

WHAT'S MENTORING GOT TO DO WITH IT: EXAMING THE ROLE OF  
MENTORING IN THE SUCCESS OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND  
UNIVERSITY (HBCU) PRESIDENTS

By

Jacolah D. Dudley

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

The University of Texas at Arlington

December 2022

Arlington, Texas

Supervising Committee:

Dr. Catherine Robert, Ed.D. (Chair)

Dr. Maria Trache, Ph.D.

Dr. Steven Bourgeois, Ph.D.

**Abstract**

WHAT'S MENTORING GOT TO DO WITH IT: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MENTORING  
IN THE SUCCESS OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY (HBCU)  
PRESIDENTS

Jacolahn D. Dudley

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2022

Supervising Professor: Dr. Catherine Robert

Over the years there has been an increase in the turnover of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) presidents. As the turnover rates at HBCUs continues to increase, many higher education researchers have noted that HBCUs are currently being plagued by a leadership crisis (Evans et al., 2002; Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Kimbrough, 2017). Despite heavy criticism by media and academic researchers, very few recommendations have been made in regard to combating the “leadership crisis” at HBCUs. Of the studies conducted, researchers have recommended that one way to counter the rapid turnover of HBCU presidents is by engaging in some form of mentoring relationship. While previous studies have examined the role mentoring plays in the success of aspiring HBCU presidents, there is currently a gap in literature regarding the positive effects mentoring has in the successful tenure of HBCU presidents. Thus, this phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of six current and former HBCU presidents and their perceptions of mentoring in their success. This study used Kram’s (1983) Phases of Mentor Relationships theory and DeRue, Spreitzer, Flannagan, and Allen's (2013)

Mindful Engagement conceptual framework to guide this study. There were six significant findings that were discovered through this study: 1) the art of mentoring development, 2) life never goes as planned, 3) advancing HBCUs, 4) I didn't get here alone, 5) tools for success, and 6) passing the baton. The findings from the study support previous literature by researchers regarding the significant role mentoring plays in the success of HBCU presidents. Overall, study participants credited mentoring relationships in addition to certain professional skills and characteristics to their success as HBCU presidents.

## Acknowledgements

**“I will bless the Lord at all times, his praises shall continually be in my mouth” Psalm 34:1**

There aren't enough words to adequately describe how grateful I am to the God I serve for carrying me throughout this journey. I don't think I would have made it this far without him by my side. Thank you dear Lord for keeping me during this season. Thank you for your continuous favor, love, grace, and mercy. As the Saints of the church say, if I had ten thousand tongues I could never thank you enough for all you have done for me.

As I move into this next chapter of my life I am so grateful to everyone who has made an impact in my life in one way or another during my time in this doctoral program. First I have to thank my wonderful dissertation chair Dr. Catherine Robert for your guidance and support over the years. Dr. Robert, you know more than anyone that this journey was not easy, but I appreciate you for your advice, encouragement, attention to detail, and your tough love to ensure that I stayed focused on my goal. To the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Trache and Dr. Bourgeois, thank you for teaching me the true meaning of what it means to be a scholarly researcher. It has been a pleasure to learn from both of you over the years. I also have to take the time to acknowledge the best ELPS cohort there is, cohort 13. I am so fortunate to have gotten the opportunity to enter this program with you all. Each of you are amazing and talented scholars and I can't wait to see where life take us. To my good brother, writing partner, and fellow scholar Trevor, thank you for constantly keeping me on track and reminding me of the goal. I don't think I could have survived the last few months without your help.

Lastly and certainly not least, a special thank you to the greatest support system that a person could ask for. To my Momo, Veronica Thompson, thank you for being the best grandmother a person could ask for. Thank you for always reminding me how proud I have made

you over the years. With every accomplishment that I have made, you constantly remain my biggest cheerleader. Thank you to my mother for your love, support, and encouragement. You constantly have reminded me (and all of your friends on Facebook) that you are proud to have me as a son. There is truly nothing like a mother's love. Thank you to all of my family and friends who have supported me over the years. To my friends (its so many of y'all) who have been in my corner during this entire journey. A special thank you to my best friends, Arlinda, Curtis, Terry, and Na'Shon who have been my number 1 supporters since long before this program. I love each of you so much. Thank you again for always being there when I needed you. To Jordan, my right-hand man, my confidant, and my go to person when grad school was stressing me out. Thank you so much for being a major part of my support system. Thank you for reminding me who I was and what I was capable of. You never failed to offer me advice, be a listening ear, or tell me (and anyone who would listen) that one day I was going to be Dr. Jacolahn Dudley. The dream has finally become a reality.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved granny, Brenda Lee Johnson. I hope that I have made you proud over the years. Continue to watch over me throughout this life's journey. I love you and miss you so much. To Dr. James A. Wilson Jr, thank you for believing in me and helping me realize my full potential. I truly believe that you are one of my guardian angels, and I am forever grateful for the impact you made on my life. Lastly, to all the young Black scholars who are questioning if you've made the right decision, experiencing imposter syndrome, or wondering if you will make it to the finish line, you BELONG here, you matter, and you are loved! Always remember to chase your dreams, and that you can do anything that you put your mind to. The world is yours.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Dedication .....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	5
Research Questions .....	6
RQ1: .....	6
RQ2: .....	6
RQ3: .....	6
Significance of the Study .....	6
Definition of Terms .....	7
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Methodology .....	9
Researcher Positionality.....	9
Forthcoming Dissertation Chapters .....	11
Chapter 2.....	12
Literature Review.....	12
History of Mentoring .....	13
Defining Mentoring .....	15
Mentoring in Higher Education .....	16
Faculty-Student Mentoring in Higher Education.....	16
Faculty-Faculty Mentoring in Higher Education.....	17
Administrator Mentoring in Higher Education.....	18
Mentoring and The University Presidency .....	21
Historically Black Colleges and Universities .....	23
Pre- and Post- Civil War Era.....	25
The Morrill Land-Grant Acts .....	26
Brown v. Board of Education.....	27
Civil Rights Era and HBCUs .....	29

Post-Civil Rights Era and HBCUs.....	30
Critiques and Challenges of HBCUs .....	31
HBCUs in Present Day .....	34
The HBCU Presidency.....	36
Profile of HBCU Presidents.....	36
HBCU Presidency Leadership Crisis.....	38
HBCU Presidential Turnover .....	39
HBCU Presidential Skills .....	42
Mentoring and The HBCU Presidency .....	44
Gaps in the Literature.....	46
Theoretical /Conceptual Framework.....	46
Phases of Mentor Relationships Theory .....	47
Mindful Engagement .....	48
Summary.....	50
Chapter 3.....	52
Methodology.....	52
Research Questions.....	52
Research Design.....	52
Phenomenology.....	53
History of Hermeneutical Phenomenology.....	53
Hermeneutical Phenomenology .....	54
Use of Hermeneutic Phenomenology .....	55
Positionality of the Researcher .....	55
Site Selection .....	57
Participant Recruitment and Selection.....	57
Data Collection .....	59
Trustworthiness.....	61
Limitations .....	62
Summary.....	62
Chapter 4.....	64
Findings.....	64
The Participants .....	64
Table 1.....	65
Harriet .....	66



Harry .....	66
William.....	67
David.....	67
Michael .....	67
James.....	68
Findings.....	68
Table 2.....	69
The Art of Mentoring Development .....	69
Life Never Goes as Planned.....	77
Advancing HBCUs .....	83
I Didn't Get Here Alone.....	88
Tools for Success .....	90
Passing The Baton.....	95
Summary.....	100
Chapter 5.....	101
Discussion and Conclusion.....	101
Discussion of Findings.....	102
The Art of Mentoring Development .....	102
Life Never Goes as Planned.....	104
Advancing HBCUs .....	106
I Didn't Get Here Alone.....	107
Tools for Success .....	109
Passing the Baton.....	110
Limitations .....	112
Significance of the Study .....	112
Implications for Practice .....	114
Implications for Policy.....	116
Recommendations for Future Research .....	116
Conclusion .....	117
References.....	119
APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	138
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL.....	140
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM .....	142
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	144

**List of Tables**

Table 1..... 66

Table 1..... 69

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Historically Black college and university (HBCU) presidents are experiencing shorter tenures while in the role, which directly impacts institutional progression, fiscal management, and community relations (Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Palmer, 2020). The increased rates of HBCU presidential turnover can be attributed to lack of preparation for the role and professional networks that support their vision (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Several HBCUs have been troubled with short-tenured presidents in the last few decades as many depart due to negative board relationships, rejection of shared governance, accreditation issues, and lack of fundraising background (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Wright, 2020). In 2012, HBCUs first saw an increase in presidential turnover when more than 20 HBCUs had a leader depart the institution (Stewart, 2013). Specifically, Jackson State University, an HBCU in Jackson, Mississippi, has had four different presidents at the institution's helm since 2013 (Wright, 2020). While every case of HBCU presidential departure is different, research suggests that HBCU presidents tend to be unsuccessful in the role because these leaders must deal with additional pressures in comparison to their counterparts at other types of higher education institutions (Crawford, 2021).

While there are several illuminating reasons for the turnover of college presidents overall, there is a limited body of research on the turnover of presidents at HBCUs (Commodore et al., 2016). Moreover, higher education researchers are concerned about the current leadership instability at HBCUs (Gasman, 2011, 2012; Schexnider, 2010; Seymour, 2008; Wilson, 2012). While several researchers are still determining if there is indeed a leadership crisis, two questions remain the same: 1) where from will future leaders come, and 2) how will they be prepared to be

successful in their role (Freeman & Gasman, 2014)? Researchers believe that one way to combat presidential turnover at HBCUs is by preparing future leaders of these institutions through organized mentoring programs and developing mentoring relationships with successful HBCU presidents (Commodore et al., 2016). Mentoring has been widely viewed as a potential solution for successful leadership because mentoring is an influential and formal process for personal growth (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2012). According to Kutchner and Kleschick (2012), mentoring happens when an experienced professional imparts knowledge to a less experienced career professional through a formal or informal process. Mentees receive wise counsel, acquire knowledge, and build relationships (Umpstead et al., 2015). Despite the vast amount of literature related to the value of mentoring for college presidents and administrators, very little is known about HBCU presidential leadership and the role that mentoring plays in their career trajectory and success (Freeman & Gasman, 2014).

### **Background**

Presidential leadership is critical to a higher education institution's academic and administrative effectiveness (Giglotti & Ruben, 2017). The role of college and university presidents is multifaceted yet challenging because of the heavy internal and external pressures to effectively lead their institutions (Harris & Ellis, 2018). College and university presidents oversee fundraising, manage the institutions' finances, participate in community engagement, mediate campus conflict, watch campus development and improvement, and lobby the legislature on behalf of their institutions (Cook, 2012; Eckel & Kezar, 2011; Fisher & Koch, 2004). Not only are these leaders dealing with internal pressures within the university, but they also contend with external pressures. These include compliance with federal government regulations, local and state legislative policies, and political constraints from various key public

figures (ACE, 2012). Additionally, college and university presidents operate in a highly competitive environment where most university leaders seek prestige and high rankings, leading to financial success and improved public perception (Brewer et al., 2002; Couturier & Scurry, 2004; Harris, 2009; Newman). These contributing factors all play a substantial role in the turnover of college and university presidents in addition to the overall high stress nature of the college presidency. In fact, over the years, the turnover of college presidents has increased dramatically from 8.5 years a decade ago to 6.5 years (ACE, 2012). The issue of turnover is more significant at HBCUs, who make up only 3% of the nation's roughly 3,000 higher education institutions than any other institution type (Winn et al., 2018). While HBCUs represent a small number of colleges in universities in America, HBCU presidents have been known to receive heavy criticism for their leadership practices (Freeman & Palmer, 2020).

HBCUs have a long and rich history of playing a significant role in providing quality education to Black and other students from marginalized backgrounds (Freeman et al., 2016). Additionally, these institutions are producing most of the nation's African American graduates, with HBCUs producing 20% of African American graduates in the United States (Freeman et al., 2016; UNCF). While these institutions have seen success over the years, researchers believe that more consistent and effective leadership at HBCUs will potentially help reverse the downward trend of student enrollment, faculty and staff relations, and community involvement (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Palmer, 2020). More recently, academic scholars and HBCU stakeholders have posited that the instability in leadership of HBCU presidents is endangering these institutions' longevity (Palmer & Freeman, 2019; Schexnider, 2013; Somers & Leichter, 2017).

From 2010 to 2014, the average tenure of HBCU presidents was roughly three years in comparison to the nearly seven-year average of college presidents at other institutions. (Kimbrough, 2017). This has become considerably alarming because the success and upward trajectory of colleges and universities rely heavily on a consistent president (Somers & Leichter, 2017). If HBCUs continue to experience rapid turnover in the presidents' seat, the growth and development of these institutions will continue to suffer (Somers & Leichter, 2017). With over 100 HBCUs in America, which only make up 3% of colleges and universities nationwide, these institutions cannot afford any further challenges, especially the detrimental impact of presidential turnover (Gasman & Nguyen, 2014; Somers & Leichter, 2017; Winn et al., 2021). Over the years, a significant number of HBCU donors, alumni, researchers, and many government officials have become troubled regarding the future of HBCUs (Commodore et al., 2016). Their concern is that HBCUs are experiencing excessive presidential turnover, an increasing number of retiring HBCU leaders, dwindling budgets, and depleted resources.

### **Statement of the Problem**

HBCU presidents have a wide variety of roles at the institutions they serve, and unstable leadership causes significant challenges for HBCUs. One problem for HBCU presidents is the under-preparation based on sharing leadership experiences by mentors in similar roles (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Secondly, HBCU presidential turnover stems from the lack of preparation in defining their leadership style and vision (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Scholars have also noted that HBCUs tend to recycle leaders (Palmer & Freeman, 2020). This means the ineffective leaders will resign or are terminated from one HBCU and are hired by another, spreading and repeating the cycle (Palmer & Freeman, 2020).

Over the years, HBCU presidential leadership instability has incited fear among HBCU shareholders and supporters (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Kimbrough, 2017). With so many HBCUs facing various challenges, these institutions need stable leadership now more than ever (Somers & Leichter, 2017). Research suggests that the most significant way aspiring college and university presidents can prepare for the role is through mentoring relationships (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Freeman & Gasman, 2014). While studies have been conducted on the success of mentoring in achieving the HBCU presidency, the role of mentoring in the success during the HBCU presidency has been neglected.

When it comes to topics related to presidential leadership, HBCU presidents tend to be left out as subjects of more extensive research studies (Freeman & Gasman, 2016; Mbagekwe, 2006; Nichols, 2004). Recent studies on HBCU presidential leadership have been conducted but have focused merely on the skillset and competencies needed to be effective an HBCU president (Esters et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Additionally, research has also focused on HBCU presidential pathways and the importance of current HBCU presidents mentoring and grooming aspiring HBCU leaders (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). While these areas are essential and contribute to the absence of literature on HBCU presidents, additional research on how mentoring relationships impact HBCU tenure is necessary.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role mentoring plays, if any, in the successful tenure of HBCU presidents. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of current and former HBCU presidents with mentors and their perceptions of mentoring's contribution to their success. This study also added to the work of Briscoe and Freeman's (2019) study on mentorship in the preparation and success of university

presidents, Freeman and colleagues' (2016) study on the skills needed to be successful as an HBCU president; and Commodore and colleagues' (2016) study on mentoring and advice in preparing aspiring HBCU presidents.

### **Research Questions**

The following overarching research questions guided this study:

Does mentoring play a role in reducing the turnover of HBCU presidents?

The specific research questions are:

**RQ1:** How do HBCU presidents describe their experiences engaged in mentoring relationships?

**RQ2:** How do HBCU presidents define success?

**RQ3:** How does mentoring contribute to the success of HBCU presidents?

### **Significance of the Study**

Over the years, there has been an increase in research on HBCU leadership due to increased presidential turnover at these institutions (Cantey et al., 2013; Crawford, 2017). Researchers have recommended that aspiring HBCU presidents seek a mentor to be prepared for the role and help combat the leadership crisis at these institutions (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016). While several studies have focused on mentoring aspiring presidents and the specific skills needed to prepare and succeed as the president of an HBCU, researchers have fallen short in understanding if mentoring truly plays a role in the success of HBCU presidents. Thus, the researcher sought to explore the role of mentoring in the success of HBCU presidents. The researcher also adds to the limited body of research on HBCU mentoring of HBCU presidents after this study was conducted. Additionally, the research from this study will prove



helpful to aspiring HBCU presidents, HBCU presidential leadership development and mentoring programs, and HBCU governing boards and stakeholders.

### **Definition of Terms**

**President /Chancellor.** Presidents or Chancellors are the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of a college or university. This position oversees the daily operation of a college or university and is the public face of the institutions they represent.

**Mentorship.** A process in which a less experienced professional receives guidance, support, relationship building, and career advancement advice from a more seasoned professional.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).** Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded after the civil war and are public and private institutions throughout the United States established to educate the African American community.

**Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).** Predominately White Institutions are colleges and universities in the United States whose primary student enrollment comprises white /Caucasian students.

**Turnover.** The rate at which an administrator leaves their position as a college president.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The first framework that guided this study was Kram's (1983) Phases of Mentor Relationships theory. Kram (1985) defined mentoring as a process in which a less experienced professional receives guidance, support, relationship building, and career advancement advice from a more seasoned mentor. Mentoring can considerably heighten the development of entry-level and mid-level career professionals (Kram, 1983). Ultimately, Kram's (1983) study theorized four stages of mentoring relationships that are developing and evolving. According to Kram's

theory (1983), the four subsequential stages of the mentoring relationship include *initiation*, *cultivation*, *separation*, and *redefinition*.

The first phase, *initiation*, occurs when a mentor and mentee develop expectancies and form the initial relationship. In the second phase, *cultivation*, the rapport develops between the two parties, and the mentor typically provides career and networking support. In the third phase, *separation* occurs, in which the mentee pursues independence and more freedom from their mentor(s). Lastly, *redefinition* transpires when mentors and mentees evolve into either a friend-like relationship or terminate the relationship entirely.

Kram's (1983) four stages of mentoring relationships guided this study because it allowed the participants to discuss how their relationship with their mentor(s) developed over time. Additionally, analyzing how presidents at various stages of the mentoring relationship speak about their success as an HBCU president will be informative. With every step of the approach being different, depending on the stage of presidents' service, their level of success due to mentorship may or may not look different. One of the stages that proved to be most telling was the cultivation phase. Each of the presidents shared experiences that took place during the cultivation phase, and how this stage in the mentoring relationship was the most significant of the four phases.

Additionally, the conceptualization of Mindful Engagement by DeRue and colleagues (2013) also guided this qualitative research study. This framework develops leaders of organizations to overcome a multitude of challenges. According to the researchers, there is currently a leadership talent crisis in various forms of organizations, and leaders need to be developed in order to lead successful organizations (DeRue et al., 2013). This conceptual

framework proved to be useful during this study as the participants described how they were able to overcome the challenges that effect HBCUs across the country.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative methodology was used to understand the lived experiences of HBCU presidents, and the role mentoring played, if any, in the success of HBCU presidents. For this study, a qualitative research design was the most appropriate approach because using this method allows the researcher to explore a problem or specific issue (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, a phenomenological strategy was also used for this study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological approach allows a phenomenon to be studied through individuals who share lived experiences. There was a total of six participants in this study who were all HBCU presidents who were mentored before assuming the presidency and held their positions for a minimum of three years. This was an ideal participant pool for qualitative research, based on Dukes (1984), recommendation that researcher have a sample size of 3 to 10 subjects in qualitative research. After participants were selected, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were scheduled to collect the data. Due to the current covid-19 pandemic and the geographic distance of participants, all interviews were conducted via Zoom and Microsoft Teams video conferencing platforms. Each of the participant interviews were also recorded.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are magical places. Founded on the premise of educating African American men and women, HBCU's have evolved and become a place to receive a once and lifetime education not just for African American students but for anyone who wants to receive an education from these historic institutions. As an individual who is a two-time graduate of an HBCU, I can say that my HBCU experience was one of the best

experiences of my life, like none other. To be honest, like most other students, attending an HBCU was not my first choice. Attending an HBCU was not one of my choices at all. Before going to tour the campus of Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU), I had never heard the term HBCU or even knew what attending an HBCU would be like as a student.

My decision to attend PVAMU was not by choice but due to not getting accepted into my top choices. Luckily, I soon realized that I made the best decision of my life, choosing to attend Prairie View A&M University. Not only was I educated in my course work, but I was taught about life, developed as a leader, and pushed to be the best that I can be, all the while being surrounded by what seemed like friends and family that I had known my entire life. The familiar atmosphere at HBCUs is probably the best part of attending these institutions. Everyone around you wants you to be successful and thrive during your enrollment and after you leave the campus.

As time went on, I became more involved as a student and ultimately was elected student body president. As president, I was the voice of over 8,000 students on campus; I attended ceremonies and banquets. Most importantly, I met regularly with my campus administration, including the president of my university. Meeting with the administrative team gave me insight into the events happening on my campus, especially what it takes to get things done. I remember being so happy going to meetings with my president, provost, or other campus vice presidents. I was eager to learn what these individuals were working on to make the campus better.

It was my first look at some of our institution's challenges and what it takes to make significant changes at a higher education institution. Truthfully, choosing this research topic is both an academic and a personal endeavor. On one side, this study will contribute to the limited amount of research on HBCU presidential leadership. Personally, this study will potentially

allow me to gain first-hand information from current and former HBCU presidents on their journeys, experiences, and their thoughts about whether mentoring leads to HBCU presidents' success.

### **Forthcoming Dissertation Chapters**

This study is separated into five chapters. Chapter One included an overview of HBCUs and the importance of HBCU presential leadership and the problem and goals for this qualitative study. Chapter Two provides an overview of relevant literature related to the topic. Chapter Three includes the research methodology, including the research design, participant recruitment and selection, data collection, data analysis, and study limitations. Chapter Four consists of an introduction and background of the participants and the findings from the study. Chapter Five includes a discussion of the results, followed by recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) play a monumental role in the education of African American students. For centuries, HBCUs have been the top producers of African American lawyers, doctors, judges, pharmacists, engineers, nurses, teachers, and Black political leaders (Evans et al., 2002; Price, 1998). Despite their historical significance to the Black community and America in general, HBCUs are currently in danger of extinction. Many of these institutions are experiencing budget cuts and issues with maintaining accreditation, and some HBCUs are closing their doors permanently. In 2018, Concordia College, a small HBCU in Selma, Alabama, was forced to close after financial crisis and enrollment declines led to the institution's unprecedented 10% six-year graduation rate (Suggs, 2019). Researchers suggest that HBCU presidents should be mentored in order to be more adequately prepared for the role in order to combat the current challenges HBCUs are facing (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016;).

This chapter includes a literature review with extensive research related to mentoring and HBCU presidents. The first section provides an overview and background of mentoring and an overview of mentoring research that has been conducted in higher education. In the second section, I share the history of the establishment of HBCUs in the United States in addition to how HBCUs have progressed since the post-civil war era. This section also includes background on the current state of HBCUs, the significance of these institutions, and challenges HBCUs are facing. In the third section, I discuss the role of HBCU presidents in addition to the current leadership crisis. Additionally, this section includes research on the role of mentoring in HBCU

presidential effectiveness. The chapter concludes with a review of the gaps in the literature, theoretical framework, and a summary of the chapter.

### **History of Mentoring**

Mentoring is not a new concept (Armstrong et al., 2002). Mentoring has a long and significant history around the world. Most researchers believe that mentoring dates back to the stone age (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Dickey, 1996). According to Crisp and Cruz (2009), the origins of the term "mentor" date back to ancient Greece. In Greek mythology, a mentor served as a knowledgeable counselor to Telemachus, the child of Odysseus, who was a King of Ithaca. In the story, the mentors' responsibility was to educate Telemachus and provide him with encouragement and direction (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The overall message of the story was that the mentor was responsible for teaching, developing the character, and shaping the life of the young Telemachus (Barondess, 1995). Over time, the concept of mentoring has stayed true to the model described by the Ancient Greeks - an apprentice/master relationship in which a younger, less knowledgeable individual learns from an older, more experienced individual (Metros & Yang, 2006). Numerous studies have shown that mentoring is essential in the academic and professional development of students and career professionals (Louis & Freeman, 2018).

