

JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY

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**Statement of Dr. Dorothy Cowser Yancy, President
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Before the
House Education and Labor Hearing
On
*"America's Black Colleges and Universities:
Models of Excellence and Challenges for the Future"*
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Washington, D.C.**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon and Members of the Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of Johnson C. Smith University, located in North Carolina's 12th Congressional District, where I have served as President for fourteen years this month. Thank you for hosting this very important hearing on *"America's Black Colleges and Universities: Models of Excellence and Challenges for the Future."* I thank the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) for requesting this hearing and for all that the Association did to provide information to Committee Members and staff as you shaped this hearing.

Johnson C. Smith University is a UNCF member institution along with thirty-nine (39) other private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Johnson C. Smith is also a member of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), the membership association of the presidents and chancellors of private and public HBCUs and the newly recognized Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), some one hundred twenty (120) institutions, representing roughly 400,000 students, more than 25,000 faculty and more than 4 million alumni. NAFEO's more than 120 member institutions are located in twenty-five states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

I appear before you today to thank you Mr. Chairman and to thank Ranking Member McKeon, Congressman Ruben E. Hinojosa, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, and all of the Members of this Committee for passing "The College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007" reauthorizing and strengthening the Higher

Education Act of 1965, as amended through the years. I appear also to share with you a few of the many ways in which provisions in the Higher Education Act have helped to make Johnson C. Smith University a leader among private liberal arts colleges in the nation. JCSU has been recognized by U.S. News and World Report as one of the best comprehensive colleges in the South since 2001, it is recognized as the first and only HBCU laptop University where all students are given laptops, it is ranked in 2007 by U.S. News and Reports as one of the top 10 HBCU's in America, and it was ranked by Yahoo in 2000 as one of the top 50 most wired small colleges. Today I offer a few suggestions for strengthening the Act during reconciliation of the House College Opportunity and Affordability Act (H.R. 4137) and the Senate Higher Education Amendments (S. 1642).and Senate bills. Given the time constraints this morning, I have prepared a written statement that I will submit for the record. I will share just a few observations with you this morning.

Before I share my observations, I want to recognize Congresswoman Virginia Foxx, a member of this Committee and North Carolina's congressional delegation, representing the 5th Congressional District that includes Clemmons and Boone. I want to extend my special appreciation and that of the HBCU community to Congressman Bobby Scott, the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus' Braintrust on Education, who is a steadfast champion of education excellence, access, equity and for the strengthening and enhancement of the phalanx of HBCUs. We appreciate Congressman Scott's leadership and that of Subcommittee Chair Hinojosa that resulted in many of the provisions for strengthening HBCUs contained in "The College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007." The leadership of Congressman Scott, Chairman Hinojosa and others on the Subcommittee also resulted in the inclusion in the Budget Reconciliation Act of new dollars for HBCUs, HACU institutions and other MSIs, for which we are also grateful.

For more than 100 years, the Nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have struggled to overcome their institutional legacy of segregation and differential treatment at the hands of the states and the Federal Government that was exacerbated by the lack of primary and secondary education provided to the slaves, and later complicated by segregated K-12 schools. HBCUs exist in 21st Century America in a virtual higher education vacuum – viewed by some, including some African Americans, as a relic of America's segregated past and having no real place or role in America's presumably diverse higher education community. The HBCUs are questioned by others who questioned their effectiveness at overcoming the educational deficits of many students enroll at these institutions, and challenged by others because they benefit from special funding like Title IIIB of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

Historically black colleges and universities, which represent a unique source of hope and advancement, have consistently performed the important function of helping African Americans hone their talents in order to contribute to American society. Much of the diversity among institutions in the higher education community was birthed in an earlier time when so-called "special purpose" institutions were created due to the exclusion of women, Catholics and Jews, the disabled, and others from "traditionally white institutions." Just as institutions serving these segments of the American population have not become obsolete, institutions founded to meet the educational needs of African Americans have not become obsolete. While it remains

commonplace to question the function and presence of the HBCUs – most recently by U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Abigail Thernstrom in a November 30, 2007 Wall Street Journal column – Charles V. Willie answered the “Why Black Colleges?” question in a 1979 Change Magazine article:

A self-centered attempt to save Black institutions for Blacks would be as damaging as an other-directed effort to remake them in the image of whites. Both actions ultimately would end in defeat. Black colleges and universities must be prepared for their value to society as a whole. A higher education system with a Harvard but not a Hampton is incomplete. Black colleges and universities have a future in our society because of their function.

