



Lumina Foundation Models of Success Convening
October 14-15, 2008
Indianapolis, Indiana

On October 14 and 15, 2008, leaders and supporters of Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) gathered in Indianapolis to discuss the successes of these important institutions. Participants included presidents of MSIs; leaders of organizations that represent and support MSIs; foundation representatives and researchers; and members of Lumina Foundation for Education staff.¹ During the convening, participants uncovered numerous successes attributable to MSIs, as well as many opportunities for growth and collaboration.

This document provides a summary of the discussion, highlighting the main themes that surfaced throughout the two-day meeting.

MSI Successes and Strengths

Diversity

MSIs have a rich history of educating all students and have never discriminated against students based on race or ethnicity. Also, MSIs have always had diverse faculties and staffs. In contrast, majority institutions have had to devote myriad time and resources to increasing diversity. As Greg Anderson of the Ford Foundation pointed out, the vast majority of attention and significant funding have focused on majority institutions and their overwhelming need to diversify their student bodies and faculties. MSIs need to embrace their diversity and make it known to the larger higher education community and society at large.

Family

Family is at the core of most MSIs. When a student is admitted, faculty and administrators understand that the student's family also becomes part of the institution. Unlike many majority institutions, MSIs encourage parental participation as it aids in student retention efforts and increases student satisfaction.

Serving Unique Needs

MSIs serve the unique needs of students of color, providing an environment that empowers student learning and leadership, boasts same-race role models, and provides curricula that not only challenge students, but also make up for deficiencies in primary and secondary school.

¹ A complete list of attendees begins on Page 5.

Community Engagement

MSIs encourage their students to give back to their neighborhoods and racial and ethnic communities. Many of these institutions have a long history of civic engagement and providing service to minority communities.

Concerns about the Future of MSIs

Although the convening focused on success, participants also expressed concerns about the future of MSIs, given the nation's changing demographics and the new emphasis on accountability in higher education.

The Collective vs. Individuality

Participants stressed the need for MSIs to work jointly and show solidarity. In the words of Margarita Benitez of The Education Trust, “we need to break the silos that keep MSIs from working together for a common good.” At the same time, several participants stressed the need for these institutions to have a collective voice while simultaneously maintaining their individuality and uniqueness.

Who is Doing the Research?

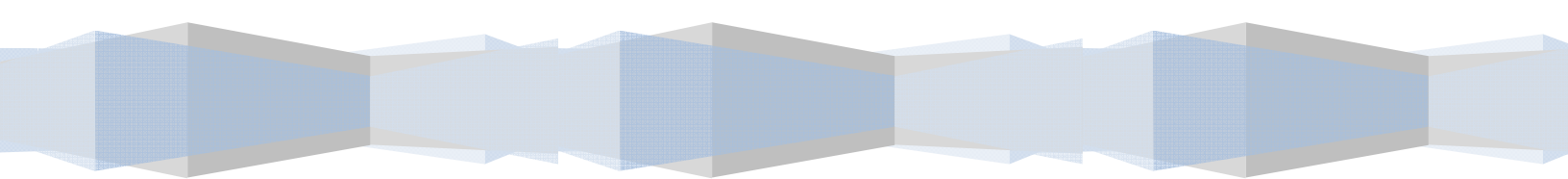
Several times during the meeting, participants raised questions related to: Who is conducting research on MSIs? Who is being funded to conduct this research? And who is speaking for MSIs? Participants urged foundation representatives at the convening to consider these questions and support research thoughtfully—that is, fund research efforts conducted by faculty and staff at MSIs or collaborative projects that include MSIs as equal partners.

Authenticity

Walter Kimbrough, president of Philander Smith College, raised the notion of “authenticity” at MSIs—insisting that MSIs need to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses. According to Kimbrough, MSIs need to own up to their weaknesses and address them. A telling comment was Kimbrough's reminder that “even students who don't graduate are our students too.” Embracing authenticity means having an ethic of care for these students as well as the successful ones.

Strategies for Making MSIs Stronger

One of the goals of Lumina's convening was to strengthen MSIs and change the national discourse about them. The convening revealed many strategies for making MSIs stronger; these are noted below.



