HBCUS "WE CAN'T BREATHE" THINK TANK

HBCU'S "WE CAN'T BREATHE" THINK TANK" REPORT

CHAired BY

DR. CIHAN COBANOGLU
University of South Florida

DR. DEANNE WILLIAMS-BRYANT
Bethune-Cookman University

UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA M3 CENTER
Muma College of Business

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HBCU@M3CENTER.ORG

PARTICIPANTS

- Abukhalifeh Alaa
- Nichole Amair
- Brian Barker
- Ernest P. Boger
- David Bonner
- Sandra Brown
- Tony L. Bryant
- Po-Ju Chen
- LaBrent E. Chrite
- June E. Clarke
- Seden Doğan
- Arlene Garrick
- Rajat Gera
- Yemane Gidey
- Brenda Groen
- Michael Hooper
- Giti Javidi
- G.Saravana Kumar
- Donald Lacey
- Chapa Loreto
- Narda Malcolm
- Charles Mallory
- Cynthia Mayo
- Ahmed Mohamed
- Meghan Muldoon
- Godwin-Charles A. Ogbeide
- Juan Alberto Palacios
- Tyla S. Plowden
- Ruth Smith
- Abdul Sofique
- Janice Q. Taylor
- Abraham Terrah
- Sergey Tikhonov
- Evangeline E. Timbang
- Ivan Turnipseed
- Sandra Vernon-Jackson
- Jiang Wang
- Doris Yates
- Victor B. Younger

**SOCIAL INJUSTICE
IMPACT ON
HOSPITALITY &
TOURISM
EDUCATION -
CREATING A
CLIMATE FOR
POSITIVE CHANGE**

INTRODUCTION

This was the start of a very important conversation specific to the state of hospitality education at the Historically Predominant Black Colleges and Universities and the minority serving institutions. There currently exists 99 HBCUs with more than 228,000 students enrolled.

Among those institutions, 56 are private while 51 are public. In addition, 87 of those are four-year universities while the rest (20) are two-year institutions. In the past, more than 80 percent of all black college graduates have been trained at these HBCUs. Today, HBCUs enroll 20 percent of black undergraduates.

However, HBCUs award 40 percent of baccalaureate degrees earned by black college students. In this context, HBCU with hospitality programs that graduate African Americans have heavily impacted the business of hospitality in the country.

Moreover, Dr Ivan Turnipseed nuanced that although 20% of the people who work in hospitality are African American, only one in 65 leadership positions at the director level and above goes to a black person (2020). This amounts to 0.02%, a minuscule amount of growth and stymied professional advancement of the minority group.

The adversity faced by minorities in the US has amplified during the pandemic. Social injustice, a recurring theme in American politics is under the spotlight again, fueled by the Black Lives Matter movement. Discrimination in policing and retaliatory protesting with violence is a big issue and the racial inequities are more defined, in addition to the fact that we are in the midst of a very important election. The climate of social injustice has definitely exacerbated political polarization in the US. Additionally, Dr. E.P. Boger reminds us that people of color have to work twice as hard to get half as far.

THE GOALS OF THIS THINK TANK WERE:

- Reflect the impact of institutional racism
- Reflect on how the industry should support hospitality management degree programs through an evaluation of the relationship between corporations and institutions
- Evaluate the value and future of HBCU's Hospitality Programs and Hospitality Management degrees as the landscape changes and the recruitment conundrum intensifies.

I. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CORPORATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS: HOW COULD INDUSTRY SUPPORT HBCU HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS.

The discussion regarding the relationship between hospitality companies and educational institutions and how industry should support HBCU hospitality management programs (HBCU-HMPs) was primarily facilitated and documented by Michael Hooper, CHA, General Manager – Miami Airport at Hilton Worldwide and Ivan Turnipseed, PhD, Professor and Coordinator of Hotel, Restaurant & Tourism Management at Cheyney University of Pennsylvania and President of the HBCU Hospitality Management Consortium.

While this report references the wide range of issues, challenges, and solutions generated during a designated breakout session and subsequent whole-group discussion, it highlights the following 10 emergent strategies for addressing the needs of HBCU-HMPs and helping them contribute more robustly to the African American community and to entry-, mid-, and upper-level management as well as entrepreneurial leadership in our industry.

