

EXPLORING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY AND INTERNATIONALIZATION WITH AFRICA: A STUDY OF SELECTED HBCU LEADERS PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

A former United States government senior policy advisor recommended that each university ought to formulate an Africa strategy within its long-term strategic objectives. This study explored the potential for historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to further engage with Africa as a sustainability strategy, with an eye toward sustaining their missions and enhancing their global impact. The study utilized AutoHBCUology™, a multi-phase originally constructed mixed methodological design. The findings shed light on the multifaceted landscape of sustainability pathways and leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa among senior-level leaders at HBCUs. The emphasis on institutional leadership, stability, connectivity, and repositioning as pathways to sustainability underscores the multifaceted approach required to ensure the long-term viability of HBCUs in an ever-evolving educational landscape. The specific examination of leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa reveals a strong inclination toward professional high-level engagement, particularly through conferences and discussions with African Ministries of Education and institutions. However, fiscal resource allocation for internationalization with Africa may not be a high priority compared to other considerations. Nevertheless, the commitment to student-related activities, such as encouraging faculty, staff, and students to engage in educational exchanges, signifies a proactive stance toward fostering international experiences with Africa. Despite constraints, targeted Africa engagement may promote HBCU sustainability. Overall, this study aimed to initiate critical dialogue on typically unexplored sustainability dimensions for HBCUs in partnership with African nations.

INTRODUCTION

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have played a vital role in providing higher education opportunities for African Americans in the United States. Established in the 19th century, HBCUs were founded with the mission of educating freed slaves and their descendants. Over the past 150 years, these institutions have endured numerous challenges, but remain critically important centers of culture and learning. As we look ahead to the future, questions arise regarding the sustainability and continued relevance of HBCUs in a changing social landscape. One potential opportunity that holds much promise is for HBCUs to build stronger relationships with Africa.

The African Century: Looking Towards Africa

The future is African. Africa's rapidly growing youth population represents a significant opportunity for mutually beneficial engagement in view of looming enrollment challenges in the United States. Over the next century, while populations in Europe, Asia, and Northern America grow older, sub-Saharan Africa will thrive as the world's fountain of youth (Sow, 2018; United Nations, 2019). Europe, Asia, and Northern America have the oldest populations worldwide

(United Nations, 2019). In Europe, the median age across EU member states is 43 (European Union, 2019). In Northern America, the median age is 39 (Ausubel, 2020). Representing the youngest age distribution in the world, the median age in Africa is 19 (United Nations, 2019; Walsh, 2023).

This massive youth boom positions Africa's higher education sector for massive growth to meet the need for advanced skills and training. The continent is positioned to reap a substantial economic dividend from its "youthquake" if this burgeoning workforce is educated and employed productively.

Tertiary education remains an urgent human capital development investment priority on the continent. The AU's Agenda 2063 (2015) and the World Bank's (n.d., 2018, 2019) Human Capital Plan prioritize the need for expanded, enhanced, and increased access to education in the region. Although sub-Saharan Africa saw the fastest growth in its "tertiary gross enrollment ratio (GER) during 1970-2013 at 4.3 percent annually, faster than the global average of 2.8 percent," (Gandhi, 2018), the region's total tertiary gross enrollment ratio is still significantly below the world average (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2019, p. 30).

Africa's youth boom presents timely opportunities for collaborative partnerships between HBCUs and African nations that can mutually advance their educational missions. By working together to connect with Africa's aspiring students seeking education, HBCUs and African nations can facilitate two-way exchanges, bolster capacity, and share valuable expertise in areas of strength.

Jointly tapping into Africa's surging youth demographics provides prospects to boost HBCU enrollment sustainability while expanding access to quality education for African youth. African partners stand to gain from HBCUs' long track record in culturally competent teaching, leadership development, and building institutions to serve marginalized communities. HBCUs can benefit from cooperation with Africa's emerging/existing public and private sectors and expanding pools of prospective students seeking advancement and social mobility.

