical markers. And yes, to find the spaces and colorful sitting areas that belong to the various fraternities and sororities. More than anything, I enjoy watching hundreds, even thousands, of young, talented African American students busily make their way around the “yard.”

My visits don’t stop there. I also spend time touring the neighborhoods surrounding the campuses of HBCUs. What amazes me is how long these schools have been neighbors to those who have come and gone, and I try to imagine what changes have occurred in the community. It is really hard to fathom—how does one institution stand strong in the same place since the early 1800s while everything changes around it? What is even more interesting is the role that these institutions have played in these neighborhoods, offering their full resources—space, faculty, and students—to improve the conditions for families and children who call these places home.

The mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today’s vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. In the area of neighborhood development, the Foundation catalyzes medical facilities, universities, businesses, and other entities with deep community ties to invest in their community’s responsible redevelopment in ways that yield tangible benefits both to low-income communities and to the institutions themselves.

This edition of the journal takes a special look at the role of HBCUs in strengthening the communities in which they are located. While much has been written about university-community partnerships, the experiences and stories of this select group of universities often don’t make the “headlines” of major publications that share best practices and model strategies of these

efforts. This edition provides a comprehensive overview of how HBCUs are involved in addressing some of the more challenging issues facing children, families, and communities of color today, including failing schools, disproportionate minority confinement, and public safety, affordable housing, and the digital divide.

- Dr. Michael L. Lomax, president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund, provides us with an overview of how HBCUs have been a part of winning economic and social justice for blacks in America in the past, and the new roles these institutions must take on regarding education and engagement to help build a strong economy that can compete globally.
- Dr. Ronald Mason, Jr., president of Jackson State University, provides a thoughtful essay on the challenges of university-community partnerships and posits the need for new models that more strongly link community engagement with learning as a way to improve student achievement and strengthen neighborhoods.
- Dr. Pamela Gray Arrington, associate vice president at Coppin State University, shares with us a successful strategy for using university resources to improve the educational outcomes of students in a school feeder pattern. The West Baltimore Pre-K to 16 Urban Education Corridor shows amazing promise for building better futures for youth by strengthening local schools in an urban setting.
- Dr. Lynn K. Harvey and Dr. Alvin D. Mitchell at Winston-Salem State University write about their efforts to broaden the way this country views crime and punishment—a new model of bringing justice to urban communities. This necessary work is done through their justice studies program and the new Center for Community Safety that works with area residents and other partners to ensure safe neighborhoods while addressing issues of fairness and justice.
- Dr. Gwenda R. Greene, assistant dean and associate professor at Benedict College, talks about the long history of the College in the community and its current focus: affordable housing in the Edgewood section of the neighborhood through the Benedict-Allen Community Development Corporation (CDC). Dr. Greene also talks about the institution's reach through its service-learning programs into the broader areas of health awareness, tutoring/mentoring, and intergenerational activities for families.

- The team from Tennessee State University—Dr. Harry Clark Maddux, Dr. Bob Bradley, Dr. Deena Sue Fuller, Mr. Carl Z. Darnell, and Mr. Brent D. Wright—share an exciting model for using technology as a tool for community engagement and learning. Their New Technopolis Project joins University computer technology students with community partners in North Nashville to strengthen their efforts to support families.
- Dr. Stephen L. Rozman and Ms. Gloria Roberts at Tougaloo College provide a look at an important networking model among HBCUs. The HBCU Faculty Development Network is a critical resource to ensure that colleagues working in HBCU-community partnerships can share lessons and best practices.

I hope the stories on the following pages fill a gap in the literature—an important gap, given that these institutions are often located in communities that suffer from disinvestment and negative portrayals by the media. These are their stories—these are their strengths.

I would like to thank all of the contributing authors for their hard work and the time they put into writing these articles. I extend a special thanks to my colleague DeShaun DeVaughn at the Annie E. Casey Foundation for working with me on this project. Most importantly, sincere thanks go out to Mel Hill and his staff for their guidance, patience, and support in this endeavor.

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