Documentation

In order to augment MSIs' credibility in an era of increased accountability and to convince funders and supporters of their continuing role in higher education, conference participants felt that MSIs must document their successes with empirical evidence. This documentation of success is also vital to MSIs internally, allowing them to analyze their capacity and to make decisions based on data rather than anecdote.

A Collective

Although there was some concern that acting as a collective would stifle individuality among the MSIs, there was also consensus that it is crucial to tackle salient issues as a group. A collective voice would be most useful in garnering federal funds and in influencing federal and state policies affecting MSIs and the education of students of color.

Leading the Conversation

Participants echoed the need for MSIs to “take charge” of the discourse surrounding them and serve as national leaders on issues related to the education of students of color. These venerable institutions must lead higher education and the nation in defining what success for students of color means. Related to this goal is the need for MSIs to capitalize on their accomplishments in the area of teaching. MSIs should document their teaching successes, conduct research in this area and share their findings and achievements with the larger higher education community.

Equitable Partnerships

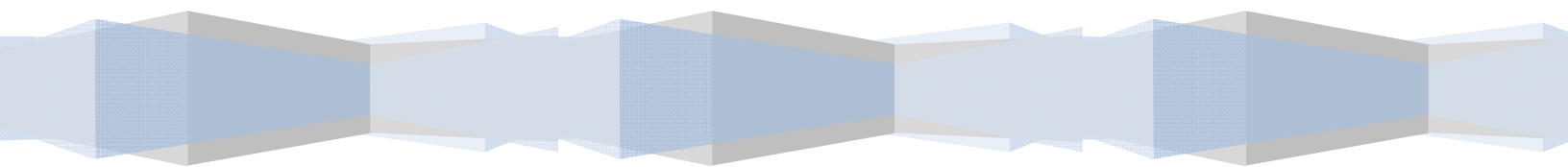
According to conference participants, MSIs want to establish equitable partnerships with others—those in which both partners benefit from the relationship and have an institutional commitment to the success of the partnership. In particular, MSIs would benefit from establishing research partnerships with majority institutions. Many majority institutions have significant resources and strong research infrastructures that would enhance the ability of their MSI partners to attract research dollars. Likewise, MSIs want and need to establish partnerships with their local communities, school districts, schools and churches to increase the success of all students across the education pipeline.

Remediation

MSIs might consider focusing their attention on remediation/developmental education—a logical choice, as MSIs have been making up for deficiencies at the K-12 level for decades. Foundations would likely support these efforts, but there are risks involved in focusing on remediation; MSIs could face a stigma because remedial programs often evoke negative stereotypes.

Student Involvement and Innovation

Perhaps the greatest resource at MSIs is the students. Julianne Malveaux, president of Bennett College for Women, suggested that MSIs adopt a global focus that prepares students for careers both in the United States and abroad. This global emphasis can be



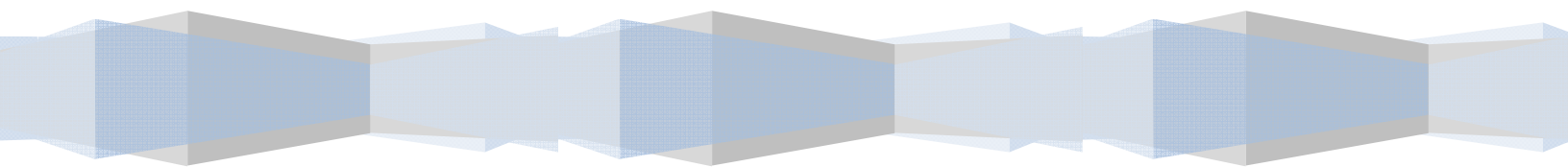
achieved through the curriculum and through extracurricular activities. In addition, Presidents Malveaux and Kimbrough provided examples of the ways that they encourage their students to take greater responsibility and invest greater effort in college achievement. For example, at Bennett College for Women, students run the on-line bookstore as a form of student entrepreneurship. Both presidents offered excellent examples of providing students with leadership opportunities while simultaneously helping their colleges in areas where operating support is limited.