Through proactive collaboration, HBCUs and African nations have an incentive to maximize, harness, and cultivate the potential of the continent's youth. Strategic partnerships can further shared goals of inclusive, relevant education and training for underserved populations. By joining forces, HBCUs can sustain their historic missions while contributing to prosperity for new generations across Mother Africa and the African diaspora. The potential for mutually fulfilling cooperation makes this an auspicious moment for invigorated HBCU-Africa linkages.

Collaborating to cultivate Africa's youth advances HBCUs' service missions for new generations while sustaining their institutions into the future. This study synthesized current scholarship and historic understanding to inform practical recommendations for sustaining HBCUs in their next century of service and supporting African nations in their aspirations to realize the African century.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The higher education sector writ large faces an existential threat. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2020) reported that "higher education institutions of all types are facing sustainability issues from liberal arts colleges to research universities" (p. 1). Declining enrollment is the most immediate existential threat to the sustainability of colleges/universities in general, but HBCUs are disproportionately vulnerable due to their small share (about 3%) of the overall U.S. higher education landscape. The college enrollment bust is predicted to impact U.S. colleges/universities beginning in 2025/2026 (Conley, 2019; Fain, n.d.; Fox, 2019; Grawe, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). The declining birth rates in the U.S. since the 2007 economic recession have contributed to the looming crisis. According to Grawe (2018), the U.S. fertility rate

has “plummeted by more than 12 percent” since 2007 (p. 6). It is projected that by 2026 the number of native-born children reaching college-age will start to decline rapidly. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (2023), “total postsecondary enrollment remains well-below pre-pandemic levels” (p. 1). However, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, overall undergraduate enrollment was declining. From fall 2010 to fall 2021, “total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting institutions decreased by 15 percent (from 18.1 million to 15.4 million students),” (Irwin, et al., 2023, p. 2).

Given the projected enrollment drop after 2025, innovative strategies are needed to sustain HBCUs. Engagement with African nations presents a timely opportunity.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explored the potential for HBCUs to engage with Africa as a strategy for sustaining their institutions. Drawing from Graves’s award-winning dissertation study (under the dissertation advisement of Moffett), the selected research questions for this iteration of the study examined the perspectives of HBCU senior-level leaders on pathways to sustainability and their level of commitment to internationalization with Africa at the time of the data collection.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review summarizes key selected research on three relevant areas: (1) the development of HBCUs and their enduring significance in providing educational opportunities for African Americans; (2) the historic role of religious organizations in connecting black institutions to Africa; and (3) the advocacy for HBCU-Africa engagement by historic university presidents and early Black education leaders. This foundation sets the stage for discussing current opportunities and strategies to sustain HBCUs through enhanced collaboration with African nations.

Theme 1: The Historical Development of HBCUs, Selected Legislation, and Their Enduring Significance

HBCUs were historically founded to provide higher education access for African Americans, with most of them founded after the Civil War. Today, over one hundred accredited HBCUs remain (inclusive of 2-year and 4-year institutions), though black schools once numbered around 800 in the 19th century (Lovett, 2015). Early schools for African Americans emerged through black grit and determination, white philanthropic societies, the Freedmen's Bureau, and black and white religious organizations (Anderson, 1988).

Key legislation in HBCU history includes the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890, establishing black land-grant colleges, and the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson case, which cemented legal segregation, making black institutions the largely exclusive option for Black students pre-Brown v. Board in 1954 (C.L. Jackson & Nunn, 2003; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). While the Brown decision expanded choices for Black students, it contributed to a "brain drain" from HBCUs (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Recent federal initiatives through presidential executive orders and Congressional acts have aimed to strengthen HBCUs. Jimmy Carter was the first president to issue an executive order on strengthening HBCUs (Historical Overview, n.d.).

Advocates herald HBCUs as vital incubators where Black students can thrive culturally and academically while nurturing deep confidence and purpose (Favors, 2020). Thereto, others contend their significance may be declining due to wider options for Black students (Vedder, 2019). HBCU advocacy organizations like the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), the Thurgood Marshall College

Fund (TMCF), the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), and the Higher Education Leadership Foundation (HELFF) advocate for the sustainability and relevance of HBCUs. In 2014, HBCUs “accounted for 17 percent of the bachelor’s degrees earned by African Americans and 24 percent of the degrees earned by African Americans in ‘STEM’ fields: science, technology, engineering, and math” (Humphreys, 2017. p.3). Williams & Palmer (2019) report that HBCU enrollment and applications increased, anecdotally tied to the “political climate under the Trump administration” and race-based challenges at predominantly white institutions. More recently, the U.S. Supreme Court’s striking down of affirmative action may have an unanticipated impact on HBCU admissions, driving interest among underrepresented students seeking inclusive and supportive educational environments.