Kram, one of the most-cited researchers on the topic of mentoring, conducted various studies throughout the 1980s, including Kram's (1983) work on the mentoring process, Clawson and Kram's (1984) study where she examined mentoring relationships using different genders, and Kram and Isabella's (1985) work, where the authors studied ways in which employers can encourage mentoring in the workplace. Kram's (1983) findings lead to the development of mentoring theories that researchers still use today. In her 1983 study on mentoring relationships, Kram defined mentoring, gave the historical context of mentoring, and introduced mentoring

research. Additionally, she theorized four phases of mentoring relationships, where she discussed how a mentor relationship could substantially improve the career development of early and mid-career professionals.

Mentoring has been mentioned regularly throughout time, but it was not until the 1970s that the term mentoring was first introduced in research (Dzickowski, 2013). These early studies were conducted by scholars who examined the phenomena in business organizations and various levels of education. In Harriet Zuckerman's (1996) book *Scientific Elite: Nobel Laureates in the United States*, the author examined American laureates who attributed much of their career advancement and success to mentoring. Zuckerman found that of the 41 laureates interviewed in the study, over half of the participants had been mentored early on in their professional career (Dzickowski, 2013; Tenner, 2004; Zuckerman, 1996).

In another early study on mentoring, Levinson et al. (1978) examined human development among adult men. The authors discovered that mentoring was monumental in men's career development and trajectory throughout their respective professions. Additionally, the researchers shared that a mentor's role consists of being a teacher, supporter, guide, and wise counsel to a protégé throughout their advancement in a particular profession.

Mentoring is typically categorized in four categories: formal, informal, short-term, and long-term (Coll & Raghavan, 2004). Formal mentoring is organized with the specific goal of establishing mentoring relationships between mentors and their protégés. In contrast, informal mentoring may have similar goals but does not have a particular structure. Informal mentoring relationships have no organizational ties and are not affiliated with a particular company or organization. While more formal mentoring programs are being created, informal mentoring has proved beneficial for decades. When looking at short and long-term mentoring, formal and



informal mentoring relationships can be placed in either of those categories. According to Basile (1998), long-term mentors stay with their mentees over a long period. The mentor is an integral part of the mentees long-term career goals. Short-term mentoring relationships are the complete opposite. These mentoring relationships last for a short period, usually, the mentor helps the mentee achieve a specific goal, and then the mentoring relationship ends (Basile, 1998; Coll & Raghavan, 2004). No matter the mentoring relationship, mentoring has been shown to play a significant role in one's success (Louis & Freeman, 2018).

### **Defining Mentoring**

Although mentoring has been a part of world history since being introduced in Greek mythology, there is no specific definition of mentoring (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Dickey, 1996). For years, researchers have been unable to agree on a singular definition of mentoring (Berk et al., 2005). Historically, a mentor has always referred to a senior, more knowledgeable individual guiding a younger person (Smith et al., 2000). Byars-Winston and Dahlberg (2019) defined mentoring as a highly skilled individual who works overtime to develop an early career professional and build them up for success while providing support and guidance.

Levinson (1978) and Kram (1985) both defined mentoring as the process in which a senior, more knowledgeable individual takes on a protégé and assists with the career mobility and professional development of that person. Despite mentoring having multiple definitions throughout academia, the most well-known and highly cited definition can be found in Kathy Kram's 1980 dissertation and her 1983 *Academy of Management Journal* article (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008). Kram (1983) described mentoring as an intense developmental relationship where the mentor advises and shapes the protégé's career experiences. Despite the term mentor having multiple definitions and meanings, mentoring has been shown to be successful in career and

professional development in various fields of study. Over time, scholars have studied mentoring related to businesses, organizations, the field of medicine, and even the field of higher education (Merriam et al., 1987).

### **Mentoring in Higher Education**

Over the years, scholars have mentioned the significant role of mentoring relationships in the realm of higher education (Kramer & White, 1982). Additionally, research has shown that mentoring interactions are deeply rooted in several different areas of higher education (Lunsford et al., 2017). Much of this research reifies the importance and the positive effects that mentoring has on students, faculty, and administrators in higher education (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019). Specifically, higher education mentoring research has primarily been about mentoring relationships from faculty to students, new faculty being mentored by senior faculty, and new administrators being groomed and mentored by senior-level administrators (Merriam et al., 1987). Moreover, higher education mentoring research has also focused on faculty peer mentoring relationships (Merriam et al., 1987).

### **Faculty-Student Mentoring in Higher Education**

Higher education scholars have consistently studied the effects of faculty mentoring students (Merriam et al., 1987). In fact, throughout higher education, there have been studies on the mentoring relationships of undergraduate and graduate students. Research has shown that student-faculty mentoring is crucial in developing positive learning outcomes for students (McKinsey, 2016). Mentoring in higher education began due to the substantial number of students not graduating from higher education institutions in America (McKinsey, 2016). While mentoring looks different at every institution, some schools have established formal mentoring programs to help increase student persistence (McKinsey, 2016). Additionally, many mentoring

programs at higher education institutions target specific student groups: first-generation, low-income, minority, women, and students with special needs (Lunsford et al., 2017; McKinsey, 2016).

No matter the target population, mentoring has been shown to be beneficial to the student persistence and increasing graduation rates of college students (Lunsford et al., 2017; McKinsey, 2016). For undergraduate students mentored by a university faculty member or a staff member, mentoring relationships helps with the student's transition to college and assists with academic success and graduation matriculation (Lunsford et al., 2017). For graduate students, faculty mentoring enhances academic, writing, and research skills, as well as professional and personal development. Graduate students face unique challenges and mentoring has been critical to helping the students overcome them. Faculty mentoring has proven to be meaningful in developing undergraduate and graduate students. In addition to faculty to student mentoring being practical, faculty peer mentoring has also been mentioned in research (Anafarta & Apaydin, 2016).

### **Faculty-Faculty Mentoring in Higher Education**

Peer mentoring relationships of faculty occur when a more senior faculty member mentors a junior faculty member (Sands et al., 1991). Additionally, mentoring in the academy refers to a more knowledgeable professor providing direction to a newer faculty member on issues relating to the professoriate (Anafarta & Apaydin, 2016). According to Anafarta and Apaydin, faculty to faculty mentoring relationships should consist of a veteran faculty member teaching, serving as a role model, and serving as a guiding light to new professors. Research also highlights how the mentoring of junior faculty by more seasoned faculty has lasting effects on college and university professors (Louis & Freeman, 2018). Ultimately, faculty mentoring

relationships are critical for the career trajectory and success of new professors in the academy. Although faculty mentoring students and senior faculty mentoring junior faculty members have been featured frequently in research, one of the most highly researched areas related to higher education is that of mentoring higher education administrators (VanDerLinden, 2005).

### **Administrator Mentoring in Higher Education**

Over the years, mentoring has been heavily credited for career and professional development in higher education (Louis & Freeman, 2018). This claim has been especially true for higher education administrators throughout the United States. Mentoring in higher education is fundamental in both the growth and development of the individual professional and in the development of the institution (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). More recently, higher education researchers have focused on mentoring college and university administrators (Freeman et al., 2016). However, up until recently, various researchers have focused on mentoring and preparing aspiring university presidents instead of developing higher education administrators, who in many cases eventually become college or university presidents (VanDerLinden, 2005).

The mentoring of higher education administrators is considered an excellent opportunity for these leaders to further develop and advance in their careers (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). In fact, according to Meriam, Thomas, and Zeph (1987), college and university administrators have heavily cited mentoring as a monumental reason for their career advancement. Additionally, due to the high demand for effective administrators in higher education, college and universities, graduate programs, and nonprofit organizations are developing programs focused on mentoring and grooming the next generation of university administrators (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Freeman & Kochan, 2013). While college and university administrators can

develop their leadership skills through on-the-job training or by gaining more experience, most researchers suggest these leaders find a mentor (e.g., Meriam et al., 1987).

Scholars have examined mentoring relationships of college and university administrators. VanDerLinden (2005), discussed mentoring of community college administrators. VanderLinden surveyed over 100 participants who served in various administrative roles and found that over 56% of participants identified that they had been mentored or were currently being mentored. Additionally, Searby and colleagues (2015) surveyed female higher education administrators.

To be selected as a potential participant in the study, the candidates had to be female administrators at a Carnegie-designated R1 institution. Carnegie institutions are doctoral-granting institutions with high research activity. The authors identified 163 participants from various institutions that met the criteria and 350 candidates who were administrators in those universities. Of the 350 administrators that were contacted through email, there was a response rate of 37%, with 131 participants in total. In the study, all 131 participants were female administrators who were deans, vice president, associate vice presidents, provosts, and university presidents (Searby et al., 2015). Moreover, 68% of the participants in the study had served in their role for three years or more, 53% of participants held a doctoral degree, and 64% were over the age of 56. Moreover, 85% of the participants identified as White, 10% identified as African American, 3% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% identified as Hispanic or Latina/o (Searby et al., 2015). The goal of the study was to understand the lived experiences of female higher education administrators who were engaged in a mentoring relationship as either a mentor or protégé (Searby et al., 2015). The scholars found that most participants had received some form of mentorship throughout their professional careers in higher education. Furthermore, most

female administrators attributed career advancement to having a mentor and having a mentor who was also a female administrator.

Dickson (1983) also examined the mentorship of college and university administrators and the effects it had on the career development of these individuals. Dickson identified a total of 437 higher education leaders who were currently serving as administrators in the colleges and universities across the state of Rhode Island. Of the surveyed 437 college and university administrators in Rhode Island, the author received a response rate of 59%, with 258 administrators participating in the study. Most of the study participants identified as White males (83.6%) and 16.4% of the participants identifying as female. In the study, Dickson found that 53.5% of administrators had a mentor, and 54.7% of administrators were currently serving as mentors to someone else. Dickson ultimately discovered that 56.4% of participants attributed their career trajectory to their mentor(s).

Since the 1970s, the importance of mentoring in higher education has continued to emerge in literature (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019). Mentoring relationships are beneficial to higher education administrators by aiding in their leadership development, career trajectory, and overall professional success (VanDerLinden, 2005). While not all higher education administrators may have had a mentor, more and more leaders have cited having a mentor to their success than not. Mentoring relationships continue to aid in the development and success of mentees. In addition to the higher education mentoring research available on administrators, students, and faculty, there have also been extensive research studies on the significance of mentoring on presidents of higher education institutions (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019).

## **Mentoring and The University Presidency**

Colleges and universities in the United States are multifaceted with a range in mission and vision, institutional type, areas of expertise, and size (Freeman et al., 2016). As such, presidents hold the most highly coveted position in academia (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Keohane, 2006; Reis, 2015). The high esteem associated with the college presidency is because the presidency is seen as the highest leadership position in American higher education (Freeman et al., 2016). More is expected of the university president in higher education than in any other role at the institution (Ramesden, 1998). A vital responsibility of a university president is to formulate the institution's educational philosophy, vision, and campus climate (Blumenstyk, 2014; Oikelome, 2017). With such a significant visionary role in higher education, research suggests that mentoring aids in the preparation of college and university presidents (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Freeman et al., 2016).

For decades, studies have shown that mentoring is essential in developing higher education administrators and presidents (Commodore et al., 2016). For example, in her 1982 study, Kathryn M. Moore found that several senior administrators and university presidents were involved in some form of a mentoring relationship. Most of the participants credited their career trajectory and success to a mentor. Mentoring was also the common factor among participants when discussing their professional and leadership development (Moore, 1982). Fitzpatrick (1992) also surveyed college and university presidents to determine if presidents had been mentored before assuming the presidency and found that various study participants had a mentor prior to becoming a university president. The author also discovered that many of the participants believed that mentoring was critical in their accession to the presidency.

More recently, Briscoe and Freeman (2019) examined the effects of mentoring on the development of university presidents. The authors surveyed college and university presidents throughout the United States and found that several participants were engaged in some form of mentoring relationship. The participants in the study also noted that their mentoring relationship was pivotal in obtaining the presidency. Due to the role mentoring has on career advancement and professional development, several participants in the study recommended that anyone working in higher education should seek out a mentor, even if you do not have plans on being a university president (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019).

Additionally, researchers have also examined mentoring relationships of female college presidents (Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Hardy et al., 2021; Jackson & Harris, 2007). In fact, within the past few decades, there has been an increase in research exploring female college presidents engaged in mentoring relationships (Brown, 2005). The increase in the literature related to female college leadership is attributed to the fact that the number of these leaders are significantly low compared to their male counterparts despite having an increase in the number of female college presidents over the years (Brown, 2005).

Turner (2007) conducted a study using a biographical sketch to explore the pathway to the presidency for women of color. The author found that each of the female college president participants highlighted a mentoring relationship as one of the significant factors for them obtaining the presidency. Brown (2005) surveyed 91 female college presidents regarding female college presidents' demographic and mentoring relationships and found that 63% of the participants had a mentor and were engaged in a mentoring relationship before becoming a university president. Additionally, 64% of the participants in the study had begun to mentor aspiring presidents after assuming the presidency.



Some researchers have also explored community college leadership to see if presidents of those institutions were engaged in mentoring relationships. VanDerLinden (2005) surveyed 300 community college administrators and presidents to explore community college administrators' professional development and mentoring background. VanDerLinden found that 56% of the participants shared that they had one or multiple mentors. Additionally, 52% of the participants credited their career advancement to having a mentor. McDade (2005) conducted a study to examine mentoring and protégé relationships of current and former community college presidents. The author found that several participants had been mentored before becoming a community college president and began mentoring other aspiring community college presidents once they assumed the presidency.

Mentoring has proved to be beneficial in the ascension to the position of college or university president. Regardless of institution type, gender, or background of leaders, college and university presidents' credit having a mentor to their success (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Madden, 2008). While there are a wide variety of skills, backgrounds, and professional experiences that can prepare an aspiring university president for the role, it is evident through research that mentoring also plays a significant role in ascending to the university presidency (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Nevertheless, despite substantial research on traditional college and university presidents, ivy league presidents, and even community college presidents, and their mentoring relationships, research has fallen short regarding HBCUs (Freeman & Gasman, 2014).

### **Historically Black Colleges and Universities**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have a long-standing legacy in American education for African Americans. The federal government defines HBCUs as higher

education institutions "whose principal mission . . . is the education of Black Americans." (Roeburk & Murty, p. 8). Since their establishment, HBCUs have collectively educated, supported, and developed African American community members (Minor, 2004). Much like other higher education institutions in America, each HBCU is unique and multifaceted. These historical institutions have varied stories, missions, and traditions (Clement & Lidsky, 2011). Additionally, there are both public and private, two- and four-year, gender-specific and co-educational, religious-based and non-religious affiliated HBCUs (Clement & Lidsky, 2011). Today, HBCUs are highly regarded for educating low socioeconomic, minority, and first-generation college students and producing a large number of Black graduates (Freeman et al., 2016).

Moreover, HBCUs have long been credited with educating much of the Black middle class in America despite a significant number of African Americans now attending Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). HBCUs constitute only 3% of post-secondary institutions in America, but these institutions produce well over 20% of Black graduates in the United States (Esters et al., 2016). Furthermore, there was a time where HBCUs were responsible for producing 80% of Black federal judges, 40% of Black lawyers, 50% of Black teachers, and 40% of Black engineers (Henderson, 2001; Nichols, 2004). Despite the small number of HBCU's, it is evident that HBCUs are a significant factor in the success of their Black graduates (Nichols, 2004). Additionally, while HBCUs' missions are dedicated to educating African Americans, HBCUs have opened their doors to individuals who do not identify as Black (Redd, 1998). The story of HBCUs has been one of triumph and success for the Black community in the United States (Albritton, 2012). For centuries these institutions have been instrumental in educating America's African American population (Albritton, 2012).

Despite their long-standing history and the significant role HBCUs play in educating members of the Black community and other marginalized groups, HBCUs continue to face numerous challenges (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). According to the accreditation body for many HBCUs, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), many HBCUs are dealing with financial mismanagement, ethical impropriety, leadership instability, and governance challenges (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). While HBCUs are doing remarkable things for the Black community, the very existence and relevance of these historic institutions continues to be called into question (Albritton, 2012; Freeman & Palmer, 2020).

### **Pre- and Post- Civil War Era**

While a small number of HBCUs were founded prior to the beginning of the Civil War, most HBCUs were founded during the post-Civil War era, (Redd, 1998). Three of the nation's first HBCUs, Cheyney State University was established in 1837, Lincoln University was founded in 1854, and Wilberforce University was founded in 1856, all before the start of the Civil War (Albritton, 2012; Redd, 1998). These HBCUs were founded by white philanthropists who wanted to provide primary education and training to young African Americans (Redd, 1998) because there were very few higher education institutions in America before the Civil War that educated African Americans (Albritton, 2012). Due to the unequal treatment of African Americans who were barred from attending higher education institutions in America, HBCUs formed throughout the United States (Bracey, 2017).

After the Civil War, most of these institutions were established in the southern states under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau, Black religious groups, and white philanthropists (Redd, 1998). Since slavery had outlawed Africans from receiving an education, HBCUs provided the newly freed people an education with the hope of having the same rights and

opportunities as their white peers (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). Moreover, HBCUs were founded with the unique mission to provide quality education to Black Americans (Nicholas, 2004). Specifically, most Many HBCUs founded after the Civil War were established to train future Black teachers to educate the millions of school-aged children and African American adults who had no formal and were illiterate (Cantey et al., 2013). During this era, schools such as Bowie State University in Maryland, Lincoln University in Missouri, Hampton University in Virginia, and Howard University in Washington DC, the alma mater of Vice President Kamala Harris, were created to educate Black students (Evans et al., 2002).

### **The Morrill Land-Grant Acts**

The Morrill-Land Grant Acts were statutes sponsored by Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont. These statutes gave colleges and universities access to much needed land to help establish higher education institutions and build up their campus infrastructure (Bracey, 2017). In the Morrill Act of 1862, every state in the country was allotted 30,000 acres of land for each member of both houses of Congress to establish intuitions devoted to agriculture and mechanics (Bracey, 2017; Committee on the Future, 1995; Stevens, 2000). However, due to the circumstances surrounding slavery and racial discrimination, most African Americans could not attend public land grand institutions until years later (Bracey, 2017).

It was not decades after the Civil War that America saw an increase in the number of HBCUs in America (Bracey, 2017; Renne, 1960). With the Morrill Act of 1890, Congress attempted to change American education for African Americans (Bracey, 2017). This statute called for white colleges and universities in America to allow Black students to attend public land grant institutions or establish a separate institution for Black students (Bracey, 2017). While some states complied with the requirements to enroll Black students, many did not, leading to the

establishment of many post-Civil War Era HBCUs (Bracey, 2017; Cantey et al., 2013; Harper et al., 2009; Museus et al., 2012). Although there were several benefits of the Morrill Act of 1890 such as the establishment of HBCUs and an increase in the number of African Americans attending and graduating college, there were some negative aspects of the act as well (Bracey, 2017). The most alarming were that it allowed white institutions to benefit from the establishment of HBCUs and further perpetuated segregation (Bracey, 2017, Roebuck & Murty). Since White males were the majority in southern state legislatures and Congress, HBCUs were disproportionately underfunded and these institutions were provided far less resources in comparison to their counterparts at PWIs (Bracey, 2017; Harper et al., 2009).

Despite the separate but equal law, these institutions were separate but not equal (Harper et al., 2009). Due to the higher proportion HBCUs in the South, and the extreme nature of racial segregation during this time, the unique needs of HBCUs were undervalued and thus underfunded (Bracey, 2017; Harper et al., 2009). Much like today, in the post Morrill Land Grant Act era, individual states allocated a large amount of the funding higher education institutions received (Bracey, 2017). During this time period, predominately white institutions were allocated 26 times more than HBCUs (Bracey, 2017; Harper et al., 2009). HBCUs may have had individual facilities but these institutions did not have adequate funding, facilities, teachers, and resources compared to their white counterparts (Harper et al., 2009). Sadly, funding and other resource inadequacies were still affecting the progress of HBCUs several decades later (Harper et al., 2009).

### **Brown v. Board of Education**

After the Civil War, HBCUs began to experience a meaningful amount of success (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Unfortunately, segregation was detrimental to the success and limited the

effectiveness of these institutions. Although *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) established "separate but equal" in the United States, African American students faced immense challenges throughout all stages of education. (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Education for African Americans at the secondary and post-secondary levels of education was deemed inadequate by federal investigators in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. Additionally, HBCUs were significantly underfunded and lacked resources that could benefit the progress of these institutions. In the southern states and across other parts of the country, White Americans remained adamant about segregation of public schools remaining intact in the United States (Anderson, 1988).

However, in 1954, that all changed with the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The revolutionary case called for the desegregation of public schools in the United States because separate educational facilities can never be equal (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Harvey et al., 2004). While the *Brown* decision was initially meant to address segregation of elementary and secondary schools in America, the case was also applied to other educational institutions. Once *Brown* was applied at the post-secondary level, African Americans were able to take full advantage of their right to attend Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Harvey et al., 2004).

Although *Brown v. Board of Education* has received high praise for integrating schools and giving African Americans the opportunity to receive an education from PWI's, many people also believe that this was a significant downward turn in the progress of HBCUs (Bracey, 2017; Patterson, 2001). Before desegregation, primarily all Black students in America received their undergraduate degrees from an HBCU (Harvey et al., 2004). However, due to integration, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, HBCU enrollment declined heavily as Black students began attending PWIs (Harvey et al., 2014). In the 1979 U.S. Bureau of Census report, African American student

enrollment rose from 83,000 students in 1950 to over 600,000 in 1975 throughout higher education institutions across the country. The number of African American students attending college increased dramatically after *Brown*, with Black students choosing to attend PWIs over HBCUs (Harvey et al., 2004; Strayhorn & Johnson, 2014). Despite the significant progress made for African Americans after the *Brown v Board of Education* decision, the fight for equality for the African American citizens in this country was far from over (Allen & Jewell, 2002).

### **Civil Rights Era and HBCUs**

HBCUs are undoubtedly best known and remembered for their role during the Civil Rights Movement. According to Albritton (2012), the history of HBCUs is tied to the Black community and its commitment to racial equality and advocacy. During the Civil Rights Era from 1954-1968, a countless number of HBCU students, alumni, professors, and supporters were an integral part of the movement (Albritton, 2012). HBCUs were a place of opposition, liberation, and social uplift for African American community members (Albritton, 2012). Due to the racial inequalities in America, HBCU educated students organized and played significant roles in the civil rights movement. Many civil rights leaders who were students during the movement started their fight for equality and justice for all at their respective institutions.

HBCU students and graduates were protesters, leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, and even argued and won cases for equal rights for the African American community that were tried before the United States Supreme Court (Allen et al., 2007). Some of America's most notable politicians and civic leaders were HBCU graduates. These include Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a graduate of Morehouse College; Thurgood Marshall, a graduate of Langston University and Howard University School of Law; Jesse Jackson, a graduate of North Carolina A&T State University; Andrew Young, a graduate of Howard University; and John Lewis, a graduate of Fisk

University (Bracey, 2017; Nichols, 2004). Despite critics and immense funding challenges faced by HBCUs, these institutions have maintained success through segregation, the civil rights movement, and a host of other tumultuous times in American history (Bracey, 2017), these institutions have continued to thrive for almost two centuries.

### **Post-Civil Rights Era and HBCUs**

Although HBCU enrollment declined in the 1970s, the trend was quickly reversed during the 1980s and 1990s when enrollment grew by nearly 26% increasing from 222,600 students in 1976 to 280,100 students in 1994 (Redd, 1998). The rise in HBCU enrollment was primarily due to the increase of enrollments of white and female students at the schools. According to Redd (1998), the number of white students attending HBCUs grew by over 71% in the late 1990s. While many believe that only African Americans attend HBCUs, the student populations are diverse with members from various races and minority groups and income levels. Over three decades, from the 1970's-1990's, female students attending HBCUs increased by 41% (Redd, 1998). The increase in female student enrollment statistics at HBCUs showed that more women were pursuing a higher education; compared to the male student enrollment at HBCUs, which only increased by 9% (Redd, 1998). The substantial increases in HBCU enrollment were primarily due to the implementation of Title III programs of the Higher Education Act by Congress in 1986 (Redd, 1998). Congress found that HBCUs had long been discriminated against and denied crucial federal funding and land (Redd, 1998). Under Title III, Congress provided grants which were used for campus infrastructure, academic programs, financial stability, and to help grow endowments. These financial resources were what these institutions needed to compete with PWIs. Although the funding did not eliminate every challenge HBCUs



were facing, this funding made a significant difference and helped these institutions move forward.