The most powerful reason for encouraging and supporting the 103 historically black colleges and universities is economic. Educational preparation resulting in higher income levels strengthens American society by creating productive citizens and the financial and human costs associated with uneducated, unproductive and non-participating citizens in the American enterprise. It is estimated, over a lifetime, that the average U.S. citizen with a baccalaureate degree will earn \$2.1 million, while a person with a high school diploma will earn only \$1.2 million. This ‘earnings gap’ is much wider for African Americans. The average African American with a bachelor’s degree will earn \$1.7 million, while the average African American with a high school diploma will earn about \$1 million.

The HBCUs play a crucial role in filling the higher education gap, and hence they also plug the economic “gap” that was first identified by the 1968 Kerner Commission Report, whose twentieth anniversary was just celebrated. Title IIIB of the Higher Education Act defines “a part B institution” as “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal purpose was, and is, the education of Black Americans. Yet, it is important to note that many of our public and private HBCUs have diverse student bodies including many white students, Latinos, and international students from all around the globe.

HBCU’s today represent only 4% of all higher education institutions, but they graduate approximately 30% of all African-American students, 40% of African American students receiving a four-year degree in STEM, and 50% of African American teachers. These successes are attributable in part to resources made available through the Higher Education Act. The successes were achieved despite the fact that in recent year’s federal support for HBCUs has only increased in very modest amounts; and in spite of the fact that HBCUs continue to receive significantly less funding for research, facilities, and programs than their historically white counterparts. According to data from the National Science Foundation, for example, 6 of the top 20 predominantly white universities received more federal funds for research than 79 HBCUs combined.¹ The NSF report shows that despite a quantifiable record of success at educating

¹ Richard J. Bennof, “FY 2005 Federal S&E Obligations Reach Over 2,400 Academic and Nonprofit Institutions; Data Presented on Minority-Serving Institutions” *Info Brief* National Science Foundation NSF 07-326 (revised),

African American scientists and engineers, HBCUs continue receiving disproportionately fewer federal dollars. This pattern if left unabated will pose a barrier to black colleges remaining comparable and competitive with historically white institutions. The pattern must be reserved. With the amendments you made to the Higher Education Act, with my proposed actions by the conference committee, and suggestions advanced by others on this panel with me this morning, the pattern will be reversed. Continued investment in HBCUs is good for the HBCU community, good for the nation and good for the world.

To provide a clear understanding of the extent to which support under Titles IIIB, IV, of the Higher Education Act has assisted Johnson C. Smith to evolve into the world class liberal arts university that it is today, I will briefly share with you something about the history and growth of Johnson C. Smith in recent years.

Johnson C. Smith was founded in 1867 under the auspices of the Committee on Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church; U.S.A. Johnson C. Smith is an independent, private, coeducational institution of higher learning. JCSU has received over \$17.5 million dollars since 1997 in federal support under the federal formula. These institutional dollars have enabled Johnson C Smith to institutionalize strategic practices and improvements

The following target areas of the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) describe recurrent institutional challenges and strategic purposes that have persisted over the past few years and reflect both national as well as local themes we must continue to address:

- Maintain an effective and developmental **technology infrastructure** (hardware, software, people, training) to support the administrative and academic mission of the university
- Aging **facilities** require on-going **maintenance, upgrades, and renovations** to support new development in curriculum and instruction.
- Academic innovations require additional **personnel resources** as well a recurrent training to improve quality.
- **Data management infrastructure** to support **institutional planning, effectiveness, and assessment** to support effective decision-making
- The institutional enrollment profile and mission requires us to provide special programs to insure **student success and persistence to graduation.**
- Increasing cost in utilizing technology and shrinking institutional budgets requires us to develop our institutional capacity to generate **alternative sources** of funding.

What we have come to realize is that these CDP target areas reoccur in some shape or form whenever we begin to engage issues of planning, development and resource allocation. They are, and will continue to be for some time, a strategic challenge for the institution as it evolves its future. Title III supports the development of project activities to reduce the effect of these

recurrent themes on the programs of the University. Title III has supported us in capacity-building to solve our recurring strategic challenges.