Using Currently Available Tools

There are many tools available to assist MSIs in assessing their institutional performance. For example, The Education Trust provides graduation data on MSIs and offers comparisons with similar institutions for benchmarking purposes. Likewise, the National Association of College and University Business Officers provides detailed information on MSI endowments and fundraising patterns. Rather than generating all-new data sets, MSIs should consult existing databases.

Next Steps

- All in attendance at the convening agreed that MSIs in general should publicly adopt Lumina's "Big Goal" of 60 percent of Americans earning a two-year or four-year degree by 2025—a goal they believe aligns with their institutional missions. MSIs want to both champion and embrace the goal.
- MSIs need to position themselves as leaders in higher education. As James Shanley of Fort Peck Tribal College noted, MSIs are in a strong position to redefine the mission of higher education—stretching beyond the personal and economic benefits of a college education to include the goals of civic engagement, increased altruism, democratic values and cultural competency.
- Campus presidents agreed that, in partnership with Lumina Foundation for Education, they want and need to make a bold statement about the current and future success of MSIs.
- However, MSIs also recognize the importance of narrating their own stories. Participants agreed that MSIs must systematically use data to quell skepticism about their mission and value to higher education.
- There was consensus that MSIs need to mobilize their students, who are the best ambassadors of these colleges and universities.



Attendees

Gregory Anderson
Ford Foundation

Carlotta M. Arthur
Mellon Foundation

Dwayne Ashley
Thurgood Marshall College Fund

Lezli Baskerville
National Association for Equal
Opportunity in Higher Education

Margarita Benitez
The Education Trust

Carrie Billy
American Indian Higher Education
Consortium

Sarita Brown
Excelencia in Education

William Bust
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Michelle Cooper
Institute for Higher Education Policy

Algeania W. Freeman
Martin University

Mildred Garcia
California State University, Dominguez
Hills

John W. Garland
Central State University

Marybeth Gasman
University of Pennsylvania

Michelle D. Gilliard
The Wal-Mart Foundation

Marshall Grigsby
Grigsby and Associates, LLC

Justin Guillory
Northwest Indian College

Lynn Huntley
Southern Education Foundation

John Jackson
The Schott Foundation for Public
Education

Melvin Johnson
Tennessee State University

Walter Kimbrough
Philander Smith College

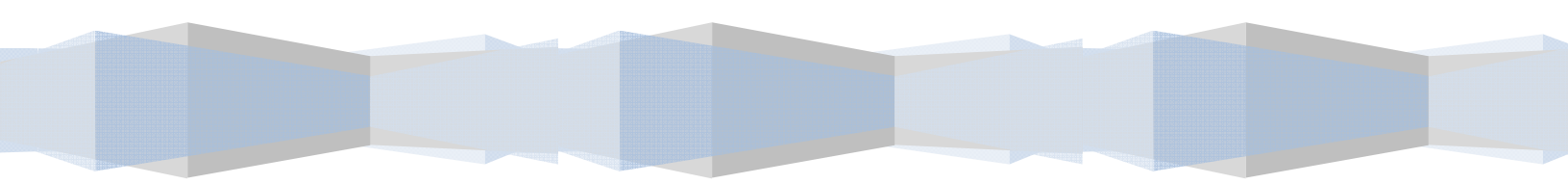
Michael L. Lomax
United Negro College Fund

David Lopez
National Hispanic University

Julianne Malveaux
Bennett College for Women

Ronald Mason
Jackson State University

James T. Minor
Michigan State University



John Moder

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

Tomas D. Morales

College of Staten Island

Tessa Martinez Pollack

Our Lady of the Lake University

Karen Radell

Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College (former president)

James C. Renick

Penson Associates, Inc.

Alejandra Rincon

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

James Shanley

Fort Peck Tribal College

Dianne B. Suber

Saint Augustine's College

Richard B. Williams

American Indian College Fund

David Yarlott

Little Big Horn College

Lumina Representatives:

Jim Applegate

Ali Campbell

Sam Cargile

Kathi Coon

Nancy Eaton

Tina Gridiron Smith

Monique Hyacinthe

Dewayne Matthews

Jamie Merisotis

Dave Powell

Suzanne Walsh

Mary Williams