Quantitatively, HBCUs have an economic impact of \$14.8 billion annually and enable \$130 billion in lifetime earnings on graduates, demonstrating their value (Humphreys, 2017). Overall, while facing ongoing trials, HBCUs remain essential to providing educational opportunities and advancing social mobility for Black communities.

Theme 2: Missionary Ties: The Historic Role of Religious Organizations in Connecting HBCUs with Africa

From their earliest days, HBCUs demonstrated international dimensions through their religious affiliations with Black and White denominations. As Blyden (2019) notes, African Americans found "a path to connecting with Africa through missionary, humanitarian, and philanthropic work" (p. 114). Driven by the Great Commission, organizations like the Freedmen’s Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the Board of Missions for the Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, the National Baptist Convention, the A.M.E. Church, the A.M.E.Z. Church, and the C.M.E. Church positioned black institutions as breeding grounds for missionaries. These mission activities positioned Black colleges as transnational institutions (Anderson, 1988; Campbell, 1995; Dworkin, 2017; Martin, 1989).

This missions-based outreach also facilitated a pipeline of African students to HBCUs. Campbell’s (1995) seminal work on the A.M.E. Church in South Africa highlighted the transformative role of America’s oldest Black church as a transatlantic institution that prioritized Africa from the beginning and simultaneously positioned institutions like Wilberforce as welcoming destinations for African students. Likewise, the National Baptist Convention sponsored African students to various Black colleges and matched them with adoptive mentors (National Baptist Convention, 1899). For example, two young female African students were “put in charge of Miss [Nannie Helen] Burroughs” who was serving as Corresponding Secretary of “women’s work” in 1899 (p. 140). Also, Prof. Byrd Pillerman, president of West Virginia Institute, adopted a young African student until he completed his studies.

Among the earliest HBCUs engaging Africa, Lincoln University's founding mission was to train "colored" ministers and teachers for work in Africa and America (Duffield, 1978). Lincoln enrolled the first groups of African students in 1873 (Brooks & Starks, 2011). Spelman College also had a strong early presence in Africa through its alumnae establishing schools and missions, often supported by groups like the Women’s Baptist Foreign Mission Society (Read, 1961; Collier-Thomas, 2010).

In summary, missionary affiliations drove early HBCU connections with Africa and positioned these institutions as welcoming destinations for African students, laying foundations for future engagement.

Theme 3: Selected Historic African American Leaders and Africa

During the late 19th and 20th centuries, Black college presidents and institutional leaders were actively engaged in international development projects, with a particular focus on Africa. These leaders extolled Africa as their ancestral home and sought to strengthen connections with the continent.

Booker T. Washington - President of Tuskegee University, 1881-1915. Washington's work extended beyond Tuskegee, aiming to export the Tuskegee educational model to Africa. His approach included hosting African students at Tuskegee, sending American Tuskegee graduates abroad to implement agricultural and industrial methods, and introducing variations of the industrial model in Africa through African nationals (Wright, 2015). The first documented African student arrived at Tuskegee from the Dahomey Empire in 1896.

Nannie Helen Burroughs - Founder/Principal of the National Training School for Women and Girls, 1909-1961. Burroughs played a pivotal role in educating Black women and girls, with an emphasis on Black history and fostering global connections. Her school accepted international students and had a profound influence on Africa through its alumnae, some of whom became missionaries and replicated her educational model on the continent (Graves, 2019).