### **Critiques and Challenges of HBCUs**

The nation's HBCUs have been the subject of scrutiny since they were established almost two centuries ago (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Gasman & Hilton, 2012). Despite their critical role in advancing the economic and social fortunes for African American, rich and treasured legacies, and significant success, HBCUs are undervalued (Bracey, 2017). In addition to being devalued, many of these institutions face immense challenges related to financial stability and lack of access to resources (Bracey, 2017; Clement & Lidsky, 2011). Although HBCUs have had significant success, these schools are often viewed as less than other American academic institutions (Bracey, 2017) and often criticized by the higher education community for their lack of resources, low acceptance and graduation rates, and low endowments (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009).

While most colleges and universities across the country experience funding challenges, this is especially true for HBCUs (Cantey et al., 2013). In fact, HBCUs have dealt with a lack of financial support since they were first established (Cantey et al., 2013; Evans et al., 2002). While these institutions have managed to develop phenomenal academic programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, they continue to struggle financially and with obtaining other forms of resources in comparison to their PWI counterparts (Muhammad, 2011). One area where the lack of resources is most apparent is in HBCU endowments. Private and public HBCU endowments are 70% lower than that of their counterparts at other institutions (ACE, 2019). With HBCU endowments being significantly lower than most institutions, HBCUs

truly cannot afford budget cuts or declines in federal funding without losing key services (ACE, 2012).

Government financial aid is another area where HBCUs experience inequity. During the 2015 academic year, public HBCUs only received \$2.2 billion in state and federal funding, while PWIs were awarded close to \$94 billion from those same bases of funding (ACE, 2019). It also does not help that HBCUs are heavily dependent on the Pell grant and other forms of federal aid students receive (Evans et al., 2002). This leads to HBCUs having little room for financial stability because tuition dollars are not guaranteed and are dependent on enrollment numbers (Evans et al., 2002). Additionally, since HBCUs have a high number of students receiving financial aid, it is difficult for these institutions to increase tuition in order to counterbalance the lack of federal funding (Crawford, 2017).

Another challenge many HBCUs face that has also led to heavy criticism by researchers is the lack of governance (Crawford, 2017). Governance or shared governance, also known as decision making, refers to collaborative management of an institution and the decisions made by the governing board and president of an institution on policies and other macro decisions that will affect the institution (Commodore, 2018; Ramo, 1998). Despite the monumental role governance plays in the success of higher education institutions, HBCUs have had issues surrounding governance and have received heavy criticism (Minor, 2004). Ramo (1998) defined shared governance is collective leadership at the university level. Specifically, shared governance is the collective management by governing boards, presidents, faculty, and staff at higher education institutions (Minor, 2004).

Historically, HBCUs have faced challenges associated with shared governance (Minor, 2004; Phillips, 2002). Collaborative leadership between at parties at higher education has

remained an issue (Minor, 2004; Young, 2008). One of the most challenging decisions made related to governance that has plagued HBCUs for decades in the hiring of the institution's president (Crawford, 2017). HBCUs have had several examples of hiring presidents who were not successful at their roles leading to failure to meet institutional goals, boards firing presidents, and other forms of nonfeasance (Crawford, 2017). While most people criticize HBCU presidents for the challenges effecting these institutions, HBCU governing boards also have a substantial role to play in the current state of HBCUs (Commodore, 2018).

In addition to financial challenges, leadership crises, and governance tribulations, accreditation has been a significant problem for HBCUs (Gasman et al., 2007). Accreditation is critical to the success and survival of any type of higher education institution, especially HBCUs. According to Gasman and colleagues (2016), accreditation plays a substantial role for post-secondary institution. If an institution loses its accreditation, it can no longer award financial aid to its students. Without accreditation, students are ineligible for loans, Pell grants, veterans' benefits, and a host of other federal and state funds (Gasman et al., 2007). In fact, according to Burton (2006), since 1989, there have been 20 institutions that have lost their accreditation. Of those 20 institutions, over half have been HBCUs (Burton, 2006). While HBCUs are not the only higher education institutions experiencing accreditation problems, HBCUs are smaller in number. Accreditation is critical to the survival of HBCUs. If these institutions lose their accreditation, it is almost impossible to recover from the financial loss, which ultimately causes HBCUs and other institutions to close their doors (Gasman et al., 2007).

HBCUs have shown resilience and have continued to be strong, vibrant, and successful higher education institutions, despite their significance and relevance being questioned for decades (Evans et al., 2002). They have a long-standing history of uplifting and educating the

Black community (Bettez & Suggs, 2012) and are a significant part of American higher education, producing some of the top Black professionals in the United States (Bettez & Suggs, 2012).

### **HBCUs in Present Day**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have an esteemed legacy of educating and producing many Black graduates in America. Although some may question the significance of HBCUs, these institutions have shown that they play a crucial role in American higher education (Nichols, 2004). According to the Department of Education, there are currently 107 institutions designated as an HBCU: 56 private and 51 public with total enrollment over 228,000 students. Although, HBCUs are small and represent less than 3% of higher education institutions in the United States (Gasman, 2011; NCES, 2011), these historic intuitions enroll 11% of African American students. Furthermore, despite HBCUs representing a small number of post-secondary institutions in America, HBCUs continue to produce more Black graduates than any other institution type. The success of HBCUs has been hard-won (Allen & Jewell, 2002).

Advocates for HBCUs believe that these intuitions have continued to thrive for several reasons: HBCUs provide a welcoming and nurturing learning environment for all students (Bracey, 2017); teach their students about their Black identity, history of the Black diaspora, promote racial pride; and cultivate a campus culture that develops a sense of belonging (Bracey, 2017; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Moreover, HBCUs continue to implement educational programs tailored to Black students' specific abilities and educational needs. Finally, HBCUs offer a broad curriculum and offer degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Bracey, 2017; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Ultimately, HBCUs have built stellar academic programs in addition to establishing a supportive atmosphere on their campuses that celebrates Black culture.

In the face of heavy criticism over governance, finances, and a host of other issues, HBCUs have managed to implement successful undergraduate, graduate, law, and medical school educational offerings (Bracey, 2017). Additionally, researchers have shown students attending HBCUs continue to excel academically, have a better overall college experience, and even have better relationships with their professors than their peers at PWIs (Tobolowsky et al., 2005). As HBCUs compete with PWIs for enrollment, HBCUs must continuously reevaluate the academic level of their academic programs. Nevertheless, the significance of HBCUs in the educational experience of its African American students has been well documented in the literature. African American students attending HBCUs continue to experience high levels of student achievement in comparison to their peers at PWIs.

HBCUs have played a significant role in students' civic engagement as well. Since the 1960s, HBCU students have participated heavily in student activism (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). In fact, according to Wheatle and Commodore, HBCU students are often known as the face of student-led activism and civic engagement. In the Trump presidency, as political and racial tensions grew in America, HBCUs were at the forefront of activism (Gibson & Williams, 2020; Samayoa et al., 2018). As the United States continues to grapple with the tragic racial injustices experienced by African Americans, HBCUs remain committed to social and political change and racial uplift and continue to be a haven where Black students feel valued (Patton, 2016). Throughout history, HBCUs have found a way to prevail over unique challenges. As America moves deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these institutions must continue to transform and adapt to the current reality of America.

## **The HBCU Presidency**

The role of the college and university president is the most instrumental and influential position in American higher education (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Keohane, 2006; Reis, 2015). Like their counterparts at PWIs, presidents of HBCUs hold the same prestige and honor. Presidents of HBCUs play an instrumental role in the success of these historic institutions. However, despite serving in a major influential position in higher education, we know very little about the HBCU presidency (Freeman & Gasman, 2014).

Research related to the HBCU presidency has traditionally been ignored (Commodore et al., 2016). Although the HBCU presidency is frequently discussed on various media platforms, literature on HBCU presidential leadership is minimal (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Additionally, presidents of HBCUs are regularly neglected in broader college and university presidential research. Until recently, much of the research related to HBCU presidents have been presented as a biography (Commodore et al., 2016). While studies conducted via biographies and autobiographies gave an inside look at individual HBCU presidents, limited literature was available on the entire group (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Henry, 2009; Herring, 2010; Mishra, 2007). Recently, more literature has emerged on HBCU presidents but have labeled these leaders as "power-hungry, dictatorial, and incompetent" (Freeman & Gasman, 2014, p. 8).

### **Profile of HBCU Presidents**

Similar to other aspects of the presidency of HBCUs, the profile of HBCU presidents has also changed over time. Presidents of HBCUs come from various career backgrounds; some leaders have experience in education, politics, the military, business, and other industries. In the early years of the HBCU presidency, presidents were all white men (Thompson, 1973). It was not until the Civil Rights Movement that HBCUs saw a real presence of African Americans at the

helm (Meriam et al., 1987). Today, it is the complete opposite, with Black men being the majority, accounting for 70% of HBCU presidents while women only account for 30% (Gasman, 2013). Although women in leadership roles in higher education is increasing, male HBCU presidents still far outnumber their female counterparts. Although females account for 30% of all HBCU presidents, this is still higher than the national average of 26% female university presidents (ACE, 2012).

As it relates to education, most HBCU presidents hold degrees from a HBCU themselves. According to Gasman (2013), 58% of HBCU presidents attended a HBCU for their undergraduate degree. While this number is still considered high, it is a significant decrease from over 40 years ago when 75% of HBCU presidents received their undergraduate degree from an HBCU (Gasman, 2013; Tata, 1980). Nevertheless, attending an HBCU propelled these leaders to professional and graduate degree programs at most PWIs (Gasman, 2013). In fact, 83% of HBCU presidents hold a doctorate, 14% have a Juris Doctorate, and 3% of HBCU presidents have earned an M.D.. Some researchers believe this is because more African Americans are attending PWIs (Sinanan, 2016). Since desegregation of institutions, Black student enrollment at PWIs has increased dramatically. Nevertheless, HBCUs still play a role in educating the next generation of HBCU leaders.

Age is also a significant factor in HBCU presidential leadership. In 2013, presidents of HBCUs were between 60 and 70 years of age (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Gasman, 2013). Additionally, 24% of these leaders were between 50 and 59 years of age; and 23% of HBCU presidents were between 40 and 49 years of age. According to Freeman and Gasman (2014), this is somewhat alarming since this age range is above the national average of college presidents and adds to the leadership crisis at HBCUs.

Although most HBCU presidents have a professional degree, these leaders still lag their counterparts in terms of salary. In fact, the salaries of HBCU presidents are much lower than the national average (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Almost half of HBCU presidents (47%) made between \$150,000 - \$249,000, while 36% of HBCU presidents made between \$50,000 - \$149,000, and only 17% of the leaders made more than \$350,000 in 2009 (Henry, 2009). While there has been some progress in HBCU compensation, presidents are still underpaid. According to Stripling and Fuller (2011), during the same year, the salary nationally for college and university presidents was \$375,442, which highlights the discrepancy of pay among HBCU presidents.

The tenure of HBCU presidents is another area in which research is needed. In the United States, the national term of college presidents is 6.5 years (American Council on Education, 2012), which is down from the national average of 8.5 just a few years prior (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). On the other hand, 16% of HBCU presidents had served between 10 and 25 years (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Additionally, according to Freeman and Gasman (2014), 42% of HBCU presidents had a tenure lasting between 5-9 years, and another 42% of the leaders had a term between 1-4 years. Today, according to Kimbrough (2017), the national average of HBCU presidents serving in their role is 3.5 years. The rapid turnover of HBCU presidents has several researchers concerned over stability in the leadership seat (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Gasman, 2011).

### **HBCU Presidency Leadership Crisis**

Despite the monumental achievement HBCUs have had on post-secondary education, these institutions face various challenges (Nichols, 2004). One significant challenge affecting the nation's HBCUs is presidential leadership. Although HBCUs face significant challenges, much of



the problems concerning HBCUs are related to leadership (Evans et al., 2002). The most critical decision HBCU governing bodies make during their appointment is selecting the institution's president. Unfortunately, there are several examples of boards selecting unsuccessful leaders (Crawford, 2017). Over the years, HBCUs have faced substantial challenges surrounding recruiting and retaining solid leaders (Schexnider & Ezell, 2010).

While not all HBCUs are facing the same challenges, most HBCUs have dealt with or are currently dealing with a leadership crisis (Evans et. al, 2002; Nichols, 2004). Recently, many researchers have cited that shared governance has strongly influenced the leadership crisis at HBCUs (Schexnider & Ezell, 2010). Frequently, issues of shared governance are related to board members' interference with the goals and agenda an HBCU president has for their institution (Schexnider & Ezell, 2010). According to Schexnider and Ezell (2010), an HBCU president who dominates the governing board or a governing board that intervenes on decisions made by the president are both contributing factors in the leadership crisis at HBCUs. These institutions have historic missions dedicated to educating African Americans and low-income, first-generation, and other marginalized student groups and depend on effective leadership (Freeman et.al., 2016). Due to their particular role in higher education, HBCUs need stable and effective leadership to sustain these institutions for years to come (Freeman et. al, 2016).

### **HBCU Presidential Turnover**

The leadership of American post-secondary institutions has been the interest of several college and university stakeholders (Commodore et. al., 2016). Retention has been a longstanding issue with HBCU presidents, and many schools have been affected by the frequent turnover of their leaders. Like other higher education leaders, HBCUs are experiencing challenges keeping presidents (Freeman et. al., 2016). Additionally, HBCUs have long been affected by the frequent

turnover of their leaders (Commodore et. al., 2016). In fact, according to Freeman and Gasman (2014), presidents of HBCUs experience turnover more quickly than their counterparts at PWIs.

“If you want to know when a college is heading down a slippery slope, I can tell you that is when you change presidents every two, three, or four years. That's a sign that the college is going to have difficulties.”

-Haywood L. Strickland, 2009, President, Wiley College.

In 2011, 38 of 105 HBCUs had hired a new president, and in 2014, nine presidents hired in 2011 were no longer in office (Kimbrough, 2017). According to Scott and Hines (2014), HBCUs have continued to be plagued by the high turnover in the top leadership role at these institutions for several decades. Most practitioners credit the rapid turnover of HBCU presidents as the most significant issue affecting these institutions (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Lomotey & Covington, 2017; Schexnider, 2017). Rapid presidential turnover and an influx in older presidents have stakeholders troubled about the future of HBCUs. Research reveals that the frequent turnover of HBCU presidents is tied to leadership characteristics and job skills (Freeman & Palmer, 2020). Many individuals who become leaders of HBCUs simply do not have the skillset needed to be successful as a university president (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Freeman & Palmer, 2020).

Over the years, numerous HBCUs have experienced short-tenured presidents. In fact, several HBCUs have seen multiple presidents depart over the past few years (Wright, 2020). HBCUs first saw an increase in presidential turnover over a decade ago when more than 20 HBCUs had a leader depart the institution during 2012 (Stewart, 2013). In November of 2012, the president of Alabama State University, Joseph Silver, was placed on administrative leave and ultimately terminated after serving as the institution's leader for 10 weeks (Poe, 2012; Stewart,

2013). Another example of relatively short tenure, even for HBCUs, was at Shaw University in North Carolina. Dr. Irma McLaurin, the president of Shaw University, resigned from her post as president after 11 months on the job (Stewart, 2013). While McLaurin's departure was viewed as sudden, the North Carolina HBCU drew even more attention for having three presidents over three years (Stewart, 2013).

Although there is a multitude of factors that play a role in HBCU presidential turnover, the fact remains that the abrupt exodus of a president harms the progress of HBCUs (Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Stuart, 2020). Another story of a short tenure of an HBCU president was Dr. Elmira Mangum. Dr. Mangum served as president of one of the largest and most notable HBCUs, Florida A&M University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Florida. Dr. Mangum was a well-known leader in higher education who had held financial, administrative positions at top universities across the country, including the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and Cornell University (Stuart, 2016). After only two short years in office, the FAMU board of trustees voted not to extend Mangum's contract despite pushback from students and faculty. Mangum eventually resigned from her post just six months before her term in office was expected to end (Mitchell, 2016; Stuart, 2016). Similar to the heavy turnover at Shaw University, FAMU's quick turnover of Dr. Mangum was a loss of their third president in a decade (Mitchell, 2016).

For Dr. Mangum, her constant disagreements with the board did not work in her favor, which has also been the case for other HBCU presidents in recent news. Austin Lane, former president of Texas Southern University (TSU) from 2016-2020, shared a similar story as Mangum. Despite accomplishing record enrollment numbers, increasing alumni giving, and a host of other achievements, the TSU board of regents placed Lane on leave and ultimately fired

him despite the overwhelming support from TSU students, faculty, and alumni (Wright, 2020). These few stories are just a tiny glimpse into the instability in presidential leadership at HBCUs across the nation. While there is a small number of HBCUs, the number of presidents leaving their posts faster is rising, which has led to a growing number of individuals believing that HBCUs are facing a leadership crisis (Somers & Leichter, 2017). Nevertheless, some researchers believe there is a way to combat the rapid presidential transitions at HBCUs (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Somers & Leichter, 2017).

Despite the current leadership crisis at several HBCUs across the nation, few studies have focused on examining the turnover of HBCU presidents. Of the studies conducted, researchers have focused primarily on the preparation and specific skillsets required by aspiring leaders need to assume the presidents (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016). With HBCUs playing such a monumental role in educating students from marginalized communities, more attention should be being paying to the current leadership crisis effecting the progress of these institutions (Freeman et al., 2016). While there are several steps that can be taken to combat the current crisis in leadership, many researchers believe that understanding the unique skills necessary for HBCU presidents will potentially help counter the narrative regarding HBCU leadership (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016).

### **HBCU Presidential Skills**

The college and university presidency has continued to transform considerably over time (Toliver & Murry, 2017). As the job duties of the college and university president have advanced with new challenges of higher education, the leadership characteristics of these leaders have become increasingly important (Sternberg et al., 2015; Toliver & Murry, 2017). In fact, in recent years, institutional leadership has become one of the most highly researched areas amongst

higher education scholars (Commodore et al., 2016). Research interests in this subject have sparked because the university president requires a multifaceted set of leadership skills to effectively lead and sustain higher education institutions (Toliver & Murry, 2017). Numerous scholars believe that presidents require a particular set of skills because of the uniqueness of the HBCU presidency (Freeman et al., 2016). Due to the significant role HBCUs play in educating first-generation, low-income, and Black students, HBCU presidential leadership is crucial in the survival of HBCUs (Freeman et al., 2016).

One of the first studies conducted on HBCU president skills and experiences was Willie and MacLeish (1978). In this study, the authors found that HBCU presidents needed to develop academic programs, recruit top faculty and student talent, increase graduate programs, improve campus infrastructure, and increase and stabilize the institutions' finances. Additionally, Willie and MacLeish (1978) found that HBCU presidents needed to increase enrollment of non-Black students, increase faculty pay, award students more financial aid, and improve the community and political relationships. Debra Buchanan completed another noteworthy study on the abilities needed to be an effective HBCU president in 1988. Buchanan (1988) interviewed public and private HBCU presidents, administrators, and faculty members and found that HBCU presidents needed to focus on establishing a clear vision for the university, hiring successful administrators to serve in the cabinet, increasing the endowment, unifying the campus, and developing future leaders. Additionally, the study participants noted that HBCU presidents needed to be effective in their role, good communicators, and create a plan for moving the institution forward.

In Freeman, Commodore, Gasman, and Carter's (2016) qualitative study, the researchers examined the perceptions of 21 current HBCU presidents, board members, and presidential search consultants on the unique skills needed to succeed as an HBCU president in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. The participants revealed that vision, effective communication, donor engagement, faculty, board relationships, and partnerships were essential characteristics and skills needed to succeed as a 21st-century HBCU president. Many of the participants of the study credited mentoring with developing the skills of aspiring presidents.

Esters et al. (2016) identified several core areas and specific skillsets HBCU presidents needed to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They recommend that HBCU presidents should have knowledge and expertise in policymaking at the state and federal level, governance, fundraising, engagement with stakeholders, and developing faculty, staff, and administrators. Esters et al. (2016) further identified additional skills needed by HBCU presidents: marketing and branding experience, crisis management, effective communication with board members and other constituent groups, maintaining student involvement, and working collaboratively with college and university presidents at other institutions. In addition to aspiring presidents having experience in certain areas of the toolkit, researchers have also mentioned extensive mentoring as a way to prepare aspiring leaders for the role (Commodore et al., 2016).

### **Mentoring and The HBCU Presidency**

The success of higher education institutions is heavily dependent on their presidents' effectiveness in their roles (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019). One way to ensure that a college or university presidential candidate is equipped with the skills needed to excel in the position is to participate in some form of mentoring (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016). Numerous university presidents have cited mentoring for their professional development and preparation for the presidency (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Madden, 2008). Studies since the 1980s have highlighted the significant role mentoring plays in college and university presidential leadership preparation (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019). For

decades mentoring has been discussed by presidents of ivy league institutions, HBCUs, and community colleges as a critical component of achieving success as a college president (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Gasman, 2014; Gasman et al., 2015; Hamluk, 2014; McDade, 2005).

In Commodore and colleagues' study (2016), the researchers conducted interviews with 21 participants including sitting HBCU presidents, board members, and presidential search firm consultants. In this study, the researchers found that all study participants emphasized the significant role mentoring calls play for aspiring HBCU presidents and achieving the role. The participants also highlighted the importance of formal mentoring programs, such as the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows and ACE Spectrum programs, play in professional leadership development. Additionally, Commodore et al. (2016) suggested the establishment of HBCU-specific formal mentoring programs.

Freeman and Gasman (2014) have also contributed to research on HBCU presidents and mentoring. In their study, the researchers found that several HBCU presidents are currently grooming and mentoring aspiring HBCU presidents for the role. The 10 presidents who participated in the study shared that they believe it is "their responsibility to groom future leaders" (p. 20). Additionally, participants shared that one way to ensure aspiring HBCU presidents are influential leaders is to be groomed by current and former HBCU presidents. Freeman and Gasman (2014) suggested that HBCU presidential hopefuls should participate in a formal mentoring program focused on presidential leadership development. Although researchers have studied the HBCU presidency and the significance of mentoring in HBCU presidential development, researchers have fallen short in examining the effectiveness of mentoring on the success of HBCU presidents once they obtain the presidency, which is the purpose of this study.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Although presidential leadership is an essential topic in higher education research, the HBCU presidency continues to be neglected by scholars. Despite the high levels of media attention and criticism toward HBCUs and HBCU leaders and the current leadership crises in process at several of these institutions, little is known about the leadership of HBCUs. Of the studies conducted, researchers suggest that in order for HBCU presidents to experience success in their roles, leaders need skills in areas such as: fundraising, fiscal management, governmental relations, student engagement, and board governance (Freeman et al., 2016). Research also recommends aspiring HBCU presidents seek out mentors to better prepare them for their desired leadership role (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2016). Additionally, researchers have highlighted the significant role mentoring plays in the preparation of aspiring HBCU presidents but has fallen short in examining if mentoring relationships are a contributing factor in the success of HBCU presidents once they ascend to the presidency. There is a gap in the current literature on mentoring relationships in the success of HBCU presidents, which makes this study important and necessary.

### **Theoretical /Conceptual Framework**

Two key frameworks were used to guide this study, Kram's (1983) Phases of Mentor Relationships theory and DeRue, Spreitzer, Flannagan, and Allen's (2013) Mindful Engagement conceptual framework. These two frameworks were used to understand the effectiveness of mentoring relationships, and how HBCU presidents define success in their roles. Since Kram (1983) is applying the concept of mentoring, and DeRue and colleagues (2013) how leaders are successful in organization, of these frameworks were applicable. Utilizing Kram (1983) allowed me to analyze how HBCU presidents mentoring relationships developed over time. Incorporating



DeRue and colleagues (2013) conceptual framework allowed me to understand how HBCU presidents overcame the challenges HBCU presidents face and lead their institutions to success. By combining these two theories I was able to explore the relationship between mentoring and success.

### **Phases of Mentor Relationships Theory**

Kram's groundbreaking mentoring research has laid the groundwork for a large number of the studies on mentoring today (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008). In Kram's (1983) study on mentoring, she theorized four stages through which mentoring relationships develop and evolve and it was initially used in her study of 15,000 employees in various levels of management. While many studies have used this theory to study organizations and businesses, it has also been used in secondary and higher education to study the effect mentoring relationships have on managers/ leaders of these organizations. According to Kram's theory (1983), the four subsequential stages of mentoring relationship--- *initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition*.