1. ENCOURAGE ALL MAJOR HOSPITALITY CORPORATIONS AND MANAGEMENT COMPANIES TO BECOME DUES-PAID MEMBERS OF THE HBCU HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT CONSORTIUM.

According to its bylaws, the central mission of the HBCU Hospitality Management Consortium is to assist HBCU members in planning, developing, implementing and sustaining robust and high-quality programs that produce competitive, marketable graduates. While the "purpose of the organization is to establish a network of educators from HBCUs with Hospitality Management or related programs for the purpose of fulfilling the mission statement", much of its capacity is the result of generous human and material support from industry and other external individuals and partners.

As the Consortium advocates for roughly a dozen HBCU-HMPs that annually produce an average of about 10 Black or African American graduates each (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), Consortium records show a range of 5 - 30 graduates among these same schools. This is a powerful vector of engagement and it is vital that organizations seeking to productively impact this targeted population become part of this ongoing conversation with key faculty leaders. In addition, while companies can immediately impact the HBCU-HM Consortium via a nominal annual corporate membership fee, there are countless opportunities to assess and identify areas and issues of more significant engagement.

2. ENSURE THAT ALL HBCU-HMPS HAVE AN INDUSTRY ADVISORY BOARD.

The HBCU-HM Consortium should reach out to determine whether all HBCU-HMPs have a formal industry advisory board. While those with existing boards can focus on strengthening them, any institution without one can be provided with the requisite assistance. Industry advisory board rationales, benefits, and suggestions offered by discussants include the following:

- To promote broader industry participation in hospitality educational programs
- To render current students more aware of industry opportunities and heighten the profile of hospitality management programs on campus
- To highlight career opportunities off campus and encourage a wider variety of prospective students to enroll in and graduate from HBCU-HMPs
- To increase externship, internship, part-time, full-time, and professional employment opportunities for hospitality students and graduates
- To facilitate regular campus visits from industry professionals to share their experiences and discuss the requisite skills for success
- To solicit involvement in curriculum development to help ensure information is relevant and students are educated in ways that meet industry expectations
- To foster informal industry engagement via a variety of campus events such as dinners and other activities where questions can be posed in more comfortable settings
- To provide a lobbying mechanism to support program initiatives to administration and industry.
- To enhance HBCU-HMP and industry collaboration to help ensure student expectations are realistic and industry is providing suitable career opportunities
- To engage industry in some aspect of every hospitality course from planning to guest lecturing, hosting a field trip, and/or covering textbook costs
- To bring together faculty with corporate, government, and other local stakeholders
- To establish relationships that can generate valuable guidance and translate into local funding support for programs, projects, and initiatives.
- To increase student involvement in industry events

3. PROMOTE AWARENESS THAT HBCU-HMPS CAN PROVIDE PAID RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY TO HOSPITALITY COMPANIES TO HELP SOLVE PRESSING ISSUES, EXPLORE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES, AND COLLABORATE ACROSS A RANGE OF OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORT AREAS.

HBCU-HMPs should strategize to inform industry and others of their ability to deliver paid hospitality research and consultancy to address complex problems, examine potential opportunities, and add value in such areas as finance, technology, food and beverage, rooms, sales and marketing, meeting planning, revenue management, human resources, asset management, engineering, artificial intelligence, data management, and diversity and inclusion, etc.

4. THE HBCU-HM CONSORTIUM SHOULD SEEK SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS FROM CORPORATIONS, MANAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP GROUPS, AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS REGARDING OFFERING INTERNSHIPS/JOBS TO ALL INTERESTED HBCU-HM STUDENTS.

Given the potential universe of concerned hospitality organizations and the limited number of HBCU-HM students not already engaged in industry work, the HBCU-HM Consortium ought to serve as a liaison in securing full employment. Major corporations and management companies are members, the Consortium should systematically track and articulate occupational need, connect students and recent grads with recruiters, and thus foster applicable placement.

5. DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR HBCU-HMPS TO CONTACT NUMEROUS HOSPITALITY CORPORATIONS, MANAGEMENT COMPANIES, OWNERSHIP GROUPS, AND OTHERS REGARDING SUPPORT.

The HBCU-HM Consortium should work with knowledgeable parties to develop a comprehensive target list and then draft a letter extolling the virtues of the Consortium and HBCU-HMPs and inviting applicable individuals and entities to become dues-paying members. The HBCU-HM Consortium should consider adding a Corporate Engagement position to its board. This individual could also be tasked with identifying available grant funding in addition to coordinating Consortium and individual HBCU-HMP fundraising efforts.