Rembert Stokes - President of Wilberforce University, 1956-1976. Historically, Wilberforce thrived as a priority destination point and training ground for generations of African students. In keeping with this tradition, Stokes increased the institution's reach to Africa. During his tenure, recruitment strategies drew students not only from the U.S., but also internationally, and particularly from Africa. African countries from which Black international students were recruited included: Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Liberia, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and Tanganyika (Tanzania). International students were also recruited from the broader African Atlantic Diaspora in the Caribbean. These countries included Bermuda, British Guiana (on the mainland of South America), Trinidad, and Jamaica. Under his leadership enrollment to the institution increased exponentially (Omolewu, 2000, 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this study are:

1. What do HBCU senior-level leaders perceive as pathways to institutional sustainability?
2. To what extent does a leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa exist among HBCU senior-level leaders?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to make an important contribution to the literature on HBCUs by exploring the potential for greater engagement with Africa. The findings may shed light on pathways for HBCUs to enhance sustainability and reinvigorate their historic missions in the 21st century context through expanded internationalization with Africa. By summarizing current scholarship on the historic connections between HBCUs and Africa, as well as illuminating perspectives from contemporary HBCU senior-level leaders, this research aimed to provide a foundation for future initiatives to build stronger institutional relationships. Given the financial and demographic challenges facing many HBCUs, this study presents a timely analysis of how strategic international partnerships—especially given the growing demand for higher education in Africa—can open new opportunities for student recruitment, faculty exchanges, innovative program development, and diversified funding sources. The study also aimed to give voice to selected HBCU senior-level leaders regarding their views on engagement with Africa, providing insight to inform outreach

efforts by partners on the continent. Overall, this study makes a case for why strengthening HBCU-Africa ties represents a promising opportunity with mutual benefits, allowing HBCUs to sustain their noble legacies while contributing to development priorities across Africa.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data to explore perspectives on HBCU-Africa engagement among HBCU senior-level leaders. This mixed methods approach was coined as AutoHBCUology™. The term, coined by Dr. Noran L. Moffett, speaks to an in vivo culturalogical design that is culturally rooted and social-justice oriented. It focuses on telling the story of the race specifically germane to the HBCU higher education context from the perspective of the people with that live(d) experience. It intends to name an empirical research brand that authentically examines HBCU phenomena. It is the interpretation of the HBCU world using the premises provided by that particular cultural context as offered by those who reside in the experience, thus making the investigations culturally relevant to the actual lives of the people and the institutions.

Participants

The participants for this study were senior-level HBCU leaders (specifically presidents, provosts, and board leaders) from 4-year public and 4-year private HBCUs.

Data Collection and Analysis

A questionnaire was developed and administered to measure HBCU leaders' perspectives, priorities, and prospective actions related to HBCU sustainability and internationalization with Africa. The instrument used to collect the data reported in this article was the **HBCU Sustainability Survey for Institutional Leaders™**. The instrument included Likert-scale questions about leadership intentionality, actions, and engagement and networking priorities. The survey also included open-ended qualitative questions from which the qualitative data reported in this iteration of the study were derived. Validity and reliability were established for this instrument. Face validity was obtained, and the instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, a measure of internal scale consistency. In this study, the survey measured affective constructs. The alpha test was run to measure the overall consistency of the instrument, which included approximately 42 items. The researchers were looking for an alpha greater than 0.600. Alpha scores in the range of 0.600-0.800 are considered reliable. Alpha scores in the range of 0.800-1.00 are considered highly or very reliable (Ahdika, 2017). The instrument had a high reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.969$).

Table 1.

Cronbach Alpha Results for Survey Instrument

	Number of items	α
Survey Items	42	0.969

The quantitative data were analyzed statistically in SPSS. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to generate insights about sustainability opportunities, challenges, and strategies. Key findings from the quantitative and qualitative strands were integrated to develop a comprehensive synthesis of how HBCU institutional leaders view engagement with Africa.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1 explored the perspectives of HBCU senior-level leaders on pathways to institutional sustainability.

As shown in Figure 1, four key target areas emerged as pathways to sustainability for HBCUs based on participant responses.

