



If You Can Dream It, You Can Achieve It at an HBCU!

Statement of

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Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King and Members of the Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), to testify about “The Role of the Department of Homeland Security in Gulf Coast Rebuilding and Recovery Efforts,” a subject about which NAFEO can offer the unique perspective of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Gulf Coast region and nationally.

NAFEO is the nation’s only membership association of all of the two-year, four-year, public and private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), representing almost 800,000 students, nearly 53,000 faculty and more than 5 million alumni. NAFEO’s more than 120 member institutions are located in twenty-five states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

Since it was founded in 1969, NAFEO has been at the forefront of shaping federal and state legislation to preserve and enhance HBCUs and PBIs, expand college access and success. It has helped to build the capacity of HBCUs, their executives, administrators, faculty, staff and students; and it has served as an advocate for the preservation and enhancement of HBCUs, as a voice for blacks in higher education, and for education excellence, equity, access and success, especially for those of least advantage and those traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Much has been said and written about the Department of Homeland Security’s role in the Gulf Coast rebuilding and recovery efforts. The Department’s role is vitally important because it is responsible for anticipating, preempting and deterring threats to the homeland, and preparing our nation and communities to respond rapidly and efficiently when such threats do materialize. From NAFEO’s perspective and that of the institutions we represent, the Department has fallen woefully short of realizing its potential in the rebuilding and recovery effort. Without the support and involvement of HBCUs and PBIs, the Department will not be able to realize its potential relative to the Gulf Coast rebuilding and recovery efforts. I am pleased to report, however, that NAFEO and its member institutions stand ready to assist the Department in the recovery and rebuilding efforts in any manner of means.

When Hurricane Katrina swept in and landed a mighty blow to those in the Gulf Coast region, none felt the pang more than Dillard University, Southern University at New Orleans and Xavier

University, three NAFEO institutions located in New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina was the most destructive and costly natural disaster in U.S. history. It caused unprecedented devastation to these HBCUs as well as other HBCU campuses in the region including Alcorn State University, Jackson State University and Tougaloo College in Mississippi. At Dillard, SUNO, and Xavier, entire campuses, including scores of dormitories, libraries, laboratories, and classrooms, were destroyed. Large amounts of equipment and furniture, books and supplies, academic records and teaching materials were permanently damaged, first by winds, floods and poison-filled waters, next by post-hurricane fires, and finally by toxic mold and mildew.

Katrina's wrath continues to be felt today, not only by the impacted higher education institutions, but the surrounding communities as well. Thousands of residents lost employment and access to other resources provided by the universities, their students and their faculty. Rebuilding these institutions is essential to rebuilding those communities. Yet, nearly two years after Katrina, the rebuilding, especially in the communities of least advantage and on the campuses of the least resourced institutions, has not moved with the alacrity, precision, and dispatch one would have hoped or expected.

Southern University New Orleans, the only public HBCU in New Orleans, was hit the hardest of all higher education institutions. Katrina decimated SUNO, and the entire campus was destroyed. The students who attended SUNO were disproportionately impacted. As a commuter campus, located in the Ninth Ward with a non-traditional, older student body, many students at SUNO lost everything: their homes and all material possessions, a sense of community (faith institutions, health and human needs services, recreation facilities, schools for their children), and members of their families and friends. As part of the 1890 land-grant system of institutions, which, like 1862 traditionally White land-grant institutions, are dubbed "The People's Institutions," SUNO should have received swift, targeted public investments to restore the campus and reconnect it to the surrounding community with as little disruption to the education of "the people" as possible. This did not and has not yet happened. At the time of this hearing, nearly two years after Katrina, SUNO is still operating out of trailers, which many of its students and their families also call home. The university lacks adequate resources to retain many of its faculty whose families fled New Orleans during or post- Katrina, or to attract adequate new faculty and staff.

Hurricane Katrina robbed many HBCU faculty and administrators of their homes, their livelihoods, and their families. Many have been furloughed, stripped of opportunities to teach, perform research, and publish. They are in effect, Missing in Action, but their individual stories and needs have gone unnoticed. Fortunately, with the assistance of the Ford Foundation, in partnership with South Carolina State University, NAFEO is beginning to document the challenges and needs of the displaced faculty and to take affirmative steps to meet some of their immediate needs.