The first phase, *initiation*, occurs when a mentor and mentee develop expectancies and form the initial relationship. In the second phase, *cultivation*, the rapport develops between the two parties, and the mentor typically provides career and networking support. In the third phase, *separation* occurs, in which the mentee pursues independence and more freedom from their mentor(s). Lastly, *redefinition* transpires when mentors and mentees evolve into either a friend-like relationship or terminate the relationship entirely (Kram, 1983).

Several researchers, including Zachary (2002) and Bozeman and Feeney (2008), have developed mentoring theories. While more recent options, most mentoring approaches have been grounded in the research of Kram. For example, Zachary (2002) also theorized four stages of

mentoring relationships: preparing, negotiating, enabling, and closure. While Zachary's (2002) four stages of mentoring relationships vary in some ways from the work of Kram, much of his work is grounded in the researcher's 1983 study. Additionally, Humberd and Rouse (2016) developed phases of mentoring relationships theory and used the same stages of mentoring relationships as Kram (1983), initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. According to Humberd and Rouse (2016), their phases of mentor relationships theory use self-identification to frame the study.

According to the researchers, self-identification is critical in establishing and the longevity of mentoring relationships (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Furthermore, self-identification focuses on several mechanisms that involve a mentor selecting a protégé because the mentor sees his or herself in that person, or a mentee selecting a mentor because they see qualities and characteristics that they identify within the mentor they choose (Humberd & Rouse, 2016).

Since Kram (1983) theorized the four phases of mentoring relationships, the theory has been used in various studies looking at mentoring relationships of business organizations. Researchers such as Knippelmeyer and Torracco (2007) have also used the theory to study mentoring relationships in higher education. Although Kram's theory has not been used to study mentoring of college and university presidents, especially HBCU presidents, the theory is still very applicable to this current study. Kram's framework will be beneficial in understanding the role if any, mentoring relationships have played in the success of HBCU presidents during their tenure.

### **Mindful Engagement**

The additional framework for this study is DeRue and colleagues' (2013) conceptualization of mindful engagement, which develops leaders to thrive in complex

organizations. This can even be said for higher education institutions. As noted in the literature review, HBCU presidents face a myriad of challenges that has led to a leadership crisis at these institutions (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016). According to the researchers, a significant part of leadership development is leaders adapting to a specific crisis. The only way leaders can continue to thrive under certain difficult circumstances is through experience (DeRue et al., 2013). For leaders to be successful in their roles, they need to go through experiences that teach them to overcome specific challenges and obstacles. This can be achieved with a mindfully engaged leader because the researchers suggest that a mindfully dynamic leader will be exceptional at thinking strategically, self-monitoring uses self-reflection (DeRue, et al., 2013).

Grounded in the Michigan Model of Leadership (MMoL), mindful engagement builds on the work of Robert Quinn and Kim Cameron; the concept of mindful engagement looks to cultivate individuals into dynamic leaders that can overcome a wide range of challenges in their organization (DeRue, et al., 2013). The MMoL is heavily rooted in the leadership research of several well-known researchers. Additionally, MMoL examines the skills leaders have that are beneficial to their leadership style and skills that leaders do not possess that they should. Furthermore, the MMoL looks to develop leaders that leave a lasting impact on their organizations and the world. The MMoL also focuses on four small and four significant behavior traits. The small concepts are empathy, courage, drive, and integrity. The four more significant concepts are collaborative community, creative change, robust results, and strategic structures. Each of these concepts is essential in developing effective, successful leaders and impacting the world.

Furthermore, DeRue and colleagues (2013) provide the process of mindful engagement, which is centered around three key concepts: readying for growth, taking action to learn, and

reflecting on retaining. Ready for growth is how an individual prepares themselves to learn in a challenging environment. Additionally, to prepare oneself for change, the author recommends individuals take three specific steps: building awareness of strengths in context, identifying target learning objectives, and developing a learner personality. The second concept, taking action to learn, is how a leader seeks out specific skills to be successful. The researchers suggested that leaders should constantly look at new ways to lead and evaluate those leadership decisions (DeRue, et. al, 2013). The leader is ultimately experimenting with their leadership style and noting what works and what does not. The final concept, reflecting on retaining, is how a leader looks at improving their leadership style. Additionally, a significant aspect of reflecting on retaining is leaders reviewing their actions from a critical lens and looking for self-improvement. This last step is challenging for most leaders because many individuals' most significant hurdle to learning is themselves (DeRue et al., 2013).

Mindful engagement is centered around developing the next generation of leaders to tackle a wide variety of challenges while making their organizations a better place. This correlates perfectly to the current leadership crisis at HBCUs and how these institutions need leaders who will overcome the current challenges and ensure HBCUs continue to succeed. Since research has repeatedly suggested that HBCU presidents deal with unique challenges and the literature on the current leadership crisis at HBCU, this conceptual framework would apply to the present study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I defined mentoring and provide a history of mentoring in America. Additionally, I shared the significance of mentoring in higher education and its role in college and university presidents' professional and career development. Next, I provided an extensive

history of HBCUs and explained the significance of HBCUs in post-secondary education with current critiques and challenges facing HBCUs today. Furthermore, I discussed the role and importance of the HBCU presidency. A review of the current leadership crisis and turnover plaguing HBCUs and ways to overcome those challenges completed the literature review. Lastly, I provided the two theoretical frameworks that will be used to guide this phenomenological study. In the next chapter, I provide the research methodology.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role mentoring plays in the success of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) presidents. In the following section, I present the research design that was used in this study. First, I present the research questions that were used to guide this study. Next, I share the site selection, participant recruitment and selection, and data collection as well as the data analysis. Finally, the chapter concludes with the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness, approaches used to validate of the study, and research limitations.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be used to guide this study.

RQ1: How do HBCU presidents describe their experiences engaged in mentoring relationships?

RQ2: How do HBCU presidents define success?

RQ3: How does mentoring contribute to the success of HBCU presidents?

### **Research Design**

I sought to explore the role mentoring plays, if any, in the success of HBCU presidents. A qualitative phenomenological approach was utilized to understand the participants' lived experiences and answer the research questions. Given the nature of the study, using qualitative methodology was the better-suited approach for conducting this study as it is used when a researcher wants to explore a problem or issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, a qualitative approach was more suited for this study than a quantitative approach because a

qualitative approach is used when a researcher wants participants to share their stories and wants participants' voices to be heard.

### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is defined as a narrative study that explains the shared lived experiences of participants while exploring a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, when conducting a phenomenological study, the researcher describes the experiences of participants and what they have in common while studying a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Moustakas (1994), using phenomenology in qualitative research allows the researcher to describe what participants experienced and how they experienced it. For this study, I explored the phenomenon of mentoring and the effects on the success of HBCU presidents. When using a phenomenological approach, the ultimate goal is to understand better a specific phenomenon shared by multiple individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, various phenomenological approaches are centered around human experience (Neubauer et al., 2019). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), hermeneutical and transcendental phenomenology are distinct phenomenological approaches. Although both methods are used in phenomenological research, hermeneutical phenomenology was most applicable to this study.

### **History of Hermeneutical Phenomenology**

Hermeneutical and transcendental are significantly highlighted as the primary approaches when using a phenomenology approach, but each has a different philosophy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hermeneutic phenomenology dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Martin Heidegger is often credited as the originator of this phenomenological approach (Neubauer et al., 2019). Heidegger, a German professor and philosopher, learned from another contributor to early

phenomenological research, Edmund Husserl (Lavery, 2003). While Husserl was one of the first phenomenology philosophers and also a mentor to Heidegger, the mentee eventually began to disagree with Husserl's teaching and later detached himself from his former mentor (Lavery, 2003). The two German philosophers disagreed because Husserl's research focused on epistemological nature, while Heidegger's research focused on ontological questions, centered explicitly on human existence (Reiners, 2012). Another hermeneutical phenomenology philosopher was Hans-Georg Gadamer (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer, another German professor and philosopher, studied the work of Husserl and Heidegger but sided with Heidegger and continued to build on the work of Heidegger (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer believed that hermeneutical phenomenology should focus on an individual seeking to understand a phenomenon that is tied to a particular subject, which in essence is phenomenology defined (Lavery, 2003).

### **Hermeneutical Phenomenology**

Rooted in the human experience and how people live through specific experiences, hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on how human beings experience phenomena (Lavery, 2003). Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand better the various levels of human experience that are frequently buried to understand the phenomenon (Bynum & Varpio, 2018). Ultimately, hermeneutic phenomenology explores a particular phenomenon and the lived experiences of those individuals (Neubauer et al., 2019). Although some qualitative approaches can be very descriptive, hermeneutical phenomenology seeks to go a step further and focus on interpretation (Neubauer et al., 2019). Hermeneutical phenomenology, at its core, is not about merely describing a phenomenon but about the researcher interpreting the lived experiences of individuals who experienced the phenomenon being studied (Neubauer et al., 2019).



Hermeneutical phenomenology will be appropriate for this study since the researcher seeks to interpret the experiences of participants who all shared the same phenomenon.

### **Use of Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Hermeneutic phenomenology has been widely used in qualitative research as a process of analysis. This approach is used to describe the experiences of participants in qualitative research. Ultimately, researchers employing hermeneutic phenomenology seek to understand “What is this experience like?” as the lived experience of the phenomenon unfolds (Laverly, 2003 p. 2).

Hermeneutic phenomenology has been used in qualitative studies surrounding a wide range of topics (Laverly, 2003). Yousefi and Abedi (2009) used hermeneutic phenomenology in the field of medicine. The authors studied the level of comforts patients received in a hospital in Iran. In secondary education, De Gagne and Walters (2010) used the phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of teachers who instructed online courses. Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology has been widely used in higher education research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Porteuos and Machin (2017) used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to study undergraduate student nurses. More recently, Corby, Taggart, and Cousins (2020) used hermeneutic phenomenology as a conceptual framework to study the lived experiences of college students with learning disabilities. As it relates to mentoring, Harrison, Kinsella, DeLuca, and Loftus (2022) used hermeneutic phenomenology to study students who were peer mentors’ perceptions of teaching through during the peer mentoring program.

### **Positionality of the Researcher**

When using a qualitative approach, the researcher must explain their positionality as it relates to the study (van Manen, 2016). Knowing the true essence of hermeneutic phenomenology, this approach is applicable to my current study as it seeks to use hermeneutic

phenomenology to explore how HBCU presidents describe their experiences, how they define success, and if mentoring plays a role in HBCU presidential success. Participants in this study will share their experiences with mentoring and their perceptions on of mentoring on their success as an HBCU president. Furthermore, applying hermeneutic phenomenology to this study is highly suitable for this study since this study seeks to understand the phenomenon of mentoring within HBCU leadership.

Reflecting on my personal and professional experiences, I am a two-time graduate of an HBCU and have been familiar with HBCUs for much of my adult life. All of my mentors who work in higher education are HBCU graduates or currently work at HBCUs, so even they have had some form of influence on my research and topics of interest. Throughout my time in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) program, I have primarily studied issues related to HBCUs. As a person who aspires to become an HBCU president one day, my initial purpose for selecting this topic was to help combat the leadership crisis at HBCUs for future HBCU presidents.

As an HBCU researcher who is highly invested in these institutions, I am looking forward to interviewing participants and hearing their responses to the interview questions. One of the reasons I decided to use a qualitative approach was to listen to participants' stories through the interview process. The participant responses will potentially be helpful to aspiring HBCU presidents like me in preparation for the role. While I am highly interested in the presidential participants sharing their stories, I am also enthusiastic about telling their stories. With so little literature on HBCU presidents, I am equally excited about contributing to scholarly research on these leaders.

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher should disclose any personal bias he or she brings to the study so that the readers (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). While positionality plays various roles in qualitative research, I foresee my positionality enhancing this study. I will be using my experiences attending an HBCU, both personal and professional experiences as a critical lens to analyze and interpret the data. Moustakas (1994) encouraged researchers to use bracketing in phenomenology which means to set aside personal experiences from the phenomenon, I believe my personal and professional experiences and background will add value to the study.

### **Site Selection**

Since all participants will be in various states across the country, they will not share the same site. Still, all participants will share experiences in the phenomenon being explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018), as they will all have served as leaders at an HBCU. All study participants were interviewed via the online platforms Zoom or Microsoft Teams for convenience. The participants in the study also had complete autonomy in selecting the setting, i.e., work office, home office, or any other private location for the interviews so that the responses can be more open and honest during the qualitative research process. While each of the interviews were conducted through an online platform, the participants were allowed to choose the most comfortable platform, leading to a more accessible collection of data.

### **Participant Recruitment and Selection**

Before beginning recruiting participants for this study, I sought IRB approval. After receiving IRB approval, potential participants were identified, and the participant recruitment process officially began. I used purposeful criterion sampling to identify participants (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). When conducting a phenomenological study, this sampling strategy ensures all participants shared the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To find HBCU presidents that met my participant criteria, I utilized personal research, the White House Initiative on HBCUs president contact list, Marybeth Gasman and the Rutgers University Center for Minority Serving Institutions, and personal relationships. After a list of potential participants was created, those individuals meeting the criteria were contacted via email to explain my study. After receiving responses from individuals interested in participating in the study, another list was created listing HBCU presidents who met the criteria and were interested in participating. Finally, I contacted those who expressed interest to confirm their participation in the study. After each participant agreed to participate in the study, interviews were scheduled. Following interview, I began scheduling the data collection process.

For this particular study, six current and former HBCU presidents who were mentored during their time as HBCU presidents made up the participant pool., aligning with Dukes (1984), who suggested that researchers have a sample size of 3 to 10 subjects in qualitative research. To qualify as a participant in the study, study participants needed to have been HBCU presidents who were mentored during their presidency and served three years or longer. The three-year timeline is important because the national average for HBCU presidents to serve in their role is 3.3 years (Kimbrough, 2017), and success is often determined by the years served. Additionally, all participants varied in age, background, and gender identity. Although the goal of using a phenomenological approach is to study participants who experience the same phenomenon, by having study participants with different backgrounds, this allowed participants to bring their own positionality to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Freeman & Palmer, 2019).

### **Data Collection**

For this research study, I conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with each of the six study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each of the interviews lasted between 45- 60 minutes. While I would have liked to conduct multiple interviews with participants to better understand the phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018), due to the complex schedule of college presidents, time did not permit. The allotted time allowed the participants to respond to the interview questions with in-depth and personal responses. The one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted through the virtual meeting platforms Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Considering the uncertainty of the current COVID-19 pandemic, meeting virtually was in the best interest of safety of the researcher and participants. These platforms also allow for sessions to be video and audio recorded which were useful in the data analysis process as well as ensuring validity.

Data were collected using a laptop computer, audio recording device, and a cellular device during the interview process to ensure that all data is appropriately organized. To maintain the data, the audio recordings were stored electronically, and password protected. In addition to information stored electronically, other forms of data, including notes, memos, and president and institution information, were held in a locked, secured location to safeguard the participant's information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, each study participant and their institutions were given a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. Example questions for participants included: 1) how has having a mentor shaped your career throughout higher education, 2) did you seek out mentor(s) or were you approached by someone about becoming your mentor, and 3) describe how your mentoring relationships and how they have evolved over time.

### **Data Analysis**

Following the data collection process, the researcher should begin preparing and analyzing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During each interview with participants, I wrote a brief memo that lists any preliminary views, impressions, and any themes that emerged from each interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 1990). Since all interviews were audio/video recorded via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, I first listened to the original recordings while reviewing the notes and memos I wrote after each interview. This was helpful in ensuring that my initial detailed memos were accurate. Additionally, it provided me with the opportunity as a researcher to retrace my thoughts which ultimately helped me structure the data analysis process and move the process in the right direction (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The next step in the process was transcribing the recorded interviews. All data was uploaded to Otter.ai, which is a qualitative transcription software that transcribes audio recordings to text. After the interviews were transcribed, I reviewed each of the participants interview transcripts to make any grammatical and syntax changes as well as check for accuracy, to ensure each participant's interview was true and accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy, I labeled all data with the appropriate pseudonym and uploaded to a secured, password protected student electronic university account. Following organizing the data, I coded the data. According to Creswell and Poth, (2018), "coding is central to qualitative research and involves making sense of the text collected from interview, observations, and documents" (p. 190). Once I began the initial coding process, I used line by line coding which calls for the researcher to assign a code to each line of written data (Babchuck, 2019).

After conducting several rounds of codes, to ensure that I had captured enough from the data, there were over 75 codes. Initially, when I was conducting line by line coding, the name of

codes was written on the printed-out interview transcription. I then created an excel spreadsheet where I created the pseudonym for each participant and listed the codes that emerged after the interviews. After listing the initial codes in the excel spreadsheet, I then went back to the transcriptions and identified similar phrases and themes that had emerged from the interviews. I then went back to the excel document I created a separate spreadsheet where I began to list the most significant words, terms, and phrases. As potentially themes were identified in a separate word document, I then began to compile a list of quotes from the interviews that matched the originally list of themes. As I went through the process, I combined quotes from the interviews that shared similarities. After the process was complete, there was a total of five major themes from the study.

### **Trustworthiness**

When conducting a qualitative study, trustworthiness is a significant component of the data analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking is used to ensure the accuracy of information by having participants read over findings and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking was used as the initial form of fact-checking. During the interviews, I gave the participants to clarify their answers to any questions to ensure that what I captured was accurate. I also asked follow-up questions during the interview if there was any clarity that was needed on a particular question. Additionally, rich, I used thick descriptions as another form of validation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “to be sure that the findings are transferrable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description is necessary” (p. 256). In the findings section, I provided an extensive and detailed account of the participants stories that were shared which allowed the participants experiences to be portrayed as accurately as possible.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are certain elements beyond the researcher's power, that may affect the results of a study (Barron, 2009). The first limitation of the study was scheduling. Due to the complex schedules that HBCU presidents have, there were several instances where interviews had to be postponed and rescheduled. Furthermore, scheduling also interfered with the completion of some interviews. In two cases, there were participants who joined the meeting late because of a previous meeting or event ran over, which limited the amount of time participants could share their personal experiences with the researcher. Additionally, with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams which led to connectivity and log in issues. In addition, meeting via Zoom also presented some challenges. There were several cases where participants did not have stable Wi-Fi connection, which led to certain interview questions and responses having to be repeated. Since I went through the secretary of each participant to schedule the interviews, there were some challenges logging in, which led me to have to create a new meeting link thus, resulting in a delay in the start time for some of the participant interviews.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a rationale on why a qualitative approach was used for this study. Additionally, Chapter 3 included the research design, data collection steps, data analysis protocols, trustworthiness, and potential limitations of this phenomenological study. Previously, Chapter One had the purpose of the study, current problem, and provided the significance of exploring the experiences of HBCU presidents to determine if mentoring played a role in their success. Chapter Two provided an extensive review of relevant literature on the concept of mentoring and HBCU presidents. Chapter Four includes a discussion of the findings from the



study, and Chapter Five consists of the critical conclusions from this study, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role mentoring plays, if any, in the successful tenure of HBCU presidents. Currently, most research on mentorship related to HBCU presidents is tied to aspiring presidents, while mentoring research on sitting presidents is often neglected (Commodore et al., 2016). With there being such a significant gap in research regarding mentoring and its role in the success of HBCU presidents, exploration of this phenomenon was needed. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ1: How do HBCU presidents describe their experiences engaged in mentoring relationships?

RQ2: How do HBCU presidents define success?

RQ3: How does mentoring contribute to the success of HBCU presidents?

This chapter includes an introduction to the participants which also includes information regarding their background and demographics. Next, I share my findings that emerged from the research questions. Lastly, I provide a summary of the chapter. In chapter five is where I discuss the key findings from the research study.

### **The Participants**

This qualitative research study included six participants that were either current or former presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The study participants included four current HBCU presidents, and two former HBCU presidents, with one of those participants being a current president of a Predominately White Institution (PWI). All participants had been engaged in some form of mentoring relationship prior to or during their presidency. Additionally, each of the presidents were in office for three years or more. The

participants consisted of presidents from public and private institutions, small and large universities with enrollments ranging from 500 students to 9,000 and represented six different states around the country.

Of the six participants, five identified as male, while only one of the participants identified as female. Each of the study participants identified as Black or African American. All the study participants had some form of advanced degree. Five of the six presidents obtained a Ph.D., while one of the presidents held a law degree, but was currently working toward a doctorate degree as well. Three of the presidents had a professional background in academic affairs, one participant came from a law and politics background, one participant spent most of his professional career working in student affairs, and one participant worked predominately in advancement and fundraising. To maintain anonymity, each of the participants as well as their institutions were provided with a pseudonym. All participant demographic data: (a) gender, (b) race, (c) degree, (d) region, (e) position (f) years as president, and (g) institution type is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Years as president</b>	<b>Institution Type</b>
Harriet	Female	Ph.D.	Southern	Employed	3	Public
Harry	Male	Ph.D.	Mid Atlantic	Employed	6	Public
William	Male	J.D.	Southeastern	Employed	6	Public
David	Male	Ph.D.	Southern	Retired	14	Public
Michael	Male	Ph.D.	Southern	Employed	5	Private
James	Male	Ph.D.	Southern	Employed	7	Private

**Harriet**

Harriet was in her third year as the president of Williams University. Williams University is a four-year public HBCU located in the rural South. Prior to becoming an HBCU president, Harriet spent most of her time at HBCUs across the country, having served as professor and administrator. Before coming to Williams University, Harriet served as Provost at Vice President of Academic Affairs at two separate HBCUs. Harriet is an HBCU graduate and is also serving as president of her alma mater. When reflecting on her own personal mentoring experiences, Harriet encouraged having a mentor that comes from different backgrounds and experiences as yourself because you can always learn from someone. Harriet shared “even if you think that you come from different perspectives, you are a Democrat, and they're Republicans, they're still something that you can learn from that person.”

**Harry**

Prior to his time at HBCUs Harry worked at large predominately white institutions across the country in various administrative roles. Harry was in his second stint as an HBCU president having served as president of another HBCU prior to assuming the presidency at Gibson University. With a nontraditional presidential trajectory, Harry has a background in student affairs, having served as Vice President of Student Affairs before assuming his first HBCU presidency. When reflecting on his experience in student affairs and his success as a two-time HBCU president, Harry shared, “I've come to learn that being the vice president of student affairs, is really the best way to cut your teeth to become the president of a university.” Harry was in his third year as president of Gibson University. Gibson University is a four-year HBCU in the eastern part of the United States.

**William**

William was serving in his sixth year as president. Prior to becoming the president of Truby College, William had a background in politics and law and had previously never worked in higher education. William was also proudly serving as the president of his alma mater. As William reflected on his time as the president of his alma mater, William stated “it has been nothing short of amazing, as I said probably for the first four and a half, five years, it still didn’t feel like work.” William was currently the president of Truby College. Truby College is a four-year, public HBCU in the southeastern part of the United States

**David**

David was previously the president of Lee Jackson University. Lee Jackson University is a one of the largest HBCUs in the country. David also had one of the most successful tenures at an HBCU in recent years having served as president of Lee Jackson University for close to 15 years. When asked about his extensive tenure as an HBCU president and his success over the years, David cited his willingness to always listen to others. He stated, “I engage with stakeholders as well as the students. I need to hear everybody's perspective, why do these people feel the way they do?” With a distinguished career in academia, David started his journey in higher education as a professor at some of the top research institutions in the country, before transitioning into administration. Prior to becoming the president of Lee Jackson University, David was served as Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs of a large tier 1 research institution.

**Michael**

Michael has spent much of his tenure in higher education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). With a career spanning over 25 years, Michael has held several upper-

level administrative roles including Provost and Vice president of Academic affairs. Michael is the president of Johnson College, which is a predominately white institution. Prior to becoming president of Johnson College, Michael was the president of Thompson College, which is a private, four-year university located in the southeastern part of the United States. When reflecting on why he decided to become a mentor Michael shared, “I did not have someone there guiding me, holding my hand, and doing those kinds of things every step of the way. I’ve said, I see the need, and I’m going to, I’m going to be better at that.”