6. FORMALLY RECOGNIZE TOP COMPANIES THAT ENGAGE HBCU-HMPS AND PLACE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES IN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

The HBCU-HM Consortium or another entity could develop or adapt an existing scorecard or set of metrics focused, for example, on industry financial support, internship/job placement, and campus/community engagement. The resultant data could be used to recognize top performers in the different categories, celebrate key players, or simply award a star, badge, or other virtual distinction to reward highly engaged supporters while encouraging others to become involved or participate at higher levels.

7. FOLLOW UP ON AN OFFER TO CONNECT THE HBCU HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT CONSORTIUM WITH SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP REVAMP THE ORGANIZATION’S WEBSITE.

In response to a general appeal during the “We Can’t Breathe” Think Tank from HBCU-HM Consortium President Ivan Turnipseed regarding the need for assistance, Dr. Cihan Cobanoglu graciously offered to connect the group with someone who can expertly address the organization’s website. The Consortium should follow up accordingly.

8. HBCU-HMPS SHOULD ENGAGE IN ONGOING CURRICULUM REVIEW TO HELP ENSURE THEIR OFFERINGS ARE CURRENT AND MEET INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS.

The issue of a contemporary and resonant academic curriculum surfaced repeatedly and produced recommendations such as the following:

Include entrepreneurship preparation and exposure to support students and graduates interested in starting their own businesses. Embed common core courses during the first two years to instill fundamental values and critical soft skills. Interview instructors and company representatives via ongoing hospitality research regarding academic requirements, industry expectations, and curriculum design and evaluation. Incorporate regular industry engagement (e.g., guest lecturers and presenters, field trips, job shadowing/externships/internships, government and industry events, extracurricular events and activities, and student-to-student discussion regarding industry experiences.) Utilize HBCU-HM advisory boards to engage diverse groups of stakeholders and help ensure curricula are current and relevant. Invite alumni to share their professional journeys during classes or extracurricular events. Ideally, industry should be involved in some aspect of every hospitality course from planning to guest lecturing, hosting a field trip, and/or covering textbook costs. Employ faculty with previous industry experience and provide faculty internships and other ongoing engagement to help ensure students receive current content.

9. HBCU-HMPs AND THE HBCU-HM CONSORTIUM SHOULD QUANTIFY THEIR ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATION OF BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICANS, TRACK THE INDUSTRY PROGRESSION OF THEIR GRADUATES, AND INVITE ALUMNI TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH STUDENTS.

Discussants encouraged the Consortium to be clearer about the overall enrollment and graduation rates of blacks in HBCU-HMPs to potentially strengthen the call for industry support. And while alumni were cited as great resources for current students, there was concern regarding the impact of ubiquitously long hours and challenging working conditions on the percentage of graduates that stay in the industry long term. HBCU-HMPs should track graduates to better understand who remains, who leaves, and why.

10. INDUSTRY SHOULD PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AND FOSTER KNOWLEDGE BY APPOINTING BLACK BOARD MEMBERS, INCORPORATING THE VOICE OF BLACK HOSPITALITY EDUCATION, OFFERING FACULTY INTERNSHIPS/EXTERNSHIPS, AND PATIENTLY TRAINING HBCU STUDENTS.

Concerns regarding diversity and inclusion were highlighted via The Castell Project, Inc. (2020) report that Blacks constitute 20% of hospitality employees but only 1 in 65 executives. In addition to partnering with HBCUs to supercharge the student-to-professional pipeline and provide internship/externship and other experiential opportunities for faculty, participants urge leading hospitality organizations to appoint more Black board members to diversify decision making at the top. A novel suggestion was to have HBCU-HMP educators serve as non-voting members of corporate boards. An innovative suggestion was to tap the inherent cultural/ethnic sensitivity and Hospitality/Tourism industry expertise of HBCU-HMP educators by inviting them to serve as non-voting members of corporate boards. Finally, there was a call for industry to embrace the joint responsibility to generously train, groom, and mentor students rather than expecting them to exhibit the knowledge and expertise of seasoned professionals upon arrival.