If Katrina highlighted the tacit inequities of resources for the affected institutions, then the experiences of displaced faculty should tell a similar story. Recovery efforts aimed at HBCUs emphasized the needs of students, rebuilding the physical and technological infrastructure, and supporting the presidents through the transition. There were few, if any, coordinated efforts to respond to the specific needs of faculty, who as scholars, lost research, libraries, and time. Around the country, various institutions, both historically white and historically black, extended invitations to individual faculty members, but there was no coordinated effort to document their

experiences or monitor how they weathered the transition, and the opportunities, if any, that opened up for them. Katrina may represent the worst brain drain among African Americans in a region that this country has ever experienced. The long-term implications of losing displaced faculty have yet to be realized or even considered. This African American talent pool exists in an intellectual and physical limbo that is displaced and disconnected from the academy. The ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts must take this into account and do something about it.

NAFEO's Response

When the Katrina catastrophe occurred on the 42nd anniversary of the March on Washington, at which the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. pricked the conscience of America and moved the nation to action with his riveting "I Have a Dream Speech," government executives and individuals, associations, corporations, and foundations sprang into action trying to rescue, relocate, offer immediate relief and begin the long, trying process of restoring, rebuilding and revitalizing for those hardest hit by Katrina.

As we collectively watched the violent winds and tumultuous waters engulf and destroy the city New Orleans and threaten the lives and property of hundreds of thousands of residents; and as we caught glimpses of the ravages of Katrina in Mississippi and Alabama, the Black College community sprang into action. NAFEO mobilized the black college community to do five things: (1) **assess** the situation and gather as much information about the crisis and immediate needs as was available; (2) **assist** Dillard, Xavier, Southern University, New Orleans, and as necessary, Alcorn State University, Bishop State Community College, Coahoma Community College, Hinds Community College at Utica, Jackson State University and Tougaloo College to ensure the safety and security of the nearly 24,000 students collectively (9,100 at Dillard, Southern University New Orleans, and Xavier) who were in the eye of the storm; (3) **assure** that basic essentials were available for all of the students: water, food, housing, and medical assistance; (4) **absorb** the 9,100 Dillard, SUNO and Xavier students who could not return to their home institutions for at least one semester into Sister institutions; and (5) **advance** the basic human, mechanical and technical infrastructures of all our Katrina-shaken institutions.

The united black college community brought and is continuing to bring to bear every resource it can muster, to aid the students, executives, administrators, faculty, staff, families and Katrina-ravaged institutions that are part of the black college community. They mobilized and are continuing to work as a united black college community on what we perceive to be the most important recovery, preservation, and rebuilding effort of our day.

NAFEO immediately shifted human resources and began identifying financial resources for Katrina-impacted HBCUs. We worked with federal legislators, corporate and foundation executives to assist the region's HBCUs that were most devastated by Katrina --Dillard, Xavier, and SUNO--to begin rebounding from \$1 billion in damages to those institutions caused by flood and fire; and to also assist Alcorn State University, Jackson State University, and Tougaloo College, NAFEO institutions in neighboring Mississippi that also suffered hurricane-related damage.

NAFEO initially engaged all of the NAFEO member institutions and other equal educational opportunity institutions in an effort to receive displaced students on a temporary basis until their home institutions could rebound and once again receive the students. This effort was remarkably

successful. We engaged teams of students from among our 120-member institutions in assisting with the clean-up and rebuilding efforts following Katrina, as well as in feeding and clothing efforts and other projects to meet the immediate health and human needs services to those in the region. The students' work is ongoing, and they continue to spend their breaks and vacations in New Orleans volunteering with the rebuilding efforts.

With external leadership from NAFEO and internal leadership from members of the Louisiana and Mississippi delegations and others, we were able to secure four *Special Supplemental Appropriations* that included funds for the HBCUs hit hardest by Katrina and others that were damaged. NAFEO's deep and heartfelt appreciation is extended to Senator Mary Landrieu, Congressman William Jefferson, Senator Cochran and Chairman Bennie Thompson, whose focused congressional leadership advanced these appropriations.