### **James**

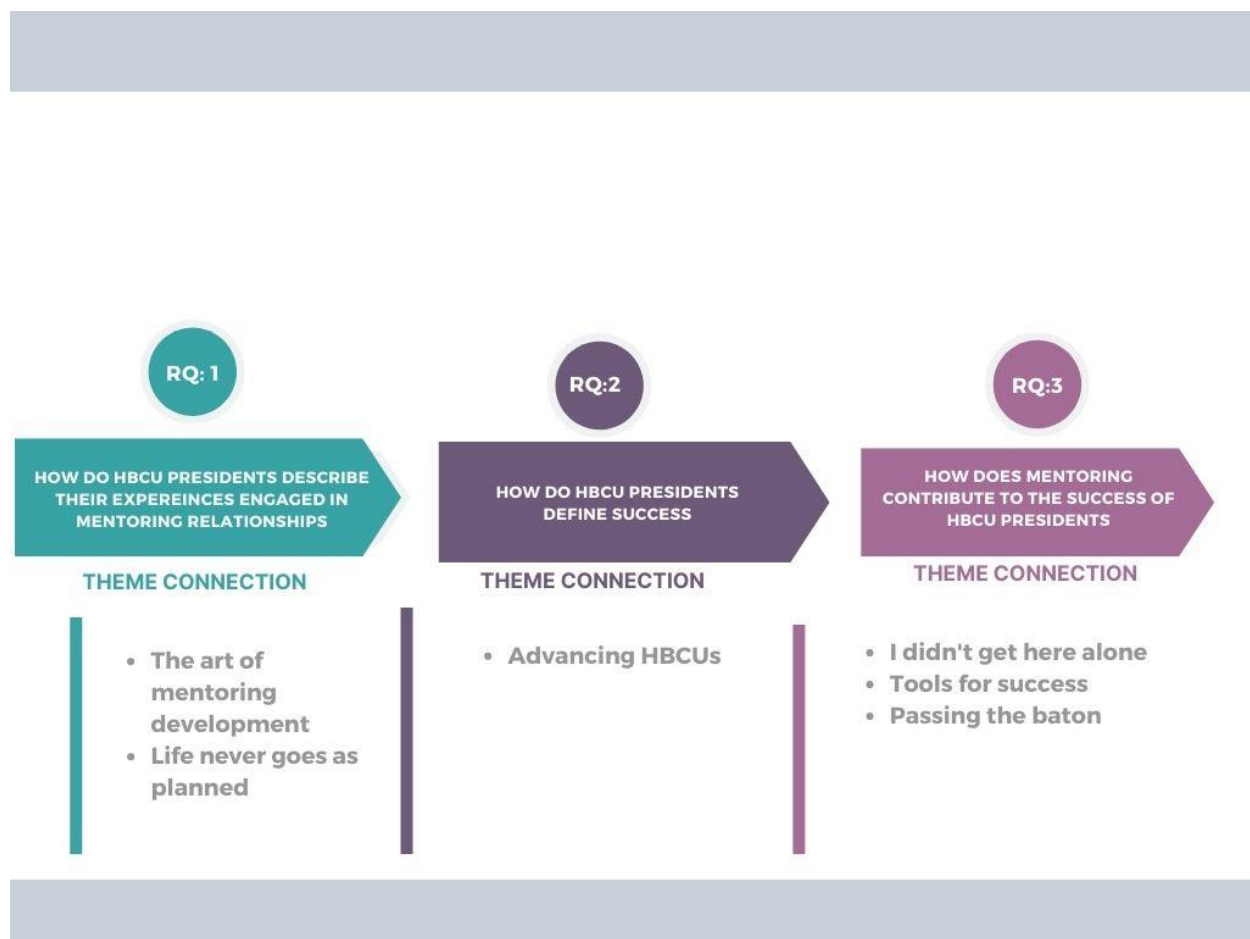
James has had a very successful career in higher education, which also includes serving as president of Bernard College for close to a decade. Bernard College is small liberal arts institution located in the south-central region of the country. James reflected on his success over the years in higher education, he credited his mentor and his advanced degree. James shared, “He [My mentor] said, the PhD is the calling card that will open most doors in higher education. So, I intentionally pursued my PhD. And he was right. I have probably got through more doors, got more opportunities, because of my doctoral work.” Throughout his professional career, James served at both PWI and HBCUs, with most of his experience being at HBCUs. Prior to becoming the president of Bernard College, James served in a variety of fundraising roles.

### **Findings**

This study explored the lived experiences of presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the role of mentoring in their success. The findings of this study stem from interviews with six participants who were current and former presidents of HBCUs. There were six themes that emerged following the data collection and analysis process: 1) the art of

mentoring development, 2) life never goes as planned, 3) advancing HBCUs, 4) I didn't get here alone, 5) tools for success, and 6) passing the baton.

**Table 2**  
*Connections Between Research Questions and Themes*



### **The Art of Mentoring Development**

In research question one, there were two themes that emerged, the art of mentoring development and life never goes as planned. In this theme, the art of mentoring development, each of the participants defined success by the accomplishments of the students and the institution rather than personal achievements. The study participants shared how they were engaged in some form of mentoring relationships, whether it be formal or informal based

mentoring. While each of the participants experienced the same phenomenon of mentoring, the participants had a different experience with their mentoring relationships. As each of the participants recalled their relationships with their mentors, there were similarities as well as differences that emerged through each of the interviews. One commonality was the way in which their mentoring relationships began. The participants also shared an appreciation for particular skills, qualities, and characteristics that they liked about their protentional mentors and identified with personally. The major difference among participants was the way in which their mentoring relationships began. On one hand, some of the participants sought out their mentors. On the other hand, some of the participants were approached by their mentors, because as Harry recalls, “he [my mentor] saw something in me that he wanted to develop and be a part of my growth through higher education.” No matter the case, each of the six participants had a unique story of their mentoring relationships and the way in which their work with mentors had evolved.

In a case where the participant sought out a mentor and was sought after by another mentor, Harry described two separate mentoring relationships that he was involved in and how each of those relationships developed. In the two separate mentoring engagements, Harry had different experiences with each of his mentors. For one of his mentoring relationships Harry approached his mentor about the possibility of mentoring him. At the same time, Harry also recalled being approached by someone who wanted to mentor him. Harry later stated:

One was a faculty member who was on sabbatical, when I was working on my Masters, and I had a class with her, and we just hit it off. I thought she was extremely intelligent, just fascinating, very knowledgeable. We started having a conversation, and she asked me, “well, what do you want to do? Where do you want to go? What do you want to be?” That really started the tip of our moving into this mentor- mentee relationship. I was with



her for about a year. Then by happenstance, met my second mentor through a luncheon that I that she had invited me to with a group of others. He then approached me, based off the conversation that we were having at lunch, and said, you know, I would like to talk to you more about some opportunities.

Harry's experience with mentoring development was unique in the fact that he experienced approaching a mentor because of characteristics and traits that he identified, but at the same time being approached by another mentor because of certain leadership characteristics that he exuded. Like Harry, James was another participant that identified potential mentors and sought them out. James discloses that he was deliberate when selecting his mentors. For James, he knew that he wanted to become an HBCU president one day, so he formed relationships with mentors that had once been HBCU presidents themselves. James shared,

I was very intentional. Very few of them [mentoring relationships] happened by accident, if you would, or by happenstance. In full disclosure, I took full advantage of my fraternal network. For example, I remember sitting at a table with two of my future mentors and saying to both of them, hey, look, I want to be just like you when I grow up. And another friend and mentor kind of introduced me to them and said, hey, look, here's the young male who I think has great potential. The rest is history, most of my mentoring relationships have taken on that shape if you would, using an existing network or connection to get access to those individuals who I wanted to serve as a mentor. I do have a couple of mentoring relationships that came just as a result of me being, I'm not calling it an expert or even a great person in my field of work, but you know, you have to make presentations, you meet people, and folks are drawn to you because of that work. As a result, you know, a friendship will emerge from that. Then ultimately, a mentoring

relationship emerges. I don't call that happenstance or coincidence, I just call it just being in the right place, at the right time. Also, God allowing your paths to cross with the people who he is ultimately set up in your life to make sure that you are successful.

James was the only participant that knew early on that he wanted to become an HBCU president. As he mentioned when he discussed his experience, James was very deliberate when selecting his mentors because he knew the career path he wanted to go down, and the type of mentor he would need in order to achieve his career goals.

Unlike James, David shared that his mentoring relationships were never intentional. In fact, David shares that “it wasn’t by design” when discussing how he first began engaging with his mentors. For David, he recalls “my relationships with my mentors began naturally.” David goes on to mention that his mentoring relationships started off as general working relationships. David explained:

After the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at an institution had hired me, we developed a working relationship. And from there, we started something else. But at the same time, I also had a mentoring relationship with the president of that same institution, that he almost developed naturally... In present day, I've had people come up to me and say, I would like for you to mentor me. Well, that's not what happened for me in my experience... [They started] simply by having a working relationship with folks first. At any rate, these are things that just developed naturally. In my case, I never asked someone. By contrast, today is a different time and all. I've had many people to just say to me, I want to develop a relationship with you.

Throughout David's experience with mentoring relationships, he was always engaged with mentors that not only developed naturally, by just getting to know his mentors on a personal level first, through the work they did together.

When asked about how his mentoring relationships began, similarly to David, William relationships seemed to have developed in a natural way over time. William also had a unique experience of becoming the president of his alma mater and was mentored by most of the past presidents of the institution. For him, most of his mentoring relationships began on the same campus that he now leads. William also shared that for him, he never knew that his mentors were actually mentoring and preparing him until much later in life. William went on to explain:

As I look back now, I have been fortunate to know every president at my institution, except for the founder, because he passed away before I was born. But every other president I have known personally. I didn't know I was being mentored for this role until after I was actually in the role. Growing up in this community, I attended nursery school through college, on the campus that I now serve as president. There are a number of people who, you know, including my president, the president, who was in my place when I was a college student at the University. He was certainly someone who was not only a mentor to me then but after becoming president was someone that was still alive at the time that I reached out to, to seek, advice and counsel from. Again, God works things out in your life or certainly he's worked things in my life, that are now really paying dividends when I didn't know what was going on behind the scenes.

William had one of the most unique experiences with mentoring relationships having served as president of his alma mater and being mentored by some of the past presidents at the institution. One of the most interesting responses from participants based on this theme was from Harriet.

Out of the six participants, Harriet was the only participant who identified as a Black female, which played a significant role in the way she described her experience with the phenomenon of mentoring. For Harriet, her mentoring experiences were completely different from the male participants. When reflecting on her mentoring relationships she discussed the importance of having situational mentors. For her, this was important because mentors serve their purpose for a set amount of time in your life. Harriet shared:

you take from people what they can give you at that particular time. I think about this poem often, that talks about friends. There are friends, for seasons, and reasons. That is applicable to mentorship and a whole lot of things.

Harriet went on to talk about her previous experience regarding mentoring relationships by stating:

To give you an example, in undergrad, I would say a mentor was my chemistry professor. He was very instrumental in me switching from engineering technology to chemistry and then going the direction, the starting point for where I did grad school, and always created just kind of different opportunities for me, as an undergraduate student, professionally, and then when I stepped out a line, you know, in a personal space, he was very willing to correct me and correct my behavior and serve as a mentor, father, whatever I needed in order to be successful. After I graduated, and for the next 25 years as I moved up in my career, there was not much more he could do in terms of me being in graduate school and moving into the academy...It [the mentoring relationship] served its purpose, at that point in time in helping with my developments.

Harriet also shared personal details regarding her mentoring relationships, and how she found it very difficult to find mentors once she began her professional career that were

committed to her success because she was a Black woman. Harriet expressed very surprising experiences related to her mentoring relationships. Harriet stated,

I am a woman, and a Black woman, and so it adds a different layer to what, and who is available to you, based on your career aspirations, because that number, particularly if you're looking for someone who looks like you, those numbers get smaller and smaller as you move further and further up the ladder. What my experience has been, women have not been as supportive, are not always that supportive of other Black women in navigating the process. For me they've not made themselves readily available, in many instances, to clear the pathway for females to move through the progressive leadership roles in higher education... Traditionally they've been men, most often white men, who have been the most supportive and who've provided advice when inquired, but I think the biggest role they played was behind the scenes or along the way. Also, clearing the pathway for opportunities and for success, making resources available to ensure that in the role, I would be able to do the job that needs to be done. And in many cases women are just not there. In many cases you see a larger presence of men who are there.

What was most surprising about Harriet's history with finding mentors was that she believed that based on her experiences she found Black women to be the less supportive in succeeding in the realm of higher education. Additionally, Harriet mentioned how she has had the most successful mentoring relationships with white men. This was also an interesting finding, but Harriet attributed her difficulty in finding mentors to the fact that she comes from a STEM background. Harriet shared, "I think the complexity for me is that I am in a STEM area."

Of all the presidents who described the experiences of mentoring relationships, Harriet was the only participant who shared the challenges of mentoring and the obstacles she had to face. This finding was alarming, especially since Harriet was the only female participant.

While most of the participants described their mentoring relationships prior to the presidency, there was one participant who did not engage in a mentor-mentee relationship until he became an HBCU president. Throughout his entire career in higher education Michael had not been involved in a formal or informal mentoring relationship. It wasn't until he ascended to the presidency that he began to be engaged in mentoring relationships. Reflecting on his experience, Michael remembers vividly how his mentoring relationships began once he first became an HBCU president. Michael stated:

I've never had someone to prepare me to get to this space. I did not. The assistance that I've had has been once I got here. At my first presidency, the institution was really having major problems. I was put there... I had a president who reached out, but reached out just to say, I'm here, I'm praying for you and was encouraging. I never forget that this person wasn't trying to get in my business or anything like that, but just wanted to say, I'm here, I'm supporting you, and I know what you're going through, hang in there. When I saw the person in passing, they gave me some other just little tidbits that stayed with me. I didn't solicit this person. This person came to me... With my next presidency, that person also did the same thing. They came to visit me, to sit and ask me some questions. Again, they also offered assistance and services. It wasn't until I got in the position, to be honest with you that I now had people who were availing themselves to assist.

Although all participants experienced the phenomenon of mentoring, each of their mentoring relationships were different and developed in their own particular way. There were

similarities in their overall experiences, specifically regarding how the relationships began. The differences were in how those relationships developed based on their own personal experiences. This particular theme revealed that there is not a guidebook or road map that tells you how mentoring relationships should take place. For these study participants, the way their mentoring relationships develop were much like an art, they happened freely and naturally.

### **Life Never Goes as Planned**

While each participant was successful in reaching the college presidency, their career aspirations and trajectory changed over time, due to the influence and guidance of their mentors. In fact, five of the six participants shared how they never planned on becoming an HBCU president once they began their professional career. Nevertheless, most of all the participants still attributed ascending to their presidency to having a mentor, in addition to other key factors.

Participant David shared that he never wanted to be a college president. Similar to other participants, his mentors played a role in his career trajectory. David shared “the first thing I will say is for me originally I never wanted to be a college president.” As time went on, and as David excelled in his career, his mentors wanted him to become more ambitious with his career aspirations. David also described how because of the encouragement and advice of his mentors, he realized that there were more possibilities besides being a professor. He stated,

For years, I was mentioned every year as one of the 10 best professors. Eventually, they put me into the teaching Hall of Fame. All of that led to the university saying we want you as part of the administration to represent our commitment to undergraduate teaching... Then my mentors also told me, the Dean of Arts and Science and the president of the university, do these jobs very well. Even if it doesn't look like it has a direct connection to where you think you want to end up. That if you do these jobs, well,

then somehow, at some point, something's going to happen to open up the door... Also, they make me Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and I'm part of the President's Cabinet...I boldly arrogantly without humility, told both of my mentors that I'm now on track to become a college president. I said that in 1990... By the time of 1995 when I moved to another university, I'm just one job away from being the president.

Due to David's success as a professor he began to gain recognition at his institution for the work that he was doing in addition to being encouraged by his mentors to take his talents to the administration side of higher education. William echoed David's statements by sharing:

I never planned on becoming a college president. As a matter of fact, when I graduated from college and got ready to go off to law school, I promised myself three things: number one I would never live in my hometown, number two, I would not work at the university I attended, and number three, I would never go into politics.

Despite his plans to never pursue a career in higher education, let alone becoming an HBCU president, William still left his career in politics to assume the HBCU presidency.

William went on to say, that it was his mentor who suggested that he seek out the presidency.

William explained,

Of my mentors, who was several presidents before me actually recommended to me that I should seek the presidency. A little over a year before the opening came up there, my predecessor only served for one year, so when, when my predecessor was being considered another previous president, reached out to me and said, hey, I think you'd be a great president. Like, really? Thank you for seeing something in me that I certainly didn't see in myself. But again, it was a result of work that we had done together in my role as a



legislator, and being able to advocate for and bring resources to the university through my work in the in the legislative space.

Even though William did not have experience in higher education, his mentors knew his potential and the type of leadership characteristics that he possessed. Due to the nature of their relationships, Williams mentor that he would be successful as an HBCU president.

Much like William and David, Harriet had similar sentiments. She shared “As I said in my presidential inauguration speech, this is all my mentor’s fault. This was not my initial plan.” Harriet, who has an extensive career in higher education, including being the provost of two separate HBCUs never thought of becoming an HBCU president when she first entered the academy. Harriet went on to say,

I started in higher education. Like most people, my initial goal was to go come back and teach for 25 years. I was following what I had been exposed to. For me, I was going to do my 25 years and retire. Then there came a time where Dr. David pulled me over into upper administration. Before then, in my head, I'd only made it up to being the dean of a college of engineering... I was interviewing for one position but didn't get it. But in that meeting, he offered to be my mentor... And I was smart enough to understand that this is a college president offering to be your mentor, you should take him up on the offer. I did take him up on the offer. And he saw something in me that at the time I didn't see in myself. So, over the course of the next 12 years, my life has changed completely. I went from being a person who's going to be a professor for 25 years to being a provost twice and now I'm a college president.

Harriet's experience is a true example of a mentor seeing the potential in a mentee. Due to the work she was doing at her institution, the university president decided to mentor her, which has led to her successful career in higher education lasting more than 25 years.

While each of the participants had different career trajectories and pathways to the presidency, they all attributed reaching that milestone to having a mentor. The participants described their mentors as playing a key role in their professional development over the years. Harry reflected on the relationship he had with his mentors and realized that although he did not realize it at the time, his mentors were slowly preparing him to become a university president. Harry stated:

Whenever I have gone for any type of promotion, I always sit down with them. We go over my CV, we talk about why I believe this, this is a good opportunity for me and those things. I have found that to be of great value, right. Then, here's where it comes full circle. I currently serve as president of compensate universe... I've been President of two HBCUs. And so, my mentor, played a role in nominating me for those presidencies... He was always testing and pushing in preparing me for judgment type situation, critical thinking type situations, thinking broader... Also, he was always challenging me in that way. Now, unbeknownst to me at that point, I didn't know that's what he was doing... He was really putting me in situations that helped me become a better leader, a better communicator, a better person, a better version of myself.

Harry also shared similar experiences with other participants where he did not realize that his mentors were preparing him for the presidency.

Although most of the participants journey to the presidency was never intentional, one of the participants shared their story and how he was very deliberate in his career aspirations. James stated:

Well, I knew that I wanted to be a college president, maybe a couple of years after I finished my undergraduate degree, and started the engagement if you would, and research that ultimately showed me a better affirm if you would, the value of historically black colleges and universities. I would say probably two years out, from my undergraduate experience, I knew that I wanted to be a college president. I think that, you know, the path after that is perhaps the path that where many people take different ways of getting there. But once I realized that's what I wanted to do, I was very intentional about every step that I made.

In addition to knowing on that he wanted to be an HBCU president, like the other participants James attributes his career journey to his mentor. James explained:

When I was Vice President Institutional Advancement at one university, I was working under the leadership of the president there. He knew coming in that I wanted to be a president, that this was my aspiration. He said to me, look at I'll help you get there. He also said, but you're going to have to work very hard for me and demonstrate that you know how to work for a President. Also, number two, you have to receive and accept the feedback that I give you on what I consider to be your readiness or the lack thereof. There were sometimes where we had some very tough conversations, even conversations that made me question whether or not I wanted to stay in the academy. But I knew at that time that it was his way of strengthening and preparing me for ultimately the seat that I would sit in, which was the same seat that he was sitting in and knowing the pressures that came

along with it. That helped to prepare me and that mentor gave me that type of what I call tough love. Ultimately, I think it led to me being successful, and when the time came, he told me that he felt that I was ready. Not only did he tell me, but he ultimately recommended me to the presidency at my current institution.

James' experiences highlight the importance of having a strong mentor. Several of the study participants shared similar stories of their mentors truly being engaged in their professional development throughout their careers.

Unlike most of the other participants, Michael was not involved in mentoring relationships until he became an HBCU president. Despite not being mentored prior to assuming the presidency Michael, had a successful career as an HBCU administrator and ultimately became an HBCU president. When asked about his career trajectory, Michael also shared that he never had intentions on becoming an HBCU president, but because of his career advancement over the years, he assumed the role by happenstance. Michael disclosed:

I never wanted to be a president. My ultimate goal when I first got in higher education is that I wanted to be a provost, I wanted to be that number two person, because academic affairs has always been my area. That's what I enjoy. Again, after serving in several capacities, as the number two person, ultimately, the number one person ended up being booted out. The board chose me to ascend to the presidency. Again, it wasn't what I had wanted, it wasn't what I prayed for, but the opportunity presented itself and so that's how I arrived in the presidency. Then, you know, then you're doing the job. It's like, you can't go back, right. That's how it happened, but I will tell you that having been in higher ed and having gone up through the ranks, on paper I was positioned and poised to be a president.

Despite most of the participants never having intended to become an HBCU president, with the help of mentors, their skillsets, and excelling in their careers, each of these leaders were able to ascend to the HBCU presidency. This particular finding revealed that having a strong a supportive mentor can have remarkable results on a person's career. Although it was not the initial career plan for most of the participants, HBCUs around the country are in a better position because of these leaders.

### **Advancing HBCUs**

For the second research question, one theme emerged, the importance placed on advancing HBCUs. The participants defined success by the accomplishments of the students and the institution rather than personal achievements. When asked how they defined success, participants did not provide a formal definition of the word success, but rather provided a definition based on how they measured success in their roles as HBCU presidents. Each one of the participants described in great detail on how success to them was not merely about data and rankings, but the ways in which the institution was transformed over time. Like many of the participants, Michael shared that his success is tied to "leaving the institution better than I found it."

During his interview, Michael was open about being a president who inherited certain problems and issues from his predecessors. Michael also shared that he has spent much of his time as an administrator in higher education finding solutions to problems and that being able to fix certain problems during his tenure as an HBCU president was what success looked like for him. Michael said:

As I mentioned, in my first presidency, the institution was in major trouble and was about to lose accreditation, and a whole bunch of things. For me, and the naysayers, they said, it

could not happen. The fact that I got the institution out of millions of dollars of debt, and saved the accreditation, that's what success look like, accomplishing those things. But folks said that it could not have happened. That was what success was... If I had to be honest, I have been successful in every position that I've had... For me, the success has been the goals that I set, achieving those goals. By changing those goals, I know that whoever comes behind me is certainly inheriting a better situation that I got. If you keep doing, your success will continue. For me, it has been whatever goals we set, achieving those goals and doing it well. In the meanwhile, as I said, leaving it much better than I found it.

Similar to other participants in the study, participant David defined success by how he was able to add value and improve the institution during his time as president. What was most interesting about David's view of success, was although he wanted to move the institution forward, he also wanted to respect this history and the legacy of the institution. For David, he wanted to protect the historic mission of the university while helping it succeed, explaining:

Looking back at Lee Jackson University, first of all Lee Jackson has been in existence since 1866. I have to respect that long tradition and all these people who've done things, and even if I don't know, all of the good programs at Lee Jackson, and something, everything that you tell me, that's good at Lee Jackson, I want to make it better.

Everything you tell me, that's excellent, I want to improve on that. The things that you tell me that are not so good. We've got to decide, do we keep doing those? Or do we make them. I'm going to enhance everything about Lee Jackson? I want the students at Lee Jackson to achieve as well.

All of the study participants were committed to the success of their institutions. Similar to David, Harry shared that success for him was leaving the institution in a better position than it was when he began the role. Harry shared:

Success for me is how do I elevate my university. How do I reimagine the university from when I arrived, and make sure that we are stronger, when my time is done, we are more competitive, we are more relevant and we're more sustainable... Success to me looks like growth in all of those areas, and that we have been able to expand access and opportunity to more students. To me, that's what success looks like. It's that those doors of opportunity are taken off the hinge, they are not just cracked open, but the doors are ripped off. That we expand in multiple areas. At the same time, we elevate our institutions. I am pleased to say that I believe that I've contributed successfully to every institution that I've worked at.