1. Institutional leadership - Specifically, focused and forward-thinking leadership, and strong governance; enhancing alignment between the CEO and Board; flexibility to adapt to a changing environment.
2. Institutional stability - Growing and diversifying enrollment; improving fiscal practices and revenue diversification through fundraising, philanthropy, alumni giving, endowments, etc.; increasing access to federal, state, and government resources.
3. Institutional connectivity - Increasing partnerships with corporations and private entities; forging more partnerships between higher education institutions; building international partnerships and enhancing internationalization.
4. Institutional repositioning - Expanding educational delivery through online and hybrid modalities; developing new business models suited for the 21st century; diversifying academic programs to meet market demands; expanding infrastructure.

Only one respondent specifically listed in their written qualitative response internationalization with Africa through institutional partnerships and student recruitment specifically as a pathway to sustainability.

Figure 1.

Selected HBCU Senior-Level Leaders Perspectives on Pathways to Sustainability



Research Question 2 explored the extent to which leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa existed among HBCU senior-level leaders at the time of the study. Leadership commitment was operationalized to mean a leader’s current beliefs/attitudes and future behaviors/actions.

As shown in Figure 2, four factors emerged through exploring leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa. The following factors will be discussed based upon the respondents who completed the instrument: (a) professional high-level engagement; (b) adding language to macro-level mission, vision, and strategy; (c) administrative priorities for planning and fiscal resource allocation; and, (d) educational exchange-related and student-related activities.

(a) Professional high-level engagement

Approximately 91.7% of respondents indicated that they were either “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to attend and/or participate in a conference or event that brings together HBCU senior-level leaders and Ministries of education, higher education institutions, agencies, and/or policymakers in Africa. Approximately 91.5% of respondents indicated that they were either “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to engage in discussions with Ministries of Education, higher education institutions, agencies, and/or policymakers in Africa. Approximately 91.7% of respondents indicated that they were either “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to invite to their campus or engage in a virtual meeting with Ministries of Education, higher education institutions, agencies, and/or policymakers in Africa.

(b) Adding language to macro-level mission, vision, and strategy

While 54.9% of survey respondents indicated that they believed internationalization with Africa was important to the sustainability of their institution, most survey respondents indicated that they did not believe that incorporating an explicitly articulated commitment to internationalization with Africa in the mission statement or vision statement was important to the sustainability of their institution. Approximately 49% indicated that they believed incorporating strategies in the strategic plan to pursue and/or maintain internationalization with Africa was important to the sustainability of their institution.

(c) Administrative priorities for planning and fiscal resource allocation;

Approximately 56.9% of survey respondents indicated that allocating fiscal resources to support internationalization with Africa was not an administrative priority. These statistics comports with qualitative information obtained from the open-ended survey items wherein financial stability was identified as a primary sustainability priority among HBCU senior-level leaders. Approximately 72% of respondents indicated that recruiting students from Africa was either “somewhat of a priority” or a “high priority.”

(d) Educational exchange-related and student-related activities.

Approximately 93.6% of respondents indicated that they were “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to encourage educational exchange among faculty/staff and administration with Ministries of Education, higher education institutions, agencies, and/or policymakers in Africa. Approximately 95.8% of respondents indicated that they were either “somewhat” or “very likely” to encourage students from the HBCU at which they served to study abroad in Africa.

Figure 2. *Factors related to selected HBCU senior-level leaders commitment to internationalization with Africa*



DISCUSSION

The findings shed light on the multifaceted landscape of sustainability pathways and leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa among respondents. The emphasis on institutional leadership, stability, connectivity, and repositioning as pathways to sustainability underscores the multifaceted approach required to ensure the long-term viability of HBCUs in an ever-evolving educational landscape. It is noteworthy that while internationalization is recognized as a strategy for sustainability, specific mention of internationalization with Africa appeared to be limited in the written qualitative responses of survey respondents, indicating potential room for increased awareness-building and prioritization of such initiatives among HBCU leaders.

The examination of leadership commitment to internationalization with Africa reveals a strong inclination toward professional high-level engagement, particularly through conferences and discussions with African Ministries of Education, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders. The significance of this finding may suggest a genuine interest among respondents in fostering partnerships and collaborations with Africa. This commitment to professional high-level engagement can serve as a strong foundation for the advancement of internationalization initiatives between HBCUs and African nations and institutions, potentially leading to mutually beneficial outcomes and the realization of shared goals. This finding also strongly suggests that opportunities need to be intentionally created to harness the high level of enthusiasm and willingness demonstrated by respondents for professional high-level engagement with African counterparts. The data show a clear appetite for collaboration, dialogue, and partnership, but it also highlights the need for proactive steps to translate this willingness into tangible actions and outcomes.