For the first time in its then 37-year history, NAFEO moved its National Conference on Blacks in Higher Education out of Washington, DC to New Orleans to demonstrate the support of the collective black college community for Dillard, SUNO, Xavier, Alcorn State University, Jackson State University, and Tougaloo College. Among the important outcomes from that convening was the record from a filed hearing co-hosted by the Congressional Black Caucus and NAFEO, and attended by Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Congressman William J. Jefferson (D-2d-LA) Congressman Bobby Scott (D-3rd-VA), Congresswoman Donna Christensen (D-VI) and others, on the impact of Katrina on our institutions and communities, and, equally as important, the many and varied ways in which our institutions could lead in rebuilding the hurricane-challenged institutions and communities

Some federal agencies worked with NAFEO and others to reallocate monies already appropriated so they could be channeled to the students, faculty, institutions and vulnerable communities uprooted by Katrina. Notable among federal agencies that responded in an affirmative and effective manner was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). With leadership from HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson and with the support of Assistant HUD Secretary Dr. Darlene Williams and her executive leadership team, the Department shaped a new *Universities Rebuilding America Program (URAP)* which dedicated another \$5.6 million to involve faculty and students in rebuilding the Gulf: \$3.6 million of which was dedicated for HBCUs to provide a range of sustained services to the effected communities and \$2 million of which went to collaborative undertakings between the Katrina-Rita-ravaged communities and schools of architecture and planning.

The above and related actions were imperative because the black college community is extremely close, and no HBCU stands as an island. To the extent that one falters or falls, the others will be weaker as will be the African American community and the nation. It is vital, therefore, for continued coordinated black college community efforts, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, to shore up Dillard, SUNO, and Xavier and their Sister HBCUs for many reasons, especially so that the educational and professional dreams and aspirations of the students, administrators, faculty and staff are not deferred, and the resources they provide to their service communities and the world are not lost.

Best Practices in Rebuilding and Recovery Efforts

Against the above backdrop highlighting some of the ways NAFEO and its member institutions--the entire HBCU community—its students, administrators, faculty, staff, alumni and friends; and large numbers of others in the higher education phalanx joined forces to assist in the recovery, and rebuilding efforts, I offer the following thoughts about, “The Role of the Department of Homeland Security in Gulf Coast Rebuilding and Recovery Efforts.”

I note at the outset that NAFEO is proud and pleased that two of “its finest” are today at the heart of the Katrina rebuilding efforts, Lieutenant General Russell Honoree, Commanding General of the 1st U.S. Army, who is overseeing the Army’s efforts in New Orleans is a Southern University alumni; and Dr. Norman Frances, the first lay President of Xavier University, his alma mater, and the recent recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, is co-chair of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. Both of these distinguished HBCU alumni are bringing to their challenging tasks in the rebuilding efforts, the courageous, principled, equitable, focused, strategic determination and results oriented approach learned or reinforced at HBCUs.

Despite the best effort of General Honoree, Dr. Frances, and many other brilliant, dedicated, passionate public servants who are working indefatigably and creatively to rebuild the Gulf Coast, the Department of Homeland Security’s effort in rebuilding the Gulf Coast is lacking. The mission of the mega-Department, to “lead the unified national effort to secure America.... prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the nation.... ensure safe and secure borders, welcome lawful immigrants and visitors, and promote the free-flow of commerce national network of organizations and institutions involved in efforts to secure our nation,” suggests that it is appropriate for the Department to play a large role in the rebuilding efforts.

That the Department of Homeland Security was founded in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 suggests an appropriate measure of what might be expected post-Katrina and what the Department should and must do in the rebuilding efforts going forward.

As we approach the sixth anniversary of 9/11 and as we near the second anniversary of 8/25, the day Hurricane Katrina hit, I urge this Committee to use the lessons learned from both 9/11 and Katrina to inspire and shape collaborative strategies that will enable the Department of Homeland Security to redouble its efforts to rebuild the Gulf Coast by engaging the entire HBCU community and other higher education institutions as the drivers for the recovery. With a shift in Departmental investments in the recovery and rebuilding efforts, these institutions can strengthen their human, physical, and technological infrastructure, to drive the recovery. The leaders of these institutions, their executives faculty, staff, students and alumni understand that the rebuilding efforts must not simply be about restoring facilities and reclaiming bodies, but also about recapturing lost and fallen youth and families and re-engaging and repositioning the institutions that are the cornerstones of the community: the schools, HBCUs and other higher education institutions; faith institutions, civic and non-governmental associations and government agencies; corporations, small and disadvantaged businesses; hospitals, health centers and other drivers of not only the economy but the health, vibrancy, security and diversity of this community.

An examination of our nation’s response in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, before we had the Department of Homeland Security, can be instructive. Immediately following 9/11, Americans

got a glimpse of our better selves. Thousands of individuals and organizations rallied to assist those whom we perceived at that time to be most vulnerable: those who were caught in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, or on Interstate 395 leaving the District of Columbia on foot because traffic was at a standstill, or who were ordered to leave buildings without access to their belongings or automobiles and with subways “on lock down.” We rallied to support our inadequately paid public health and safety workers who raced toward situations of imminent danger and exposed themselves to harm’s way so that others might live. We rallied to assist social service agencies, non-profit associations, neighbors and others whom some of us never recognized as connected to us until that fateful day.