Institutionalization of Title III activities will continue to occur as we integrate Title III activities. This is evidenced historically by the fact that the following offices were developed by Title III funding and continue to play a role in Title III program development:

- Information Center
- Office of Mobile Computing
- Institutional Planning, Assessment, Effectiveness and Research
- Sponsored Programs and Research
- Academic Retention and Support Services
- Faculty Development
- Facilities Management
- Tutorial Services
- Discipline Based Computer Technology

A portion of the work of these well established offices still coordinate in the development of new and critical Title III activities. We have achieved a kind of transparency with Title III and institutional development. This integration of Title III and these critical areas of concern have been progressively interwoven into the fabric of the institution as new administrative and academic services primarily supported by institutional funds. New activities of these offices will extend the evolution and work on these recurring and persistent problem areas and our Title III partnership will result in new institutionalized capacity in the form of new offices, programs, and personnel.

The “**Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities**” program has been, and continues to be, not only the principle source of institutional assistance for Johnson C. Smith, but for the vast majority of HBCUs. Since its inception, the Title IIIB program has been very successful in supporting strategic planning initiatives, academic program enhancements, administrative and fiscal management, student services, physical plant improvements, and general institutional development.

The Title IIIB dollars are transforming HBCUs to meet the challenges of a new century with cutting cutting-edge projects in agriculture, science, technology, and international education. Title IIIB dollars are also enabling HBCUs to provide vital education, health care, human needs, economic and community development, and recreation services for the communities in which they are located.

Finally, the **Title IV Student Assistance** programs have enabled Johnson C. Smith University to maintain its student enrollment with 83% of its students receiving financial aid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PELL GRANT PROGRAM - I strongly support improvements in the Pell Grant program; especially the proposed increases in the Pell Grant maximum award to more clearly reflect the cost of tuition and fees at four-year public colleges and universities. Of course, the cost of tuition and fees at private institutions, like Johnson C. Smith University, is generally higher than that of public institutions, but at this point in our nation's history in which a college education is vitally important, we should make a national commitment, at a minimum, to afford funding for those of least advantage who are desirous and prepared for college to be able to afford the cost of a public 4-year institution. Congress should retain the current \$4000 minimum and establish a maximum award linked to the tuition and fees of the cost of a public 4-year college according to the annual College Board Cost of College report. Students at Johnson C. Smith University commonly work two and three jobs to make ends meet.

I appreciate and applaud the inclusion in both the House and Senate Higher Education Act reauthorization bills, on a bipartisan basis, of provisions that establish student eligibility for a Year-Round or "third semester" Pell Grant.

TEACHER QUALITY ENHANCEMENT - There is a great deal more to do. **The Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement** programs contained in both the House and Senate reauthorization bill will strengthen our teacher education programs in a significant way. The changes incorporated in Title II of both the House and Senate bills targeting funds on partnerships composed of institutions of higher education, local education agencies (LEAs), especially "high need" LEAs, non-profit organizations, and others, and the removal of states as partner grantees will focus limited resources on entities located closest to those involved directly in preparing teachers and in providing professional development for existing teachers. The HBCU community is especially pleased with the language in the House bill, H.R. 4137, that provides for Development Leadership Programs for partnerships that would focus on the preparation of superintendents, principals and other school administrators, and gives priority in the award of partnership grants to teacher preparation programs that have a rigorous selection process, i.e. NCATE accredited institutions with PRAXIS-related graduation requirements. Johnson C. Smith is such an institution, and we will encourage your Senate counterparts, especially those in the North Carolina delegation to accept this House-passed, important provision.

I strongly support the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence provisions in H.R. 4137 that are designed to provide funds for HBCUs and MSIs, or consortia of such institutions, to strengthen their teacher preparation programs. The Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence in Teacher Education would enable ten HBCUs, like Johnson C. Smith, with exceptional Departments of Education, to establish or enhance collaborative centers of excellence in which to prepare highly qualified teachers to close the achievement gap that plagues minority students, who in turn, will disproportionately opt to teach in the most underserved communities. The

funding to create state of the art teacher training facilities contained in the legislation for the institutions that house these centers, to create s, will be immeasurably helpful to those of us who are meeting not only the needs of our states for exceptional, diverse teachers, but for the nation, with sparse resources.