Much like her HBCU presidential colleagues, Harriet defined her success by what the institution is able to accomplish under her leadership. While most of the participants focused on the success of the institution, Harriet shared that she wants the institution, students, and university community to succeed. It's as if she felt obligated to ensure that everyone is successful because the success of the institution in some ways was tied to her own success. Harriet further explained:

Most importantly, success is when I look at those kids not just walking across the stage to get a diploma, but those students that I see that have truly been educated, and who understand the doors that this piece of paper will open up for them in their future. For me, success is being able to expose students, particularly black students, to the possibilities of what life has to offer. The third part is being able to demonstrate in a very bold way, that

we are just as good, just as bright. If we do things the right way, we can succeed. I do believe I have been able to accomplish that even in the midst of a pandemic, and a winter storm, and fighting against a culture that hadn't changed in 150 years.... Although our primary focus is on the students, you know, that's what I want for the community at large. It's my desire for people to see that there's opportunities... You just need to be willing to take that first step, lean into it, and own it. My job is to facilitate, to serve, and to find the resources that will support the students in accomplishing and achieving those things. We've made some major milestones and major accomplishments in a variety of areas... It is important to me that we are not a stereotype! For me, we're going to achieve and be successful, and we're going to do it in an excellent way.

Harriet also mentioned success also stems from challenging the norm. She disclosed that one of her leadership characteristics is that she always seeks to challenge complacency and continuously tries to raise the bar in terms of what the institution can achieve, saying, "For me, one part of success is being a disruptor... Success for me is also being willing to do the right thing and disrupt the organization."

Through listening to the participants share how they defined success, it was clear that each of them were dedicated to the students and the institutions they served. James expressed a key example of this dedication. He shared very proudly that his success as a leader is deeply tied to the students who graduated from the institution who also live up to the unique mission of the college. James explained:

Well, two things define my success. First and foremost is, you know, this is Bernard College's 145th anniversary. Like most HBCUs, and the institution has a very unique mission, what it does, and the region here in the greater city community and in the state.



So, when that mission is realized, that is success for me, and this particular instance, is the production and graduation of students who have demonstrated some success in the classroom, but who have also been charged through the lens of social justice, to go out and change the world for the better. When that mission statement is realized, for me, that is success. The other comes in the form of our students, while they are on campus, and our lungs while they are out in the world making a difference when our students succeed... Ultimately, walking across that stage as an average student. That's success to me, when our lungs are, you know, successful in their respective fields of endeavor. That is success to me.

Additionally, James also discussed how one of his main goals as an HBCU president is to ensure that the students are achieving success. He went on to add:

The balance of my success has been defined by the students who happen to be my constituents. My reason for being here as president, that's how I define success, it has very little to do with me. What I am able to do about pulling together the right team of people, to serve these students, and ultimately help them to realize success.

Overall, there was an overwhelming sense of service and commitment by the participants in the study. They collectively believed that it was their duty to not only preserve the rich and historic legacies of these institutions but make them better for generations to come. For these HBCU presidents, success wasn't about accolades, monetary things, or recognition, but more so about adding value to HBCUs, enriching programs, and making the institution a better place for current and future students. Success for the participants was not measured by personal success, but the success of the students and the upward trajectory of the institution.

### **I Didn't Get Here Alone**

In research question three, which asked how does mentoring contribute to the success of HBCU presidents, there were two themes that emerged, I didn't get here alone and passing the baton. Each of the participants believed that in addition to skills developed throughout their career, mentoring played a significant role in their success as HBCU presidents. There was an overwhelming consensus by study participants regarding the positive effects of mentoring. All participants emphasized the significant role that having a mentor played in their personal and professional lives. Specifically, all participants attributed their success as an HBCU president to having a mentor(s). Harry shared "I will tell you that having a mentor has been instrumental in my development from a professional standpoint, and even from a personal standpoint... throughout my entire higher education career." Harry went on to further elaborate the importance of having a mentoring by stating:

I credit my mentor for a portion of the success that I have benefited from today... As the years go on, and in my case, they become a part of your significant milestones, weddings, promotions, children, failures, all those things. Over the course of those years, if your mentorship is strong, and if it's set up the right way, they are there as a mentor, and a sponsor, so to speak. As they get to know you, they offer support and become a sounding board. They're also there to help you with the trajectory of your career... So, mine [mentoring relationships] has evolved wonderfully over the years and we have, like I said, they have been a part of just about every facet of my life over the last 23/24 years or so.

Harry was intentional in acknowledging his mentors and recognizing the monumental impact they had on his career in higher education. He believed that it was very important to pay respect to his mentors for playing such a monumental role in his professional career. Harry later added:

I don't think that I would have been as successful navigating the landscape of higher education without a mentor. Mentors should help you with understanding the culture and climate of higher education... My mentors really did educate me on the big p and the small p of higher education. The small p is the internal politics of any institution that you that you work at, in understanding those politics, understanding those various cultures understanding how to hit a face with faculty staff, and, and, you know, unions and all of those things. Then the big p is the external politics, how to interface with, you know lawmakers and state legislators and governors and lieutenant governors and all of these individuals even on the federal level... I could not have garnered that type of IQ, or emotional intelligence, I believe, without the help of my mentors.

James discussed the importance of having strong mentoring relationships because those relationships made him the leader that he is today. He shared:

I will say it [mentoring] is one of the most significant impacts on my career I learned very early on, from one of my mentors who used to be the Dean of Arts and Humanities at Southern University. So, when I was a college student at my undergraduate institution, and, of course, met him, he was a member of my fraternity. And he opened his door to me. And whenever I would ask him, what would it take to be successful, he would always tell me three things. The top of the list was having a strong mentor, who had been where I'm trying to go. I think that was the important part, it's one thing to have a good mentor, but also having a mentor who is in the place where you aspire to be, it makes a

difference. I've sought out several HBCU presidents, who would be willing to be my mentor, and invest in me. Also, I would say that a lot of what I do today, my style, my approach to handling matters, etc. is all based on very strong mentorship from those presidents. And so, it has been critically important to my journey.

Whether mentors assisted with how to handle a particular situation or just provided needed perspective, each of the participants looked to their mentors for advice and their input on various topics and challenges that only a college president can understand. Similar to James, David looked to his mentor for advice for ways in which he should approach a certain issue. David shared:

My mentors really gave me good advice... Also, throughout my career in higher education, my mentors also played a role in my decision making. I would ask for their opinion on something, and they would say, David do not do that.

Overall, each of the participants believed mentoring was very substantial to their growth and development as an effective HBCU leader. This is attributed to the fact that each of the participants had mentors who not only poured knowledge into them, and provided them with words of encouragement, but their mentors also helped them to develop skills that also led to their success. Experiencing the phenomenon of mentoring ultimately made them better leaders.

### **Tools for Success**

While all participants believed that mentoring played an instrumental role in their success as HBCU presidents, there was a consensus among participants that mentoring isn't the only reason why they have been successful. They shared several key skills and characteristics that they developed throughout their professional career that also helped them become successful HBCU presidents. For these participants, having the right skillset was just as important as being

involved with a mentor. Reflecting on their experiences, the participants each shared a host of skills that they believed played a role in their success as HBCU presidents.

When asked about her skills, president Harriet shared, “I’m pretty adaptable. But firm. I’m a value driven person, and I am open to hearing multiple perspectives. Being able to hold a conversation with someone who has a different viewpoint than you do. That helps you.”

Harriet also added that although she has moved up the administrative ranks quickly, in the opinions of some critics in higher education, she has always been adamant about learning each role she is in and performing that role well. Harriet added, “I’ve been intentional, and then just again, as part of my personality, made sure that I understood every level and layer of the of the profession that I’ve chosen to be in higher ed.”

When reflecting on why he believes he has been so successful as a two-time HBCU president, Harry credited his ability to “think on one’s feet. Being agile. Having the ability to synthesize information and answer questions, you know, spontaneously.” Harry went on to say that he has certain qualities and characteristics that he believes has also played a role in his success. He continued that he has qualities that you cannot teach, they are qualities that you either have or don’t have, but you can’t learn them from other people. Harry added:

The ability to think on my feet, the ability to be agile, the ability to synthesize information. Also, my curiosity. I have always been curious about learning, figuring things out, always had a very strong sense of problem solving, because you can't teach those things. Either people have it or people don't. Now you can help someone identify that they need to grow in that area. If they're not committed, comfortable, and just don't have that ability, then that's going to be an actual struggle.

Harry also shared that he has seen such success because he did not try to rush his way into a presidency. He learned as much as he could and slowly advanced throughout his professional career by learning and excelling in every job that he had. Harry went on to say:

I tell my mentees this, one of the things I've always been cognizant of, is to make sure that my ambitions did not weigh my talent. That's why when you look at my record, I took very slow intermediate steps to get to where I am. Sometimes we want to make that bet, that huge leap. And I tell my mentees, the worst thing you can do is rush to get there and not be ready. Because if you're not tested, if you're not vetted, then it's going to be a long fall, and you're going to lose the respect of your team.

Like Harry, Michael echoed similar sentiments with crediting his skillset that he has developed over the years that has truly helped him be successful throughout his two presidencies. Michael also discussed how he continuously seeks to learn as much as can, saying, "I'm always in the mode of learning." He went on to share more skills and characteristics that he believed has led to his success by saying:

My analyzing skills and my problem-solving skills have certainly been key. Being able to quickly assess and determine what the problem is, and then come up with some viable solutions. That to me is extremely important. I think being a good listener, has helped me as well. I tell people, God gave you one mouth and two ears for a reason that you really ought to be listening twice as much as just speaking, but not only with not just hearing with your ears, but you got to hear with your heart as well. For me, being firm and consistent, is also key... The other thing is, I try to be like a sponge to just absorb as much as I can. I think when you get to the point where you think you know what everything,

you need to go ahead and throw the towel in. I'm constantly learning, evolving., and have realized that you can learn something from anybody.

David echoed the need for some of the same skills and characteristics discussed by other participants. He believed his skills added to his success and are ones that an HBCU president will use practically every day in their role as a university leader. David shared:

I think critical thinking skills is one. That to me, goes back in my case, to learning how to read critically, that you got to think about the root of the issue. So critical thinking skills is key. You have to speak effectively. You've got to speak effectively because you're always going to be asked to speak. So, every comment I ever made was something I had already thought about. I make no comments that I haven't thought about even though I may want you all to think that nothing. Oh, I think it's very important that I had to work in that you cannot always get in the last word. You just cannot. I have also discovered that people are going to challenge you. They also will find whatever they can to say about you, but you cannot say anything you want to about them. It all comes down to respect and trust, because people have to be able to trust what you say... You have to be ethical; you have to be honest, and you have to be open.

Much like the other participants, James added three key elements that he considers to be one of the main reasons why he has been successful for this long in higher education. James listed the following:

I have three things that I'll say I think I have perfected over the years. I adopted these from several mentors, and some seasoned alums from some of the institutions from which I have worked. The first is that you have to have courage in this work. It is a job that is not for the faint of heart. You have to have the courage to face the challenges that you

face, you have to have vision, you have to be able to demonstrate and execute a plan that is going to take folks from point A to point B, and you have to have the effective communication skills to communicate all the above. With that plan with that vision, and with the courage to execute it, you have to have communication skills and be able to effectively share it with the people and ultimately convinced them to follow you and following the leadership. I think those are the skills that any leader needs to be effective in a position like college presidency, but more so for the presidency, because of the various constituency groups with which you have to do.

One of the most interesting perspectives came from William. William was the only president who did not have a PhD prior to becoming president but is currently pursuing a doctoral degree while enjoying successful tenure as an HBCU president. William credits two things aside from mentoring that have helped him maintain success, “those are graduate school and God.” William goes on to say:

I will tell you that for me, being in a doctoral program has, really provided with so much knowledge. Again, I have to credit God for leading me to this program. Now, obviously, I'm kind of doing it backwards because more often people already have their Ph.D. or a doctorate before becoming president, but, you know, again, if I'm going to be just totally honest, God put me here for a reason and then he also put in me the desire to seek a terminal degree that is already paying dividends. Also, I think he has provided me with what I have needed in order to be successful as he wants me to be.

Additionally, William attributed much of his success outside of his mentoring relationships to his strong commitment to his faith. Of the six participants, only William mentioned the importance of faith and religion in higher education. William said, “and so you



know one of the things that we don't necessarily talk a lot about in higher ed is how our faith plays a role in what we do.” While William attributed many factors to his success including mentors, having a strong cabinet, and pursuing a PhD, it seemed that his faith was the most important factor to him. William also shared:

Let me start by my telling you my quote, in my favorite scripture, which is Proverbs 19:21, Many are the plans of a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails... Again, God works things out in your life or certainly he's worked things in my life, that are now really paying dividends when I didn't know what was going on behind the scenes... Everything that I'm doing now, professionally, I have to credit God's plan for my life... I think, for me, it's important to have a strong spiritual life...I think it's important to not only have goals, dreams, and aspirations, but I think for me, being obedient to what God has led us all to do. We all have gifts and talents, and he's got purpose for our lives. But we've got to be true to His purpose for our lives.

The participants of this study made it clear that mentoring is one of the leading factors in the successful tenure of HBCUs presidents. While mentoring is significant, these leaders also shared that it takes more than having a mentor to be successful as an HBCU president. Based on the experiences of the participants, in addition to having a strong mentor, aspiring HBCU presidents should also possess certain skills and characteristics and be committed to the success of HBCUs.

### **Passing The Baton**

With mentoring playing such a key role in the success of HBCU presidents, it is no surprise that all participants in the study shared that they are still involved in mentoring relationships, but they have now transitioned from mentee to mentor. Each of the participants

disclosed that they are all mentoring aspiring higher education administrators. Some presidents went on to share that they believed it was their duty to mentor the next generation of HBCU presidents and higher education administrators. Harry, for example, stated that:

I believe that you have to pay it forward. And the reason I don't say back is because the folks who have mentored me, they're at the tails end of their professional careers. So, I am responsible for paying it forward.

Harry went on to say that being able to mentor higher education leaders and seeing them develop and move up in their career is something that he is tremendously proud of. He added that he had been able to mentor several individuals who have had several different roles in higher education, including some who have become college presidents:

One of my greatest accomplishments is that I have made three university presidents under my leadership, and I'm very proud of that. I mentor individuals who are younger than myself, and some who are older than I am. To have people look at you and respect you enough to have you help them navigate their career. This is a person's career, and this is their livelihood. This is what they've been working toward for their entire professional career. For them to tap you and say, would you be my mentor, I am very humbled by that. I am working with some AVP's and some vice presidents who want to go to the next level. The AVPs want to be vice presidents, the vice presidents want to be presidents. And they are at HBCUs and predominately white institutions as well. I am even mentoring some individuals at Hispanic serving institutions as well. I believe it's important.

Additionally, several presidents added that they are not just mentoring HBCU presidents, but mentoring individuals to ascend to a variety of higher education leadership roles. Harriet shared, "I am mentoring a few individuals. I would say, I am not just mentoring aspiring HBCU

presidents, but also individuals looking to have a progressive and successful career in the academy.” Harriet added that she’s likes to be transparent with aspiring leaders by sharing with them that not everyone will make it to the college presidency. She elaborated by saying:

My advice to some people is that I know you think that you may want to be a president but think it through. I’m not saying take it off your goal list, but at the same time don’t make that your primary focus. Focus on how to have the most successful career possible and how to make the impact that you want to have. At the end of the day, the positions will come. If you do the right things to position yourself right. The positions will come. I think people spend so much time focused on getting to the position that sometimes they miss the boat. They either never assume the presidency or when they do become a president it is short lived or it’s not the experience that they hoped it would be. I think that because they spent so much time thinking about the position and not about the things you have to do once you’re in the role. Positions will come. Advancements will come. Money will come if you focus on the right things.

Similar to Harriet, Michael takes a similar mentoring approach. Michael was adamant about not just mentoring individuals who are seeking the presidency, but mentoring individuals who aspire to take on a wide variety of roles in higher education. Michael stated:

I am mentoring some individuals, and I'm mentoring them to be their best self. Whether it's President or not, I'm mentoring them in their current role, and possibly the next role. Whether they become a president or not is not up to me. My role as a mentor is for them to be successful, where they are, that they achieve and reach their potential. That is what I'm hoping and that they have that level of success. If they become president, then by all means, I'm happy for them. But I want them to be their best self, wherever they are

serving in whatever capacity and so yes, we talk about it. I've got a mentee who just gotten a role as a Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at a PWI. I've got another former mentee who is President of the Community College. I've got one who is an associate provost in academic affairs, one who's doing well. I've got another one who is now at the system level as an assistant vice president. I've got a couple other people serving as Dean's. I've got someone who is just starting their career off as an assistant professor. So yes, I am mentoring those individuals. Yes. I'm working with those individuals to be their best self at whatever role they choose.

We learn from Kram (1984) that there are both formal and informal mentoring relationships. While most participants didn't go into detail about their particular mentoring style, one participant did. David stated that he prefers developing formal mentoring relationships with his mentees because he wants to be involved in their professional development. David disclosed:

I am mentoring people now who aspire to do that. I typically try to make it a rather formal relationship. We shared our CV's and all those kinds of things, and there was sometimes that I even gave them some formal questions or things and gave them some things to read. We also talk about various things. For example, since I was a provost, we may talk about those kinds of things. Then in both instances, I have them come physically to where I am and spend the day, you know, with me, just to see some of the things here... Then of course, they know that in the future, I'm a person who, if they decide to apply to certain kind of jobs they can see my input, they're not obligated, but if they want to think about applying for this job, or that kind of job. Most of these folks have also asked me will I serve as one of their references, which I've said yes. That's how my things have been, I tried to keep it very structured, and that kind of thing.

James was similarly clear that he is committed to developing the next generation of HBCU leaders. Throughout the interview, James exuded a sense of obligation to his mentoring relationships. He mentioned:

I'm mentoring quite a few individuals... I'm committed to ensuring that there is a strong pipeline of potential presidents there for our historically Black colleges, and universities...The only way that we're going to get there is to have more of us more people who look like us, prepared and trained at the doctoral level, and engaged in meaningful experiences with the right mentors, to make sure that they are prepared when that next opportunity or when the right opportunity knocks on their door. It makes sure that they are ready. So yes, I am mentoring several aspiring presidents.

Due to the positive effects mentoring had on throughout their professional career, the participants are now in turn mentoring aspiring higher education leaders. Whether it be formal or informal relationships, the participants in this study were all involved in some form of mentoring relationship in which they are preparing the next generation of HBCU presidents. In addition to mentoring and grooming HBCU presidents, participants noted that while they are HBCU presidents themselves, they are also preparing their mentees to assume leadership roles at any type of institution, not exclusively at HBCUs. Nevertheless, there was an overwhelming consensus by study participants on the importance in preparing aspiring HBCU leaders due to the complex problems that these institutions face. Ultimately, each of the study participants deemed it necessary to prepare future higher education executives for the ever-changing landscape of higher education.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the participants, in addition to the themes that emerged from the findings of this study. Previously, Chapter 1 included the purpose of the study, statement of the problem, and provided the significance of exploring if mentoring played a role in the success of HBCU presidents. Chapter 2 provided an extensive review of relevant literature on the concept of mentoring and HBCU presidents. Chapter 3 included the research design, data collection steps, data analysis protocols, trustworthiness, and the limitations of this phenomenological study. Next, in Chapter 5 I will provide a detailed discussion of the findings from this study, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played a monumental role in the education African Americans in this country since the post-civil war era (Albritton, 2012; Redd, 1998). Although these institutions have made significant contribution to American higher education, several concerns have been raised about the survival of HBCUs. This is attributed to the fact that some researchers believe that there is currently a leadership crisis at HBCUs (Evans et al., 2002; Freeman & Palmer, 2020; Kimbrough, 2017). In order for HBCUs to continue to be successful in their mission, having stable leadership in the presidency is necessary (Somers & Leichter, 2017). The current literature available recommends that in order to be successful in the HBCU presidency, aspiring leaders of these institutions should engage in various forms of mentoring relationships. (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014). While research has examined the role mentoring plays in achieving the HBCU presidency, researchers have neglected the exploration of the role mentoring has on the success of HBCU presidents during their presidency. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the role mentoring plays, if any, in the success of HBCU presidents. Furthermore, the researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of current and former HBCU presidents with mentors and their perceptions of mentoring's contribution to their success. In order to explore this phenomenon, six current and former HBCU presidents from 4-year public and private institutions across the country were used to understand the lived experiences of study participants. This chapter includes a discussion of the study findings, limitations, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

To gain a greater a greater understanding of the phenomenon, the following research questions were used to guide this study.

RQ1: How do HBCU presidents describe their experiences as leaders?

RQ2: How do HBCU presidents define success?

RQ3: How does mentoring contribute to the success of HBCU presidents?

### **Discussion of Findings**

This section includes a discussion of the findings that were discovered through this phenomenological study. Over the course of conducting this study, there were six significant themes that emerged: 1) the art of mentoring development 2) life never goes as planned, 3) advancing HBCUs, 4) I didn't get here alone, 5) tools for success, and 6) passing the baton. I will now discuss the thematic findings from this study based on the order in which they emerged during participant interviews. The linkage between research questions and themes appear in Chapter 4 in Table 2.

#### **The Art of Mentoring Development**

In Chapter 4, participants shared their experiences regarding how their mentoring relationships began and how these relationships changed over time. This theme details the lived experiences of HBCU presidents with their mentors. In previous studies that have been conducted related to HBCU presidents and mentoring, participants only discuss the importance of mentoring, and not any specific details in regard to their personal experiences with mentoring relationships. The art of mentoring development theme encompasses the ways in which participants described their mentoring relationships and how these relationships evolved over time. These findings are reflected within Kram's (1983) phases of mentoring relationships theoretical framework that was discussed in Chapter 2. Kram (1983) shares four key stages of



mentoring relationships: *initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition*, and how as time progresses, the mentor-mentee relationships should progress as well. While there was no overall consensus between study participants on how a person's mentoring relationships should be developed, the importance of developing mentoring relationships was a key finding from study participants.

Participants either sought mentors on their own, their mentors approached them, or in some cases, the participants experienced both. Participants who shared that they approached individuals to be their mentors did so because of certain skills or leadership characteristics that the potential mentor possessed. On the other hand, some participants recalled their mentors approaching them about being beginning a mentoring relationship because "they saw something in me that I didn't see in myself." In both instances, these factors are tied to the *initiation* phase of Kram's (1983) theory. In this phase, the introduction between the two parties is made and the relationship between mentor and mentee is first established.

Additionally, for these participants, having a mentor was not only important, but developing a relationship with their mentor was the most significant factor when reflecting on their overall career experiences. The participants made it clear that individuals should not be engaged with a mentor for superficial reasons, but one should be involved with a mentor that they could build a genuine relationship with since this person will have a major influence on the direction of their career. This is consistent with the *cultivation* phase of Kram's (1983) theory. In this phase, as time goes on, the relationship becomes more meaningful, and a true bond between the mentor and mentee is established.

The study participants also shared that throughout their career they have had multiple mentors, who have all served specific purposes over the course of their career. Some of the

participants highlighted the importance of “situational mentors” which supports the idea that not all mentors will be a part of your life forever. In many cases, mentors come and go, and sometimes a mentor only serves in that capacity for a particular timeframe. These particular findings from the theme correlates with Kram’s (1983) third phase, which is *separation*. In this phase, the mentoring relationship has run its course, and the two parties go their separate ways.

Lastly, most of the study participants shared that as the years went and as they obtained significant success in their career such as reaching the HBCU presidency, their mentors became more like peers than mentors. For many of the study participants, once they reached the university presidency, the mentoring relationship had run its course. Nevertheless, because their mentor had been such a major part of their life, the mentor ultimately assumed a familiar like role. This particular finding is consistent with Kram’s (1983) last phase, *redefinition*. In this phase, once the relationship has run its course, and certain career goals were achieved, the mentor-mentee relationship becomes more of a friendship. Overall, the findings from this theme match up to all stages of Kram’s (1983) Phases of Mentor Relationships theoretical framework.