September 11th occasioned more physical, emotional, and economic loss than has yet been tallied. The highly visible, unfathomable tragedies of that day, elicited deep compassion and shared grief. As a nation, we channeled our compassion and shared grief into appropriate action. In the days and months immediately following September 11th, we, as a united nation rallied to raise record amounts of money for the “family and community discordance” that those horrific events triggered. We raised incredible amounts of public and private money to provide needed survivor assistance for families devastated by the unconscionable events. You, our representatives in Congress, quickly approved sorely needed dollars for increased public safety and infrastructure undergirding. We donated innumerable hours to public service and heroic relief efforts. Those days provided us with a glimpse of our better selves.

Following the highly public devastation of 8/25—Hurricane Katrina--the most destructive and costly natural disaster in U.S. history that wiped out entire communities and devastated the HBCUs in the region-- there was also a public outpouring of deep compassion and caring. People from every corner of the nation and indeed across the globe, from all walks of life, channeled their compassion and shared grief into appropriate affirmative action. Every HBCU and PBI in the nation responded by opening their doors or extending resources in some manner to save the compromised HBCUs and thereby assist to save the families and communities hit hardest by Katrina—those of least advantage. Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs) and others of goodwill did similarly.

Disturbingly, neither the federal nor the state government--those who are responsible for investing public dollars in providing for the common defense, promoting the general welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty for all Americans, responded to Katrina as they did to 9/11. Many have suggested that part of the reason has to do with the race and class of the victims. The “public faces” of 9/11 were mostly white, whereas the “public faces” of Katrina were mostly colored and poor. Those who had their lives devastated and unalterably changed as the result of 8/25 were those of least advantage.

Although I will not revisit the debate about the public failings following 8/25, it is important to note that we knew what to do following 9/11, and we as a nation did it. We knew what to do following 8/25, and we as a nation did not take many of the affirmative steps we knew to take. We knew that in order to move the families of direct victims of the September 11th attacks and of the 8/25 devastation from the depths of despair and uncertainty to a restored, albeit tenuous, sense of normalcy, we needed to shore-up their lives: provide for their immediate human needs, provide appropriate social services, spiritual support and counseling, and provide an educational base upon which they could ensure their future independence.

Instinctively, we quickly thought about the children of the 9/11 victims and the future of those children. Interestingly enough, for those children we equated a brighter future with the fulfilled promise of educational opportunity. After the terrorist attacks six years ago, millions of dollars in public and private aid became available to educate victims' family members, in many cases, without regard to financial need. Some students eligible for scholarships from various September 11 programs come from families with real financial need. Others come from families who earned in excess of \$200,000 annually and whose parents left them with financial security. Many received victim compensation funds averaging \$1 million. Almost 50 new organizations were created in the wake of September 11 to distribute almost \$1.5 billion in various forms of aid. More than 40 programs and a dozen institution-specific funds were created to aid victims' families. One year after 9/11, well over \$100 million was made available in education scholarships, and these amounts did not include a multitude of regional tuition waivers and loan forgiveness programs.

In the nearly two years following 8/25—following Katrina—there has been no comparable public investment in public education in lower or in higher education. Some of the elementary and secondary schools in the areas hit hardest by Katrina are still not opened. And, at the postsecondary level, SUNO, the state's only public four-year institution in New Orleans that educates disproportionate numbers of students of little advantage is still operating out of trailers and has had its shape and offerings drastically altered by the state legislature in what some believe is an effort to transform the institution into a two-year institution. A total of \$190 million in federal dollars was appropriated for the state higher education boards in Louisiana and Mississippi: \$95 million each to Louisiana and Mississippi to divide among all higher education institutions that suffered loss as the result of Katrina. Dillard, SUNO, and Xavier alone occasioned \$1 billion in financial loss.

In the immediate aftermath of 9-11, we strengthened the whole community by assisting those whom we considered most vulnerable. In so doing, we demonstrated the faith, hope, and charity that strengthen the human community. In the immediate aftermath of 8-25, we floundered and bungled and have yet to make the level of public investment in rebuilding New Orleans and rebuilding our HBCUs that are the anchors of the devastated areas. To be sure, there were exceptions to this generalization. For example, Under Secretary Jackson's leadership, HUD responded in a decisive and creative manner as did the Department of Education under Secretary Spellings. Other government entities, including National Institute of Minority Health and National Institute of Mental Health responded with swift, affirmative action, but as a whole, the federal response has been lacking.