OTHER ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The historically black colleges and universities are not without their challenges as they continue to mature as institutions and compete in the larger arena for private and Federal funding support, as they seek out African American and other students in a highly competitive admissions climate, and as they strive to keep their infrastructure and instrumentation competitive with their peers in the higher education community. Let me mention several issues that are at the core or my concerns as I leave the presidency of Johnson C. Smith University at the end of the academic year.

ENDOWMENT BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Fewer than five HBCUs have endowments that exceed \$500,000 and only one that exceeds \$1 million. Institutional endowments represent necessary shelter against the winds of change in higher education, especially for small, private colleges like Johnson C. Smith. Most of the HBCU institutions have low or no endowment to speak of, and too many struggle just simply to pay their bills on time, provide scholarship funds for needy, highly qualified students, and to pay faculty and staff a quality salary. Competition for private sector and foundation support and for Federal grant and contract dollars, including congressional “earmarks” has intensified – as public and private colleges compete for declining resources and donors insist upon a *quid pro quo* or recognition for large gifts or grants.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION – At least three two-year and five four-year HBCUs have had their accreditation withdrawn by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) or Commission on Higher Learning of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools during the past two decades. Many other public and private HBCUs have been sanctioned by SACS and other regional accrediting agencies, and continue to operate in a fiscally “at-risk” posture that threatens their continued existence and viability.

Two-Year Colleges

Morristown College
Clinton Jr. College
Shorter College
Mary Holmes College

Four-Year Colleges

Barber Scotia College
Edward Waters College
Knoxville College
Morris Brown College
Texas College

Clinton Jr. College regained its accreditation with another accrediting association. Texas College successfully restored its accreditation with SACS within two years. Edward Waters successfully pursued litigation against SACS and secured a settlement that provided a path for the restoration

of its accreditation. Knoxville College and Morris Brown College remain open without regional accreditation.

SUSTAINING INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP - One of the most pressing challenges facing the HBCU community is the identification and preparation of quality institutional leadership for the presidency and the first-tier of institutional leadership, especially Vice Presidents for Fiscal Affairs/Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), Chief Information Officers (CIOs), Provost/Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Institutional Development, and Graduate Deans (where appropriate), etc. Our needs in these areas are strained by limitations in the available pool of applicants, salary limitations, etc. Rapid turnover in the presidency or chancellors, in the public sector, also impacts the tenure of the first-tier administrative staff and executives. A related and challenging question has to do with the skills and abilities of HBCU trustees or boards of directors. Training and skill development – including developing an understanding of the roles and duties of trustees is critical, especially as it relates to search and selection of the president or chancellor. This issue is complicated among the private colleges by self-perpetuating boards and in the public sector by the gubernatorial power of appointment or election of public institutional trustees.

The above are just a few of my observations regarding the many improvements to the Higher Education Act contained in “The College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007.” I again express my deep appreciation for the determination of this Committee to move this bill forward, but not at the expense of denying the public, and especially the broad and diverse stakeholders, an opportunity to participate in the deliberative process.

CONCLUSION

The Higher Education Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation to the institutions that are among the constellation of colleges and universities we call HBCUs. These institutions were founded before 1964 to educate black Americans who were, at the time of their founding, denied access to most historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs). HBCUs were defined in the 1986 Amendments to the Higher Education Act by their mission and purpose, not by the racial or ethnic make-up of their student enrollment. Many HBCUs have increasingly diverse student bodies, including my own institution, Johnson C. Smith, which has as its mission providing outstanding education for a diverse group of talented and highly motivated students from various ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds. We enroll 1470 students from many backgrounds, although the majority of my students are African American. Many have few financial means. They overwhelmingly share a thirst for knowledge and the belief that the familial atmosphere at Johnson C. Smith is aligned with their preparation and their aspirations.

Title IIIB of the Higher education Act, the provision on **Strengthening the Historically Black Colleges and Universities**, has been especially important in assisting Johnson C. Smith University to become a model of excellence, and in enhancing the 96 other HBCUS that are receiving funding under this provision. Title III, Part D of the Act, the **HBCU Capital Financing Program** has enabled many of the HBCUs to build and maintain facilities and an infrastructure to attract to and retain competitive students at our institutions. Title IV, **Student Assistance** has exponentially expanded access to higher education for low-income, first generation and traditionally underserved students—those who are the majority of students attending Johnson C. Smith.

I thank you for affording me the opportunity to share these observations with you this morning.