Ultimately, it is clear that a productive relationship between forward-thinking hospitality companies and HBCU-HMPs is foundational to the placement, progression, and permanence of current and future students and graduates in industry. Also while the requisite relationships have not yet been established, the 10 strategies delineated above hold great promise. Indeed, effective implementation of this plan, which resulted from the multifaceted discussions of a diverse group of industry professionals and educators, can significantly boost the managerial and entrepreneurial prospects of Blacks or African Americans at all levels of the hospitality business.

II. Institutional Racism: Identification and Amelioration

How do we define institutionalized racism? Think tank members assessed for example that one lens from which to evaluate the occurrence of institutional racism is the one of pain, presented through personal experiences. Several group members had personal experiences as to being considered a member of a group, not an individual, and being assessed not just on their individual qualities, but on their color. They explained having been turned down for jobs due to inappropriate reasons, and that the racist bias was covered up with code words. For instance, one of the discussants was referring to an appraisal procedure for being recruited in an academic institution.

The discussant explained the appraisal had not mentioned color, but referred to e.g. less publications, not from an established (white) university, hiding the real reason, color. The discussants also stressed on the fact that on top of color, some people may even be more disadvantaged, due to the fact of being female, belonging to a certain religion or the LGBT community. Thus, agreement was reached that institutionalized racism occurs when people of color are systematically not being recognized for their individual qualities, that this is condoned, business-as-usual or internalized by everyone in an institution.

COMBATTING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

There was a discussion among discussants whether the change should start on the individual level (bottom-up) or on the institutional/policy level (top-down). It was mentioned on one hand, that there might be a policy, but without enforcement of this policy, it is almost impossible to bring about change. Conversely, as an individual one should not hide behind the rules but act responsibly yourself. Speak up when you see it happen, address people, don't think somebody else should take care of it. Discussants also tried to assess the underlying motives of institutional racism, expressing the need to have a more open discussion in political sphere, but also stated that there needs to be purging of those unwilling to learn and change. A side remark to the discussion was that systemic racism also plays a significant role in tourism business, among entrepreneurs. For example, a discussant mentioned that most beautiful beaches in the Caribbean are for tourists only, and not for the (colored) locals, emphasizing the need to support black businesses to support change.

Think tank discussants all urged moving away from the status quo. Part of addressing the status quo may be that of fear, risk taking, and assumptions about competence. Fear may be that of management and their lack of confidence in the staff hired and whether they feel the person of color has the requisite skills to move up in the industry. The risk taking may be as Dr. Grubbs suggests in her article in the New England Journal of Medicine "...institutions to prove their statements aren't just pretty words by acting to create diversity, equity, and inclusion that matter" (2020) The pretty words of diversity, equity, and inclusion seem to be in the forefront of the decision making when it comes to the promotion of people of color. The fear or risk taking beyond the status quo, and whether the efforts will warrant the necessary outcomes with the advancement of a person of color was also a point of much discussion! Historically, it seems that management "settles for" versus taking risks when it comes to the promotion of people of color regardless of credentials, skills, and abilities (Yates, 2020). Possible solutions to combat institutional racism provided by discussants were:

A course that will educate people into what race means, what racism means, how to identify it. Debate, simulations and role play were mentioned as methods. The course should make people familiar with situations with overt or covert (institutionalized) racism, let them experience what it feels like to be treated in a racist manner, and provide them tools to address such situations in real life.

A certification system like the UNWTO TedQual, a certificate that shows ‘the existence of transparent mechanisms for the selection of the faculty and favorable conditions for their professional development. Such a certification could be used to show potential students and faculty to what extent a university is embracing people of all color, and not just based on promotional materials, but on the real policies and execution of these policies. It would signify that a university is actively against (institutionalized) racism practices.

III. VALUE AND FUTURE OF HBCU'S HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT DEGREES IN VIEW OF THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Everyone can foresee the post COVID financial hardships in the tourism and hospitality business worldwide, which consists of persistent decline for airlines, railways, cruise ships, travel operators and all lodging organizations including hotels and tourism products. It has not only affected the present operations but there is no hope for travel and hospitality sectors to rebound towards normal even after a year. These repercussions will certainly lead to major losses and will require modifications to the operating procedures to sustain.

The situation has forced companies to change the way businesses are traditionally operated and managed; the impact is visible across sectors, from manufacturing to goods, from products to services. In the scenario where industry is going through radical changes, educators also need to change with change to make students ready as per the industry requirement.