### **Life Never Goes as Planned**

In addition to *the art of mentoring development*, study participants believed *that life never goes as planned*. Most of them never planned to have a career in higher education administration, let alone become HBCU presidents. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 4, most of the participants continuously mentioned that they never wanted to become an HBCU president, but it was their mentors who saw something in them that they didn’t see in themselves.

Participants shared that as they continued to succeed in their roles and move up the professional ladder, the HBCU presidency slowly became a possibility, but only because of the influence of their mentors. Study participants also shared their personal experiences with their mentors and

how their mentors played an instrumental role in their professional development and preparing them for the HBCU presidency.

Throughout this theme, participants shared the significant impact that their mentors had on their career trajectory. Since most of the participants never intended to become an HBCU president, they felt that they most likely would not have ascended to the presidency if it had not been for the presence of a strong mentor. One of the most interesting findings from this theme was the fact that most of the participants shared that as they progressed in their career, their mentors made strategic plans to help prepare them for the HBCU presidency. Before they reached the HBCU presidency, their mentors conducted mock interviews with them, nominated them for the position, and some mentors even were recommenders during the application process.

This theme supports research related to mentoring of college and university presidents. Although Briscoe and Freeman's (2019) study focused on mentoring and the success of all university presidents and not specifically presidents of HBCUs, their findings were still applicable to HBCU presidents as well. Briscoe and Freeman (2019) asserted "mentoring, including experiences such as internships, shadowing, and frequent conversations with current and past university presidents, has shaped aspiring university president experiences and continues to be influential for their career trajectories" (p. 18). Additionally, the findings from this theme also support the claims made by Commodore and colleagues (2016), that while having a mentor is important, individuals also need a mentor who also takes on the additional role of a sponsor and helps to further a person's career. According to Commodore and colleagues (2016), "sponsorship differs from mentorship in that sponsors go the extra step of actually advocating for the mentee" (p. 4).

## **Advancing HBCUs**

The theme, *advancing HBCUs*, is not only unique, but inspiring as well. When describing their success as presidents, there was an overwhelming consensus from participants that success was not about personal accomplishments, but more so about advancing the HBCUs they serve, and moving their institutions forward. What was most moving and inspiring about this theme was that the participants displayed a sense of selflessness in terms of their commitment to the advancement of HBCUs. The participants felt that the role of the HBCU presidency was bigger than one individual. The role of HBCU president for them was not about titles, rewards, or accolades, but was more so about protecting and preserving these institutions that have been a part of this country for over a century.

Study participants stated that their success is not about what they accomplish, but what the students and the institutions achieve together. This particular finding makes a connection to previous research. In Gasman and colleagues' (2021) study, the researchers found that aspiring leaders at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) "feel committed to give back or "pay it forward" to the next generation of students" (p. 17). Similar to the aspiring leaders in Gasman and colleagues' study, the participants of this study believed that they had an obligation to give back to these institutions and ensure that they are successful. It was evident after conducting the study that the participants truly had a deep love for HBCUs and truly wanted their institutions to succeed. Nevertheless, these findings counter previous research referencing HBCU presidents as domineering and dictators who are only concerned with their own success (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Gasman 2011, 2006).

As previously mentioned in the literature review, HBCU presidents have been historically left out of higher education research (Freeman & Gasman, 2014). Additionally, there currently

isn't research available that accurately portrays HBCU presidents in a positive light. Again, most research published on HBCU presidents is either outdated or characterizes them as power hungry and selfish individuals who are unfit leaders (Gasman & Bowman, 2011). These particular characteristics have also been linked to unsuccessful leadership at HBCUs. Palmer and Freeman (2020) examined the perceptions on unsuccessful leadership for HBCU presidents and found that one trait participants believed that led to unsuccessful leadership was authoritarianism which encompassed dishonesty and a lack of humility.

On the contrary, the participants of this study did not take a dictatorial or authoritarian leadership approach. Instead, these leaders focused on putting the needs of the students and the institution above their own personal beliefs and successes, what I believe every successful leader should do. The participants in this study have shown that not all HBCU presidents are the power hungry, controlling, selfish leaders that past research has made them out to be. HBCU presidents are committed to ensuring that HBCUs continue to thrive and reach greater heights. Overall, this study found that presidents of HBCUs believed that it was their responsibility to leave these institutions in a better place than they found it.

### **I Didn't Get Here Alone**

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings of this study was participants' beliefs that they did not get to where they are in their professional career alone. The study participants reflected on their lived experiences and acknowledged the fact that they didn't get to where they are in life on their own accord, but their success was due to the help from their mentors along the way. Participants were adamant about recognizing their mentors for the monumental role these relationships played in their success. In fact, there was a mutual consensus by study participants that mentoring was an invaluable part of their success. The mentoring relationships that

participants were engaged in were instrumental in their professional development and ultimately were the leading factor that allowed them to be successful HBCU presidents.

This finding that mentors directly contributed to HBCU presidents' success supports past research that mentoring, specifically Freeman's (2011) assertion that "the role of grooming and mentoring is essential to the preparation of presidential leadership" (p. 10). Doman (2016) conducted a study exploring the career pathways of individuals who were all former Chief Student Affairs Officers (CHAO) who became HBCU presidents and similarly found that "participants in the study shared how a mentor played a significant role in their personal and professional development, which eventually culminated in being selected to lead an HBCU" (p. 160).

All study participants not only perceived mentoring to play a role in their success as HBCU presidents, but also, they believed mentoring to be crucial in their ascension to the presidency. One of the most important aspects about this particular finding was the fact that each of the study participants wanted to share their story in order to specifically acknowledge the role their mentor played not only in their professional career but their personal lives as well. They used their participation in this study as an outlet to say thank you to their mentors. Overall, this theme supported previous literature on the importance of mentoring in the success of HBCU presidents (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016; Gasman et al., 2015; & Gasman, 2014). Through exploring the relationships with their mentors, participants acknowledged the critical roles their mentors played, which firmly establishes the fact that mentoring plays a role in the success of HBCU presidents.

## **Tools for Success**

Another theme that emerged in this study was the need for additional tools for success, beyond the mentoring relationship. While the participants believed that mentoring relationships were a significant part of their success, they also discussed how mentoring was not the only factor which led to their ascension. They described that they also developed skills over the years that were crucial in their work as HBCU presidents. The study participants made it apparent that one cannot simply depend on mentoring alone, that there are certain skills that one must learn and possess to be successful as an HBCU president as well. Study participants all shared that in addition to mentoring, they have seen success in the presidency due to skills such as their analyzing and critical thinking skills in addition being able to problem solve and adapt quickly due to the nature of the role.

This particular theme aligned with DeRue and colleagues (2013) conceptualization of Mindful Engagement. The authors developed Mindful Engagement with hopes of understanding how leaders thrive in complex organizations. According to the researchers, in order to be successful, a leader needs to overcome certain obstacles throughout their professional career which in turn prepares them for leadership success. For study participants, each of them believed that in addition to mentoring, they were successful because of certain skills that they had learned and developed over the years. These particular skills led each of the participants to overcome several of the current challenges associated with the HBCU presidency and presidential leadership crisis.

While some of the statements within this theme align with prior research, most of the skills identified as necessary did not match up entirely with earlier findings. Previously, researchers have explored the skills required for HBCU presidents to be successful in their role

(Commodore et al., 2016; Esters et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014). For example, Freeman et al. (2016) discovered key areas aspiring HBCU presidents needed to have skills in such as: fundraising, governmental relations, and board management and listed specific areas of the job that HBCU presidents would need in order to be successful in their role. Similarly, Esters and colleagues (2016) also identified several competencies that they believe HBCU presidents need to have experience in to be successful. These competencies included things such as: policymaking, marketing and branding experience, fundraising, and shared governance.

Participants of this study, however, shared that certain personal skills were needed in addition to and/or instead of core competency areas related to the HBCU presidency. Study participants discussed the importance of having the ability to think critically, analyze information, be a problem solver, communicate effectively, and be adaptable. Although these skills don't match entirely to previous researchers' findings, presidential participants believed that these skills also played a role in their success over the years as HBCU presidents. Although study participants are mentoring aspiring leaders in key competency areas mentioned to previous literature, there are clearly additional personal behaviors and skills that lead to a successful tenure as an HBCU president.

### **Passing the Baton**

The final theme is *passing the baton*. This theme was based on study participants' dedication to mentoring the next generation of HBCU leaders. Each participant shared that they are currently mentoring aspiring HBCU executives to one day assume various leadership roles within HBCUs. Similarly, to what was discussed in the *advancing HBCUs* theme, study participants felt obliged to aide in the preparation of future HBCU leaders. It is important to note that the landscape of higher education is continually changing, especially for HBCUs, so there



will continuously be a need for mentors to prepare aspiring HBCU leaders for new challenges that effect these institutions. What was most surprising about this section was that several participants acknowledged that they are not just mentoring aspiring HBCU presidents but mentoring future HBCU leaders at all levels of administration. Participants understood that not everyone will make it to presidency, and that not everyone wants to be an HBCU president. Also, study participants believed that in order to make sure HBCUs continue to succeed, they need trained leaders in all levels of HBCU administration.

As mentioned in the literature, HBCU presidents believe it is "their responsibility to groom future leaders" in addition to ensuring "proper and effective leadership of HBCUs" for future generations to come (Freeman & Gasman, 2014, p. 20). Additionally, this finding also supports literature from Commodore et al. (2016) in which, "Being able to help move individuals from presidential hopefuls to actual sitting presidents is the ultimate goal of mentoring" (pg. 8). Despite a dearth of research on HBCU leader mentorship, this theme illustrates the importance of college and university presidential mentoring programs. Over the past several decades, we have seen the emergence of mentoring programs focused on mentoring aspiring university presidents such as: the American Council on Education ACE fellows program or the AGB Institute for Leadership and Governance in Higher education. Most of the individuals serving as mentors to the aspiring presidents are sitting university presidents who believe in mentoring the next generation of college and university presidents; just as the participants of this study do. With mentorship being such a significant factor in the success of aspiring and sitting HBCU presidents, it is crucial to continue the cycle of current HBCU presidents mentoring the aspiring leaders.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are certain elements beyond the researcher's power, that may affect the results of a study (Barron, 2009). One the most significant limitations was participants' willingness to be interviewed for this study. There were several instances where participants met the criteria to be a participant but declined to participate due to negative portrayals of HBCU presidents in media and other research interviews. Another limitation of the study was not being able to meet in person. Additionally, with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. While meeting virtually protected the study participants and researcher from potential exposure to Covid-19, in-person interviews would have allowed the participants to be more open during the interview, as well as provided the researcher the opportunity to pick up on non-verbal communication.

In addition, meeting via Zoom also presented some challenges. There were several cases where participants did not have stable Wi-Fi connection, which led to repeating interview questions and responses. Since I worked with the secretary of each participant to schedule the interviews, there were some challenges logging in, which led me to have to create a new meeting link thus, resulting in a delay in the start time for some of the participant interviews. Future researchers would benefit from conducting interviews with study participants face-to-face in order to decrease some of the technical issues that occurred from meeting virtually.

### **Significance of the Study**

This qualitative study proved to be significant for several reasons. First, this study added to the limited body of research that is currently available on HBCU presidents. While research related to the university presidency has been widely researched in higher education, HBCU presidents have been neglected from this research area for far too long (Commodore et al., 2016).

Specifically, this study affirmed that mentoring does indeed play a role in the success of HBCU presidents. Furthermore, by exploring this particular phenomenon through the lived experiences of the study participants, I was able to contribute to an area of research that has not been featured in literature up until this point.

This study was unique in that it provided HBCU presidents the opportunity to share their personal experiences regarding their mentoring relationships. Researchers have explored the positive impacts mentoring has on the success of HBCU presidents (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016), but those studies have focused on aspiring HBCU presidents only. While current and former HBCU presidents were participants in those previous studies, we knew nothing about their personal experiences with mentoring and their perceptions of the role mentoring played, if any in their success. Since this was an area that has been widely neglected in scholarly research, this study proved to be unique and very much significant.

Another significant aspect of this study was uncovering the presidents' intense commitments to the success of HBCUs and providing an accurate portrayal of HBCU presidents. In recent years within literature and media, HBCU presidents have been characterized as power hungry dictators (Freeman & Gasman, 2014, Gasman, 2011). I believe that this inaccurate portrayal also plays a role in the negative reputation of HBCU presidents and the institutions. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that these leaders are not what the media has portrayed them to be. The HBCU presidents who participated in this study are selfless, successful, and committed to the upward mobility of HBCUs. As a graduate researcher and an aspiring HBCU leader, the accurate characterization of HBCUs and HBCU presidents is critical for recruiting healthy student enrollment and quality faculty.

Lastly, this study also proved to be significant by affirming the need for HBCU mentoring and leadership development programs. In recent years, we have seen the emergence of mentoring programs such as the Rutgers University Center for Minority Serving Institutions and the Clark Atlanta University HBCU Executive Leadership Institute. While these two programs are needed and have played a significant role in mentoring and preparing the next generation of HBCU presidents, there is still a need for more programs. By conducting this study and discovering that HBCU presidents perceive mentoring to be instrumental in their success, the study findings not only support previous research related to the matter, but they also highlight the increased need for more mentoring programs dedicated to HBCU presidents. Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been instrumental in educating African Americans, and low socioeconomic students for decades. If HBCUs are to continue to thrive, there needs to be more leaders qualified to lead these institutions. One of the ways we can ensure that the HBCU presidential pipeline is filled with top talent is through mentoring and preparation programs.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study examined six current and former HBCU presidents and their perceptions of mentoring in their success. The results of this study provided a greater understanding of the role mentoring plays in the success of Historically Black College and University Presidents (HBCUs). Not only did this study add to the limited body of research available on mentoring of HBCU presidents, but it will also prove to be instrumental in the development of aspiring HBCU presidents. The following section provides several implications for practice based on the study findings.

Based on the findings from this study, the first implication for practice is leadership development programs focused on preparing the next generation of HBCU presidents. With

several higher education researchers acknowledging that HBCUs are dealing with a leadership crisis (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et. al., 2016), the establishment of leadership development programs is necessary for ensuring a strong pipeline of administrative talent. By developing future leaders to assume the HBCU presidency, there would be significant progress made toward countering the turnover crisis in the HBCU presidency.

While there are programs focused on preparing leaders at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI's) such as the Rutgers University Center for Minority Serving Institutions, these programs do not exclusively focus on HBCU leaders, which is needed since HBCUs deal with their own set of challenges. On the other hand, Clark Atlanta University recently founded the HBCU Executive Leadership Institute, which is a fellowship program which focuses on increasing the talent pipeline for HBCU presidents and executive leaders. Programs such as these will not only mentor aspiring HBCU presidents and allow them to learn firsthand from HBCU presidents of the past and present, but it will also provide them with the opportunity to develop skills in areas such a finance, fundraising, and shared governance, which are all essential in succeeding as an HBCU president.

The second implication for practice is the establishment of graduate and professional degree program focused on preparing higher education leaders, especially leaders of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. While professional development programs are beneficial as well, I believe it is equally important to prepare younger leaders first entering higher education and academia, just as it is in preparing more seasoned individuals in the profession. Although there are some graduate degree programs available at institutions around the country, most of these graduate degree programs are focused on preparing students to go into the field of student affairs but no program focused on HBCU leadership and administration. Establishing a graduate

school and even certificate program focused on HBCU executive leadership would not only increase the pipeline of future HBCU leaders, but also teach future HBCU leaders early on in their career the skillset they need in order to succeed. This would ultimately lead to having more successful leaders in all levels of HBCU administration. I believe that it is vital that HBCUs prepare the next generation of HBCU leaders.

### **Implications for Policy**

One of the most significant factors effecting the success of HBCUs is adequate funding. For years, HBCUs have been underfunded in comparison to PWIs in higher education (Sav, 2010; Gasman, 2010). In fact, HBCUs have been historically underfunded in the United States since these institutions were originally established (Bracey, 2017; Harper et al., 2009). One significant policy implication from this study was the need for an increase of funding at the federal and state level for HBCUs. Currently, aside from the leadership crisis, most of the problems HBCUs are facing are related to the financial state of these institutions (Bracey, 2017; Clement & Lidsky, 2011). Increased funding from the federal government would allow more money for HBCUs to grow endowments, provide more scholarship opportunities to students, upgrade campus facilities, develop new and innovative programs, and help recruit and retain quality faculty. Additionally, policy implementation at the federal and state level would show the government's commitment to the success of HBCUs. Proper funding would not only allow HBCUs to compete with PWIs, but it would also potentially assist with retention, performance, and graduation rates as at these institutions as well.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While this study provided a greater understanding of the lived experiences of HBCU presidents who were engaged in mentoring relationships, there are certain areas of this study that

would benefit from future research. I recommend future researchers explore HBCU presidents who were not engaged in mentoring relationships, but who were still successful in their role. While mentoring has been shown to be instrumental in the success of HBCU presidents, not all HBCU presidents have been involved in mentoring relationships. Therefore, I believe that scholarly research could benefit from learning about the lived experiences of HBCU presidents who were not involved in a formal or in formal mentoring relationship, but still have seen success. The findings from a study of this nature would provide a greater understanding of the other factors that play a role in the success of HBCU presidents, since most current studies have focused on mentoring as the leading influence in the development and success of these leaders.

In addition, there is a gap in research regarding the pathways to the HBCU presidency that leads to success. Traditionally, like other university presidents, HBCU presidents have followed the longstanding tradition of the academic pathway to the presidency (Freeman & Gasman, 2011). For example, three of the six participants in the study came from an academic background and served as provost prior to ascending to the presidency. While HBCU presidents from academic backgrounds have seen success, so have presidents from non-academic backgrounds such as student affairs, business affairs, and enrollment management. Examining HBCU presidents' perceptions on their career pathway to the presidency would prove beneficial and aid in strengthening the HBCU presidential pipeline.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine HBCU president's perceptions of mentoring on their success. While several researchers (Commodore et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014) have explored mentoring as it relates to the success of aspiring HBCU presidents, scholars have neglected to explore the role of mentoring in

the success of current HBCU presidents. The findings from this study revealed that HBCU presidents believe that mentoring played a significant role in their professional success. However, HBCU presidents also attributed other factors to their success such as their skillset and personal characteristics like critical thinking and communication. Nevertheless, study participants credited formal and informal mentoring relationships as the leading factor in their success as HBCU presidents. For these HBCU leaders, mentorship was essential in their professional development, allowing them to gain key competencies, and was also monumental in their career trajectories. The findings from this study support previous research regarding the role of mentorship in the development and success of HBCU presidents. In order to combat the current leadership crisis at HBCUs across the country, there needs to be adequate mentorship and professional development opportunities for the future leaders of these institutions. Therefore, as higher education continues to evolve, there should be a continuous examination in the key factors that lead to the success of Historically Black Colleges and University presidents.

HBCUs continue to be affected by low enrollments, financial mismanagement, and the presidential leadership crisis, which will continue place these institutions in jeopardy. While all higher education institutions face challenges, HBCUs today face several unique challenges that can only be overcome by successful leaders who will remain in the presidency for an adequate amount of time. With the rapid turnover of HBCU presidents continuing to rise, the need for mentoring and grooming future HBCU presidents also continues to grow. This study supported previous research by highlighting the importance of mentoring in the success of HBCU presidents. In order for HBCU to overcome the current challenges, and truly thrive, there needs to be a strong pipeline of future HBCU leaders.



## References

- Abelman, R., & Dalessandro, A. (2008). The institutional vision of community colleges: Assessing style as well as substance. *Community College Review, 35*(4), 306–335. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552108315604>
- Albritton, T. J. (2012). Educating our own: The historical legacy of HBCUs and their relevance for educating a new generation of Leaders. *The Urban Review, 44*(3), 311–331. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-012-0202-9>
- Allen, W. R., & Jewell, J. O. (2002). A Backward Glance Forward: Past, Present and Future Perspectives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. *The Review of Higher Education, 25*(3), 241–261. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2002.0007>
- American Council on Education (2012). *The American College President: (2012 ed.)*. Washington, DC. American Council on Education.
- American Council on Education (2017). *The American College President: (8<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. American Council on Education.
- American Council on Education. (2019). *Public and Private Investments and Divestments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Public-and-Private-Investments-and-Divestments-in-HBCUs.pdf>
- Anafarta, A., & Apaydin, C. (2016). The effect of faculty mentoring on career success and career satisfaction. *International Education Studies, 9*(6), 22. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n6p22>
- Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935*. University of North Carolina Press.

- Armstrong, S. J., Allinson, C. W., and Hayes, J. (2002). Formal mentoring systems: An examination of the effects of mentor/protégé cognitive styles on the mentoring process. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(8), 1111-1137. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00326>
- Association of Governing Boards, (n.d.). <https://agb.org/>
- Babchuk W. A. (2019). Fundamentals of qualitative analysis in family medicine. *Family medicine and community health*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000040>
- Barondess J. A., (1995). A brief history of mentoring. *American Clinical and Climatological Association*, 106(1), 1–24.
- Basile, F. (1998). Mentoring a path toward immortality. *Indianapolis Business Journal*, 18(53) 1-16.
- Berk, R. A., Berg, J., Mortimer, R., Walton-Moss, B., & Yeo, T. P. (2005). Measuring the effectiveness of faculty mentoring relationships. *Academic Medicine*, 80(1), 66–71. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00001888-200501000-00017>
- Bettez, S. C., & Suggs, V. L. (2012). Centering the educational and social significance of HBCUs: A focus on the educational journeys and thoughts of African American scholars. *The Urban Review*, 44(3), 303–310.
- Blumenstyk, G. (2014). *American higher education in crisis? What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Birklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Bozeman, B., & Feeney, M. K. (2008). Mentor matching. *Administration & Society*, 40(5), 465–482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399708320184>

- Bracey, E. N. (2017). The significance of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the 21st century: Will such institutions of higher learning survive? *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 76, 670–696.
- Briscoe, K. L., & Freeman, S. (2019). The role of mentorship in the preparation and success of university presidents. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 27(4), 416–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2019.1649920>
- Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Brown, T. M. (2005). Mentorship and the female college president. *Sex Roles*, 52(9/10), DOI: 10.1007/s11199-0053733-7.
- Buchanan, D. A. (1988). *Presidential roles and qualifications: Views from historically Black colleges and universities* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Oklahoma State University
- Burton, B. (2006) Trying prevention before punishment, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52(39), A21-A22.
- Byars-Winston, A., & Dahlberg, M.L, (2019). *The science of effective mentorship in STEM*. National Academies Press.
- Bynum, W., & Varpio, L. (2018). When I say... hermeneutic phenomenology. *Medical Education*, 52(3), 252-253.
- Cantey, N.I., Bland, R., & Mack, L.R. (2013). Historically black colleges and universities: Sustaining a culture of excellence in the twenty-first century. *Journal of African American Studies* 7, 142–153 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-011-9191-0>
- Chao, G. T. (1997). Mentoring phases and outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1997.1591>

Clark Atlanta University HBCU Executive Leadership Institute. (n.d).

<https://www.cau.edu/hbcueli/index.html>

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*, 2nd Edition. SAGE.

Clawson, J. G., & Kram, K. E. (1984). Managing cross-gender mentoring. *Business Horizons*, 27(3), 22-32.

Clement, A., & Lidsky, A. 2011. The danger of history slipping away: The heritage campus and HBCUs. *Planning for Higher Education*, 39(3): 149-158

Commodore, F., Freeman, S., Gasman, M., & Carter, C. (2016). How it's done: The role of mentoring and advice in preparing the next generation of historically Black college and university presidents. *Journal of Education Sciences*, 6(4), 19-33.

Committee on the Future of the Colleges of Agriculture in the Land Grant University System. (1995). *Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities*. National Academy Press.

Cook, B. J. (2012). The American college president study: Key findings and takeaways. <http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/The-American-College-President-Study.aspx>

Coll, J. H., & Raghavan, P. (2011). Mentoring: Who and how. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 1(8), 65-77.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap ... and others don't*. Random House.

Corby, D., Taggart, L., & Cousins, W. (2020). The lived experience of people with intellectual disabilities in post-secondary or higher education. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 24(3), 339-357.