It is not too late to adjust our public response to Katrina and the rebuilding efforts to demonstrate the faith, hope and charity that make our nation strong. This Committee can begin today by taking a number of steps:

- (1) Require that a percentage of the laboratory and research facilities investment of the Homeland Security Department go to building and strengthening the laboratories and research facilities of the HBCU campuses ravaged by Katrina and of those on the campuses of their Sister HBCUs that are strategically located in frontline responder areas around the country, and could provide the biological, chemical, radiological, nuclear science, technology, computer and information science necessary to prevent, deter, detect, and mitigate the use of weapons of mass destruction;

- (2) Require that a percentage of the scientific and technological resources invested by the Homeland Security Research Agency provide federal, state, and local officials with the technology and capabilities to protect the homeland be set aside for the HBCUs in areas hit hardest by Katrina and for other HBCUs;
- (3) Designate one of the nation's HBCUs as a Homeland Security Center of Excellence and afford these traditionally under resourced, richly diverse higher education institutions the opportunity to bring together leading experts and researchers to conduct multidisciplinary research and education for homeland security solutions;
- (4) Design and operate through NAFEO a new program designed to encourage and support the involvement of high-need, diverse students in meeting a homeland, campus, or community security research, policy or practice need; and
- (5) Invest first in making HBCUs "disaster-resistant universities" (DRUs) (defined as colleges or universities that have incorporated into their overall mission, initiatives to facilitate and enhance communication and the exchange of ideas among its community of students, faculty, scientists, practitioners, and policymakers, in order to identify urgent and important issues and measures related to the understanding and mitigation of natural, technological, and other disasters); and then, equip them to prepare the communities in which they are located. In testimony submitted by NAFEO to this Committee for its May 14th hearing on campus security, readiness and response, we outlined the reasons for this recommendation and why this would be an effective, equitable and efficient investment of sparse public dollars. We wrote in that submission:

"HBCUs must become prepared [to rebuild, protect and secure their communities] not only for the benefit of their campuses and the residents of their campuses, but also for the benefit of the communities in which they are located. As the economic engines and the social and cultural centers for the communities in which they are located, many HBCUs are the providers of services (water, sewer, electricity) for the communities in which they are located. They are uniquely situated and equipped to become first responders to community emergencies and also to train those in the community how to avoid, mitigate, and respond to emergencies and disasters."

We also noted the need for the proposed investments:

"HBCUs are under-resourced and have as the priority for their limited resources student learning and achievement. They are located in areas where a natural disaster is not only possible but also probable - in the Gulf States and on the East Seaboard, where hurricanes are prevalent and in our country's midsection, also known as "Tornado Alley." They are in urban and rural areas where terrorism is a threat and the rates of crime are high. They are clustered around potential target sites such as nuclear facilities, oil and gas supply sources and waste disposal plants."

There is a legislative foundation and precedent for the proposed types of investments in HBCUs in the Executive Order 12876 establishing the White House Initiative on HBCUs, as well as in the Higher Education Act and other federal legislation.

The data show that a postsecondary education is today the engine that drives the American economy. Data also demonstrate that HBCUs are extraordinarily successful at educating African Americans in STEM disciplines, health professions, as teachers and in other high-need professions. The proposed shift in the allocation of already appropriated dollars is the best investment the nation can make in its future:

- HBCUs represent only three percent (3%) of all colleges and universities, yet they enroll fourteen percent (14%) of all African Americans in 4-year degree granting institutions;
- HBCUs graduate thirty percent (30%) of African Americans receiving 4-year degrees, and forty percent (40%) of African Americans receiving 4-year degrees in STEM areas;
- Twenty-four percent (24%) of all PhDs earned each year by African Americans are conferred by twenty four (24) HBCUs;
- Eighteen (18) of the top twenty-three (23) producers of African Americans who go on to receive science-related PhDs are HBCUs;
- Four (4) of the top ten (10) producers of successful African American medical school applicants are HBCUs. These HBCUs produce twenty percent (20%) more African American applicants than the other six (6) institutions combined;
- Eight (8) of the top ten (10) producers of African American engineers are HBCUs.

Thomas Jefferson's admonition that a nation cannot be both ignorant and free is a sober reminder of what's at stake for our nation's future. Recent history has also taught us that a nation cannot be both ignorant and secure.

I thank you, kindly, for affording me the opportunity to submit this testimony. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.