The pandemic will also have had an impact on hospitality education; institutions have to make modifications in the course curriculum. The development of curriculum needs to be around the sense of responsibility while preparing the students for industry to work under crises. The educators need to add on the newfangled vocabulary and procedures used by the hospitality industry such as clinically clean and sanitized cleaning along with the meaning of aesthetically clean and general safety. Delivering the contactless services to guests especially while serving food hygienic care while food preparation, kitchen area may be divided into segments; critical operation area, non-critical area and pre-preparation area, use of 100 ppm chlorine for sanitizing non-vegetarian items and 50 ppm chlorine for vegetarian items.

cost management during crises period, focus on self-registration and self-service features via latest technologies.

The world is constantly changing and evolving, and equally, the hotel industry cannot be oblivious to this change. Year after year the evolution of processes and standards has led to greater use of digital services and greater participation of the industry in the preparation of future professionals, updating of current employees and professional certification to ensure the level of quality required (Palacios, 2020). In the next 10 years, hospitality education will not disappear but will certainly take a different form, and those adjustments necessarily pass through an enhancement of digital capabilities of students (Abukhalifeh, 2020) will be needed. The biggest challenge will be the implementation of technology that doesn't overpower the student's natural learning experience.

The professors of tomorrow will also have to be ready for this educational shift. Will they look like robots? Certainly not, but definitely will have to transform their interactions with the students. Hospitality education of the future will not be able to afford to be a disciple of the industry by just answering short and medium terms needs. It will have to be a driver for the hospitality industry, which is not just confined to hotels, but to extend to any company wishing to place customers at the center of the interactions. The success of well-rounded students in the hospitality/business industry is based on building their practical and intellectual foundation on proven concepts (Younger, 2020). Suggestions proposed by the discussants include:

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- Offer courses and programs in Entrepreneurship, i.e., social entrepreneurship as suggested by Barker (2020) so that graduating students are competent and motivated to start their own ventures. Technology Entrepreneurship, Informal Entrepreneurship, International Entrepreneurship programs and courses on start up funding, entrepreneurial business models, opportunity identification could provide the students with the options of launching innovating new ventures.
 - Technology and Digital courses in operations and marketing, i.e. Business Analytics, AI, Machine Learning, Big Data, Digital marketing could provide students with skills which are in great demand by all industries including Hospitality and Tourism and could enhance the students employability across the spectrum. These skills are transferable to other industries and offer the opportunity to be self-employed and Work from Home (WFH).
 - Companies may be approached for "Work from Home" (WFH) internships and job opportunities to tackle the interim situation of low recruitments due to Covid-19 (Gera, 2020). The practice is very common in IT industry especially in India. Even Microsoft and Google are offering WFH internships.
 - Students may be encouraged to volunteer to work for some hours per day even without monetary compensation for leading Industry leaders and professionals to enhance their resumes and recommendations which in turn would boost their employability quotient. For example, they can approach leading professionals in the hospitality industry in LinkedIn and offer their services to them. They can ask for a recommendation or reference if they have done a satisfactory job for them.
 - Social networking especially on Linked In will enhance the visibility of students in the employment space.
 - HBCU institutions can collaborate and partner with organizations such as Manav Rachna International Institute for Research and Studies for cross cultural skills and competencies which would enhance the global employability of the students. Some economies are likely to have a sharp recovery post covid-19, and students with cross cultural skills and sensitivities may have greater employability
 - Develop Syllabus so students are prepared to work under/during crisis (Abukhalifeh, 2020; Chen, 2020)
 - Social Entrepreneurship (adding Entrepreneurship in Hospitality programs and Infuse social entrepreneurship in the curriculum (Barker, 2020)
 - Collaborate more nationally and internationally-HBCUs need to collaborate and dialogue to move agenda forward (Smith, 2020).
 - Create mentorship programs where college students provide mentorship to high school students (Recruitment) (Barker, 2020)
 - Be the first choice for companies seeking talent. (Mayo, 2020)
 - Find a way to collaborate with other industry partners (Mayo, Kingston and Clarke, 2020).
 - Digital/Technology skills are vital for students to gain a competitive edge (Sofique, 2020)
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IV. HBCU SCHOOLS-A SAFE HAVEN

The biggest takeaway from the panel discussion was the fact that the panelists all shared the belief that the schools are a "Safe Haven" for the students who attend. Most historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) focus on being inclusive, some even have an open enrollment policy—based on an inherent belief that all students can be successful. They have a legacy of being family oriented, caring beyond the norm and a literal home away from home for many. The students, most first generation college-goers, via a rite of passage and obligation to family and supporters, enter in some cases as diamonds in the rough and under the care and tutelage of the professors and tight knit support systems become refined over time. Their confidence builds and they are taught to overcome barriers and negative stereotypes and to most of all believe in themselves and their own abilities. The supportive environments, role models and tough-love provide a "safe haven" for some who would not have otherwise had the opportunity and exposure.