- Crawford, J. (2017) HBCUs: Accreditation, governance and survival challenges in an ever-increasing competition for funding and students, *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 2(3), 1 – 13.
- Crawford, J. (2021). HBCU Administrators and the COVID-19: Dealing with the pandemic under the pressure of funding and self-care. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 5(3), 1-15.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research Higher Education* 50, 525–545 (2009).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9130-2>.
- De Gagne, J. C., & Walters, K. J. (2010). The lived experience of online educators: Hermeneutic phenomenology. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6(2), 357-366.
- DeRue, D., Spreitzer, G., Flanagan, B., & Allen, B. (2013). Developing adaptive leaders for turbulent times: The Michigan model of leadership. *The European Business Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/>
- Dickey, C. (1996). Mentoring women of color at the university of Minnesota: Challenges for organizational transformation. University of Minnesota.
- Dickson, A. (1983) The relationship between mentorship and other variables and administrators' perceptions of the career development process in higher education. Boston University.

- Doman, D. (2016). *A phenomenological study on historically Black colleges and universities African American male presidents using student affairs as a career pathway* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Dziczkowski, J., (2013) Mentoring and leadership development, *The Educational Forum*, 77(3), 351-360, DOI: 10.0/00131725.2013.792896
- Duncan, A. (2010). *Changing the HBCU narrative: From corrective action to creative investment*. Speech given by Arne Duncan at the HBCU Symposium, Durham, NC, USA. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/changing-hbcu-narrative-corrective-action-creative-investmentremarks-secretary-arne-du>
- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 23(3), 197-203. Doi:1007/BF00990785
- Eckel, P., & Kezar, A. (2011). Presidents leading. *In American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges*. John Hopkins University Press.
- Esters, L. L., & Strayhorn, T. L. (2013). Demystifying the contributions of public land-grant historically black colleges and universities: Voices of HBCU presidents. *Negro Educational Review*, 64(1-4), 119-134.
- Esters, L. T., Washington, A., Gasman, M., Commodore, F., O'Neal, B., Freeman, Jr., S., & Jimenez, C. D. (2016). Effective leadership: A toolkit for the 21st-century historically Black college and university president. Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions [https://cmsi.gse.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/MSI\\_LdrshpRprt\\_R3.pdf](https://cmsi.gse.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/MSI_LdrshpRprt_R3.pdf)
- Evans, A. L., Evans, V., Evans, A. M. (2002). Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUS). *Education*, 123(1), 3-16.

- Fisher, J. L., & Koch, J. V. (2004). *The entrepreneurial college president*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Fitzpatrick, J. C. (1992). *An examination of career mobility patterns and social origins of American college and university presidents* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Hofstra University.
- Freeman, S., Commodore, F., Gasman, M., & Carter, C. (2016). Leaders wanted! The skills expected and needed for a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century historically Black colleges and university presidency. *Journal of Black Studies*, 47(6) 570-591.
- Freeman, S., Gasman, M. (2014). The characteristics of historically black college and university presidents and their role in grooming the next generation of leaders. *Teacher College Records*, 116(7), 1–34.
- Freeman Jr, S., & Kochan, F. K. (2013). University presidents' perspectives of the knowledge and competencies needed in 21st century higher education leadership. *Journal of Educational Leadership in Action*, 1(1), 1-21.
- Freeman, S., Palmer, R., (2020). Exploring perceptions of effective leadership practices of presidents of historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of Minority & Underrepresented Progress*. 4(2), 207-228. doi:  
<https://doi.org/10.32674/jump.v4i2.2461>.
- Gasman, M. (2007a). Swept under the rug? A historiography of gender and Black colleges. *American Education Research Journal*, 44(4), 760-805.
- Gasman, M. (2007b). Truth, generalizations, and stigmas: An analysis of the media's coverage of morris brown college and Black colleges overall. *Gender & Society*, 34(1– 2), 911–934.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243219869311>

- Gasman, M. (2007c). *Envisioning Black colleges: A history of the United Negro College Fund*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gasman, M. (2008). Survey says....Black colleges need to complete national surveys. *Diverse Issues in Education*, 24(14), 36.
- Gasman, M. (2011). Perceptions of Black college presidents: Sorting through stereotypes and reality to gain a complex picture. *American Education Research Journal*, 48, 836-870.
- Gasman, M (2011b). *Walter Kimbrough and the next generation of Black college presidents*. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Gasman, M. (2013). The changing face of historically Black colleges and universities. Center for MSIs, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania.
- Gasman, M., Baez, B., & Turner, C. S. V. (2008). *Understanding minority-serving institutions*. State University of New York Press.
- Gasman, M., & Bowman, N. (2011). How to paint a better portrait of HBCUs. *Academe*. Retrieved from <https://www.aaup.org/article/how-paint-better-portrait-hbcus#.V0ZgZ2OPmFI>
- Gasman, M., & Commodore, F. (2014). The female Black college president. *HBCU Lifestyle*. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>.
- Gasman, M., & Nguyen, T. (2014). Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs): Leading our nation's efforts to improve the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pipeline. *Texas Education Review*, 2(1), 75– 89.
- Gigliotti, R. A., & Ruben, B. D. (2017). Preparing higher education leaders: A conceptual, strategic, and operational approach. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 16(1), 96–114. <https://doi.org/10.12806/v16/i1/t1>



- Hamluk, B. (2014). *The impact of mentoring on the ascension of senior student affairs officers to the college presidency* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The George Washington University, DC.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Routledge.
- Hardy, K., Williams, M., Bullington, K., & Commodore, F. (2021). Preparing to fill the leadership gap: The challenges facing women leaders in mid-level positions at urban community colleges. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*.  
<https://doi.org/10.32873/unl.dc.jwel.202>
- Harper, Shaun R., Lori D. Patton, and Ontario S Wooden. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *Journal of Higher Education*, 80(4): 389–414.
- Harris, M., & Ellis, K., M. (2018). Exploring involuntary presidential turnover in American higher education. *The Journal of American Higher Education*, 89(3), 294-317.
- Harvey, A. M., Harvey, W. B., & King, M. (2004). The impact of the Brown v. Board of Education decision on postsecondary participation of African Americans. *Journal of Negro Education*, 73(3), 328-340.
- Henderson, J. (2001). HBCUs will still have a role to play in the 21st century. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*.
- Henry, S.M. (2009). *A study of historically Black college and university (HBCU) presidents* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Union Institute & University.

- Herring, P.M. (2010). *Historically Black college and university presidents: Personal and professional challenges, career paths, and leadership characteristics* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Fayetteville State University.
- Holmes, S. L. (2004). An overview of African American college presidents: A game of two steps forward, one step backward, and standing still. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 73(1), 21–39
- Humberd, B., & Rouse, E. (2015). Seeing you in me and me in you: Personal identification in the phases of mentoring relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(3), 435-455. doi.org/10.5465/amr.2013.0203.
- Karlin-Resnick, J. (2004, J). Historically Black barber scotia loses accreditation [Web log post]. Retrieved from The Chronicle of Higher Education website: <http://chronicle.com/article/Historically-Black/13529>
- Keohane, N. O. (2006). Higher ground: *Ethics and leadership in the modern university*. Duke University Press.
- Kimbrough, W. M. (2017, July 8). Trends of the HBCU presidency demand Attention. HBCU Digest. Retrieved March 31, 2018, from <https://hbcudigest.com/trends-of-the-hbcu-presidency-demand-attention/>
- Knippelmeyer, S. A., & Torraco, R. J. (2007). Mentoring as a developmental tool for higher education. Paper presented at Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference in The Americas, Indianapolis, IN.
- Kram, K. E. (1980). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in managerial careers* (Doctoral dissertation, Yale University).
- Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management Journal*,

- 26(4), 608-625.
- Kram, K. E. (1985). Improving the mentoring process. *Training & Development Journal*, 39(4), 40–43.
- Kram, K. E., & Isabella, L. A. (1985). Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 28(1), 110-132.
- Kramer, G. L., & White, M. T. (1982). Developing a faculty mentoring program: An experiment. *NACADA Journal Special Issue*, 2, 47-58.
- Kutchner, W., & Kleschick, P. (2016). Mentoring in higher education administration. *College & University*, 91(4), 41-46.
- Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303>
- Levinson, D. J., Darrow, D., Levinson, M., Klein, E. B., & McKee, B. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. Ballantine.
- Lomotey, K., & Covington, M. (2017). HBCUs: Valuable—yet substantially impaired—institutions. In R. T. Palmer, D. C. Maramba, A. T. Arroyo, T. O. Allen, J. T. F. Boykin, & M. Lee Jr. (Eds.), *Effective leadership at minority-serving institutions: Exploring opportunities and challenges for leadership* (pp. 21– 45). Routledge.
- Louis, D., & Freeman, S. (2018). Mentoring and the passion for propagation: Narratives of two Black male faculty members who emerged from higher education and student affairs leadership. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, 9, 19–39
- Lunsford, L. G., Crisp, G., Dolan, E. L., & Wuetherick, B. (2017). *Mentoring in Higher Education*. Sage Publications.

- Madden, S. R. (2008). *On becoming a woman leader: Learning from the experiences of university presidents*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mbagekwe, C. O. W. (2006). *The future of HBCU presidents: Ten presidents speak out*. McFarland Press.
- McDade, S. A. (2005). Teacher-pupil: The challenging relationships of mentors and protégés. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 29(9–10), 759–781.
- McFarlin, C. H., Crittenden, B. J., & Ebbers, L. H. (1999). Background factors common among outstanding community college presidents. *Community College Review*, 27(3), 19-33.
- McKinsey, E. (2016). Faculty mentoring undergraduates: The nature, development, and benefits of mentoring relationships. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 4(1):25-39.  
<https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.4.1.5>.
- Merriam, S.B., Thomas, T.K., & Zeph, C.P. (1987). Mentoring in higher education: What we know now. *The Review of Higher Education* 11(2), 199-210.  
doi:10.1353/rhe.1987.0004.
- Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Metros, S. E., & Yang, C. (2006). The importance of mentors, in cultivating careers. *Golden, C. Cultivating Careers: Professional development for campus IT*. Educause.
- Minor, J. T. (2004). Decision making in historically Black colleges and universities: Defining the Governance Context. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 73(1).
- Mitchell, T. (2016, September 15). *FAMU President Elmira Mangum steps down with six months remaining on contract*. Florida Times-Union.

- <https://eu.jacksonville.com/story/news/politics/2016/09/15/famu-president-elmira-mangum-steps-down-six-months-remaining-contract/15724406007/>
- Mishra, J. (2007). *Becoming president: Patterns of professional mobility of African American university presidents*. University Press of America.
- Moore, K. (1983). The role of mentors in developing leaders for academe. *Educational Record*, 63, 22-28.
- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Muhammad, J. (2011). Despite naysayers, Black Colleges still relevant. *The final call*.  
[http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National\\_News\\_2/article\\_7578.shtml](http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_7578.shtml).
- Museus, S., Ledesma, M., & Parker, T. (2015). Racism and racial equity in higher education. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 42(1). Wiley.
- Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 8(2), 90–97.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2>
- Nichols, J. C. (2004). Unique characteristics, leadership styles, and management of historically Black colleges and universities, *Innovative Higher Education*, 28(3), 219–229.
- Oikelome, G. (2017). Pathway to the president: The perceived impact of identity structures on the journey experiences of women college presidents. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(3): 23–40.
- Palmer, R. T., & Freeman Jr., S. (2019). Examining the perceptions of unsuccessful leadership practices for presidents at historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 13(3), 254–263. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000120>

- Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education, 51*, 315-342
- Phillips, I. P. (2002). Shared governance on Black college campuses. *Academe, 88*(4), 50.
- Poe, J. (2012, November 27). *ASU president Joseph Silver placed on administrative leave*  
[https://www.al.com/montgomery/2012/11/breaking\\_asu\\_president\\_joseph.html](https://www.al.com/montgomery/2012/11/breaking_asu_president_joseph.html)
- Porteous, D. J., & Machin, A. (2018). The lived experience of first year undergraduate student nurses: A hermeneutic phenomenological study. *Nurse Education Today, 60*, 56-61.
- Price, G.N. (1998). Black colleges and universities: The road to Philistia? *Negro Educational Review, 49*, 9-22.
- Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. Sage
- Redd, K. E. (1998). *Historically Black colleges and universities*. Jossey-Bass.
- Reis, T. C. (2015). *Leadership traits of successful women university presidents: A qualitative study* (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Reiners, G. (2012). Understanding the differences between Husserl's (descriptive) and Heidegger's (interpretive) phenomenological research. *Journal of Nursing & Care, 01*(05). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-1168.1000119>
- Renne, R. R. (1960). Land-grant institutions, the public, and the public Interest. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 331*(1), 46-51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/000271626033100109>
- Roebuck, J., & Murty, K. (1993). *Historically Black colleges and universities: Their place in American higher education*. Praeger.
- Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions. (n.d). <https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/>

Sands, R., Parson, L.A., & Duane, J. (1991). Faculty mentoring faculty in a public university.

*The Journal of Higher Education*, 62:2, 174-193. doi: 10.1080/00221546.1991.11774114

Samayoa, A., Stolzenberg, E. B., Zimmerman, H. B., & Gasman, M. (2018). Understanding

black students' social agency at historically black colleges: Data from a National Survey.

*Frontiers in Education*, 3(94). <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00094>

Searby, L., Ballenger, J., & Tripses, J. (2015). Climbing the ladder, holding the ladder: The

mentoring experiences of higher education female leaders. *Advancing Women in*

*Leadership*, 35, 98–107. [http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl\\_wordpress/](http://advancingwomen.com/awl/awl_wordpress/)

Schexnider, A. J. (2013). *Saving Black colleges: Leading change in a complex organization*.

Palgrave Macmillan

Schexnider, A. (2017). Governance and the future of Black colleges. *Inside Higher Education*.

Retrieved 12/14/18 from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/12/20/struggling-hbcus-must-consider-new-options-survival-opinion>.

Schexnider, A., & Ezell, J. (2010). Leadership, governance, and sustainability at Black colleges

and universities. *Trusteeship*, 18(3), 25–28.

Scott, D. W., & Hines, R. (2014). Rethinking and reframing leadership of historically Black

colleges and universities: A distributed perspective. *Creative Education*, 5, 132-139.

Seymour, A. (2008). Political pitfalls for presidents: an uneasy environment exists today for

presidents of public HBCUs, leading to a revolving door of higher education executives.

*Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. [https://www.diverseeducation.com/leadership-](https://www.diverseeducation.com/leadership-policy/article/15086616/political-pitfalls-for-presidents)

[policy/article/15086616/political-pitfalls-for-presidents](https://www.diverseeducation.com/leadership-policy/article/15086616/political-pitfalls-for-presidents)

Sinanan, A. (2016). The value and necessity of mentoring African American college students at

PWI's. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 9(8), 155-166.

- Somers, K., & Leichter, K. (2017). Presidential leadership at MSIs: Challenges and strategies. *Educational Challenges at Minority Serving Institutions* (pp. 18-35). Routledge.
- Strayhorn, T. L., & Johnson, R. M. (2014). Why are all the White students sitting together in college? Impact of Brown v. Board of Education on cross racial interactions among Blacks and Whites. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 83(3), 385–399.  
doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.3.0385
- Sternberg, R. J., Davis, E., Mason, A. C., Smith, R. V., Vitter, J. S., & Wheatley, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Academic leadership in higher education*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Stevens, M.A. (2000). Morrill (Land Grant College) Act of 1862.
- Stewart, P. C. (2012, November 29). *New Alabama State President Placed on Leave*. Diverse: Issues In Higher Education.  
<https://www.diverseeducation.com/home/article/15092447/new-alabama-state-president-placed-on-leave>
- Strickland, H. (2009). Still striving: Trustees and presidents of historically Black colleges and universities unprecedented dialogue about governance and accreditation. Southern Education Foundation.
- Stripling, J., & Fuller, A. (2011). Presidents defend their pay as public colleges slash budgets. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 57(31), A1–A20.
- Stuart, R. C. (2016, September 16). *Mangum Out as Florida A&M University President*. Diverse: Issues In Higher Education.  
<https://www.diverseeducation.com/students/article/15099095/mangum-out-as-florida-am-university-president>



- Suggs, E. (2019). 18 HBCUs that didn't make it. *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*. Retrieved from <https://www.myajc.com/news/local/hbcusthat-didn-make/BnmRJgnxwnBV8yXqqtswcP/>
- Tata, S. S. (1980). *A study of the occupational origins and career patterns of presidents of Black colleges and universities in the United States* (Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations database.
- Tenner, E. (2004). The pitfalls of academic mentorships. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50(49), B7– B10. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Pitfalls-of-AcademicMe/1759>.
- Thompson, D. (1973). *Private Black colleges at the crossroads*. Greenwood.
- Tobolowsky, B. G., Outcalt, C. L., & McDonough, P. M. (2005). The role of HBCUs in the college choice process for African Americans in California. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74, 63-75.
- Tolliver, D & Murry, J. (2017). Management skills for the contemporary college president: A critical review. *Journal of Research on the College President*, 1(3). 9-17.
- Turner, C. S. V. (2007). Pathways to the presidency: Biographical sketches of women of color firsts. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77, 1-38.
- Umpstead, R.; Hoffman, H.; Pehrsson, D.E. (2015). Building leadership from within the ranks: Leadership fellow initiative. *Advancing Women Leadership*, 35, 144–152.
- VanDerLinden, K. (2005) Learning to play the game: Professional development and mentoring. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 29, 9-10, 729-743, DOI: 10.1080/10668920591006575
- Van Manen, M. (2016). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*, 2nd edition. Routledge.

- Walker, M. (2008, January 24). Accreditation probation for country's two largest HBCUs [Web log post]. Retrieved from the Diverse Issues in Higher Education website: <http://diverseeducation.com/article/10537/#>
- Wheatle, K.I.E., & Commodore, F. (2019). Reaching back to move forward: The historic and contemporary role of student activism in the development and implementation of higher education policy. *The Review of Higher Education* 42(5), 5-35.
- Willie, C. V., & MacLeish, M. Y. (1978). *The priorities of presidents of black colleges*. Teachers College Press.
- Wilson, J. (2012). Which HBCUs will exist and why in the 21st century? Speech given at the Economic Empowerment Institute Annual Meeting, North Carolina, USA. VV
- Winn, J., Bryan, K. C., & Tyler, A. L. (2018). The role of HBCUs in tackling issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In *Underserved Populations at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Wright, B. C. T. (2020, February 22). *Texas Southern Firing Draws Attention to HBCU Presidents' High Rate Of Turnover*. NewsOne. <https://newsone.com/3903361/hbcu-presidents-high-turnover-rate/>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. SAGE.
- Young, P. R. (2008). HBCUs and shared governance. *American Institute of Higher Education*, 1(2), 257-263
- Yousefi, H., Abedi, H. A., Yarmohammadian, M. H., & Elliott, D. (2009). Comfort as a basic need in hospitalized patients in Iran: a hermeneutic phenomenology study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(9), 1891-189

Zachary, L. (2002). The role of teacher as mentor. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 93*, 27-38.

Zuckerman, H. (1996). *Scientific elite: Nobel laureates in the United States*. Transaction Publishers.

**APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



5/4/2022

**IRB Approval of Minimal Risk (MR) Protocol**

PI: Jacolahn D. Dudley

Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

IRB Protocol #: 2022-0415

Study Title: *What's Mentoring Got to Do With it: Examining the Role of Mentoring in the Success of**Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Presidents.***Effective Approval: 5/4/2022**

The IRB has approved the above referenced submission in accordance with applicable regulations and/or UTA's IRB Standard Operating Procedures.

**Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor Responsibilities**

All personnel conducting human subject research must comply with UTA's [IRB Standard Operating Procedures](#) and [RA-PO4, Statement of Principles and Policies Regarding Human Subjects in Research](#). Important items for PIs and Faculty Advisors are as follows:

- **\*\*Notify [Regulatory Services](#) of proposed, new, or changing funding source\*\***
- Fulfill research oversight responsibilities, [IV.F and IV.G](#).
- Obtain approval prior to initiating changes in research or personnel, [IX.B](#).
- Report Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) and Unanticipated Problems (UPs), [IX.C](#).
- Fulfill Continuing Review requirements, if applicable, [IX.A](#).
- Protect human subject data ([XV](#)) and maintain records ([XXI.C](#)).
- Maintain [HSP](#) (3 years), [GCP](#) (3 years), and [RCR](#) (4 years) training as applicable.

**APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

Hello,

My name is Jacolahn Dudley and I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas at Arlington. I am conducting a qualitative research study on the lived experiences of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) presidents who were engaged in a mentoring relationship during their presidency. The purpose of this study is to explore the role mentoring plays, if any, in the successful tenure of HBCU presidents.

For this study, I am seeking participants who are current or former HBCU presidents who served as a president for a minimum of three years. Additionally, to qualify for this study participants will need to have been mentored during the presidency. Mentoring is defined as a process in which a less experienced professional receives guidance, support, relationship building, and career advancement advice from a more seasoned professional. If you believe you meet the criteria, I welcome you to participate in this crucial research study. Eligible participants will partake in an interview which will last between 45-60 minutes (depending on schedule and availability) and will take place via Zoom or Microsoft Teams depending on your preference.

During the interviews participants will be asked to reflect on their experiences as an HBCU presidents and how mentoring played a role in their success. All data and personal information collected during the interview process will remain confidential. Each of the study participants will be given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

If you are interested in participating in this study or know a fellow HBCU president who may be willing to participate, please contact Jacolahn Dudley at [jacolahn.dudley@mavs.uta.edu](mailto:jacolahn.dudley@mavs.uta.edu).

Thank You,

Jacolahn D. Dudley  
PhD. Candidate  
The University of Texas at Arlington

**APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM**





## The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA)

### Info I. Informed Consent for Minimal Risk Studies with Adults

My name is Jacolahn Dudley, and I am asking you to participate in a UT Arlington research study titled, “What’s Mentoring Got to Do With it: Examining the Role of Mentoring in the Success of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Presidents.” This research study is about [exploring the role mentoring plays in the success of HBCU presidents]. You can choose to participate in this research study if you are at least 18 years old and [are a current president of an HBCU who has been in the role for three years or more and was mentored prior to assuming the presidency].

Reasons why you might want to participate in this study include [ if you want to contribute to the limited amount of literature available on HBCU presidents, but you might not want to participate if [you believe you have not experienced the phenomenon being study. Your decision about whether to participate is entirely up to you. If you decide not to be in the study, there won’t be any punishment or penalty; whatever your choice, there will be no impact on any benefits or services that you would normally receive. Even if you choose to begin the study, you can also change your mind and quit at any time without any consequences.

If you decide to participate in this research study, the list of activities that I will ask you to complete for the research are a 45- 60-minute interview session. There should only be one interview session, but there could be a follow up interview if any more information is needed. Although you probably won’t experience any personal benefits from participating the study activities are not expected to pose any additional risks beyond those that you would normally experience in your regular everyday life or during routine medical / psychological visits. However, some of the questions that I will ask may be about sensitive or uncomfortable topics

You will not be paid for completing this study. There are no alternative options to this research project.

The research team is committed to protecting your rights and privacy as a research subject. We may publish or present the results, but your name will not be used. All participants in this study will be given a pseudonym to protect identities. [While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records as described here and to the extent permitted by law. If you have questions about the study, you can contact me at [Jacolahn.dudley@mavs.uta.edu]. For questions about your rights or to report complaints, contact the UTA Research Office at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

You are indicating your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning the survey.

**APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

## Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself
  1. What is your educational background?
2. What led you to pursue a career in higher education?
  1. Did anyone influence your higher education journey?
3. What was your first administrative role in higher education?
  1. How did you ascend to that administrative role?
4. At what point in your career did you decide that you wanted to be a college president?
  1. What was the most significant factor that led to your decision?
  2. Did someone assist you in navigating that decision?
5. Describe your current role?
  1. What does a typical day look like for you?
6. Prior to assuming the presidency did you receive any form of leadership training or development?
7. Prior to assuming the presidency did you feel prepared for the role?
  1. What specific factors or indicators made you feel that you were prepared to be a college president?
8. What does success look like to you as an HBCU president?
  1. Do you believe you have achieved success as an HBCU president, why or why not?
9. Did having a mentor help you in reaching success as an HBCU president? Why or why not?
10. What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced in your role as an HBCU president? How did you overcome them?
11. What are some skills or leadership characteristics that you have developed throughout your tenure that you did not learn from your mentor?
12. What skillset and characteristics do you believe all HBCU presidents should possess?
13. Would you recommend aspiring HBCU presidents have a mentor? Why or why not?
14. Are you currently mentoring any aspiring HBCU presidents? If so, how were those relationships developed?