To some the dormitories and classrooms present a life of luxury compared to the homes from whence they came. The odds are stacked against them out there, the possibility of a successful career paths revealed while in college provides an impetus and once the potential is unleashed and hope sighted there is no stopping them. The ability to see a glimpse of the future provides stimulation to the minds and ambitions of these students. An institutional culture of success and faith surrounds these students, providing an academic safety net that helps them to thrive and survive and ultimately succeed. That is what sets the HBCU's apart from the PWIs that educate black students, the belief that they are just as good and as capable of academic prowess and the resources are provided to support that belief, creating learning communities of a unified mission to ensure success and access to opportunity and achievement

**COMBATTING
INSTITUTIONAL RACISM**

CONCLUSION

As we embark upon the journey to unpack and recommend solutions for HBCUs and the plight of black students in the wake of both Covid-19 and the frequent killings of unarmed black civilians, we quickly learn of the complicated nature of many of these systemic societal problems. There are many positive community leaders, politicians and higher education administrators toiling and marching for change. As academics however, we have an obligation to offer unique insights, and the application of theory as one part of the many solutions needed. Because there is a labyrinth of societal problems disproportionately affecting HBCUs and the black students who attend them, we also advocate for a stronger foundational knowledge of Social Enterprises (S.E.) throughout hospitality curricula (Barker, 2020). Almost all societal problems require resources, in fact an abundance of resources are required to offset many of the social inequities facing HBCUs and the hospitality students they serve. Social enterprises are known to offer sustainable solutions for societal problems.

Social Entrepreneurship (SE) is a rapidly expanding field for both scholars and practitioners, and while in its early stages of development, SE is revolutionizing traditional approaches to business through the use of social issues (Wilson & Post 2013). Social enterprises involve identifying, addressing, and solving societal problems through business generation (Ergul & Johnson, 2014). For as vast as there are societal problems, the potential for business creation to address these problems are equally bountiful. The concept and practice of SE represents a sustainable approach for mitigating societal problems, as SE organizations aggregate a reduced strain on government and institutional resources. For business owners looking to address a myriad of societal problems, generating revenue allows them to be independent of governmental subsidies, support, and operational mandates (Dickerson & Hassanien, 2017). While SE has been a focal point of much scholarly research for the last decade, it is not until recent that scholars have taken an interest in SE as delivered within a hospitality context, also known as HSE, Hospitality Social Enterprises (Kline, Shah, & Rubright, 2014; Mody & Day, 2014; Sloan, Legrand, & Simons-Kaufmann, 2014). Despite the increase in HSE publications, and its proliferations within our industry, social enterprise is missing from most HBCUs curricula.

The World Health Organization recently stated that a vaccine may not eradicate Covid-19 quickly and we will need to learn to live with it. As a result, it seems likely that economic recovery in the hospitality industry will take some time, and we will continue to see millions unemployed, and a growing demand for social services further creating need for social enterprises. The hospitality industry, specifically group and convention hotels will carry a surplus of inventory, with underutilized kitchens and facilities. These spaces should be viewed as fertile ground for social enterprise business development. Teaching, applying and implementing social enterprise solutions could be a win-win for both the HBCUs and the hospitality industry. We must teach students how to creatively solve problems and doing so in a way that generates revenue. These students will then become agents of change. These skills can be applied within traditional hospitality organizations or applied to entrepreneurial endeavors.

In order to bridge the gap between the C-Suite and the frontline positions where minorities prevail in great numbers, there has to be intentional commitment from the upper echelons of the organizations, commitment has to come from the top, with executives, CEOs and Higher Administrators setting the pace. Minorities plateau in the middle due to lack of mentoring and support. Developmental initiatives, training, coaching are just some ways in which the decision makers in these organizations can create pathways for success. At the end of the day, productivity outweighs tokenism and equity downplays discrimination (Williams-Bryant, 2020)

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