As a brand strategy, the incorporation of language into the institutional mission and vision statements that highlighted internationalization with Africa specifically did not appear to be widely important among respondents. This finding reveals an interesting discrepancy in the perspectives of survey respondents. On the one hand, more than half of respondents acknowledged the significance of internationalization with Africa in contributing to their institution's sustainability, indicating a general awareness of its potential benefits. However, the majority of respondents did not see the need for explicitly articulating a commitment to internationalization with Africa in their institution's mission or vision statements. This suggests that while respondents recognize the importance of internationalization with Africa, they may not view it as a central aspect of the institution's overall brand identity. This variance between intellectually recognizing the importance of Africa and formally articulating linguistic commitment to Africa in the institution's brand headline (i.e., the mission and vision statement) may reflect varying institutional priorities. One possible explanation for why respondents may not explicitly include "Africa" in their mission and vision statements when considering internationalization efforts is the desire to maintain a broadly inclusive and globally oriented approach. While the survey revealed that more than half of the respondents recognized the importance of internationalization with Africa, the results suggest that the institutional leaders who responded to this survey may strive for a broader and more inclusive international outlook in their headline branding. In other words, by specifying the region of Africa specifically in the mission and vision statements, there may be a concern that institutions could inadvertently send a message that their focus is limited to a particular region, potentially excluding opportunities for collaboration and engagement with other parts of the world. Universities generally aspire to be seen as open to partnerships and collaborations with countries and regions around the globe, and there may be a concern about appearing too regionally focused.

At the strategic planning level, the findings highlight that just less than half (or approximately 49%) of respondents did believe that incorporating strategies specifically related to

internationalization with Africa in their strategic plans was important for institutional sustainability. This implies that respondents may see the value in integrating concrete plans and initiatives into their long-term strategies to ensure the successful pursuit and maintenance of internationalization efforts with Africa. Understanding these variations in perception may aid institutions in developing effective strategies for internationalization with Africa, aligning their actions with the overarching goal of global engagement that many universities may aspire to achieve.

Moreover, allocating fiscal resources toward internationalization with Africa did not appear to be a high priority for more than half of the respondents. This outcome suggests that, within the surveyed group, there might be competing priorities or budgetary constraints that have led to internationalization with Africa not being the foremost concern in the institutional budget. It is important to note that this lower prioritization in terms of fiscal resources may not necessarily imply a lack of interest in internationalization with Africa, but rather it suggests a recognition that other immediate needs or objectives may be taking precedence in the allocation of fiscal resources, especially in view of the historic underfunding of HBCUs to the sum of billions of dollars. Understanding the reasons behind this lower fiscal prioritization can offer valuable insights for HBCUs seeking to promote internationalization efforts with Africa and help them address potential barriers or challenges. Nevertheless, the commitment to promoting student-related activities, and encouraging faculty, staff, and students to engage in educational exchanges, signifies a proactive stance toward fostering international experiences with Africa.

In conclusion, these findings as an aggregate underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of HBCUs' strategies for sustainability and their commitment to internationalization with Africa. As HBCUs navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, a nuanced and comprehensive approach to leadership commitment, strategy alignment, and resource allocation will be crucial to realizing the potential benefits of internationalization with Africa and ensuring the long-term sustainability of both HBCUs and African nations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Enhanced engagement between HBCUs and Africa should be founded on mutual benefit, not approached as a one-sided sustainability strategy. There is tremendous potential for two-way exchanges that allow both HBCU institutions and African nations to learn from each other, build capacity, and work collaboratively to uplift underserved populations. A spirit of true partnership, rather than paternalistic one-way aid, should shape collaborations. HBCUs and African nations and institutions can leverage their complementary strengths while upholding shared commitments to inclusive, relevant education.

The findings from this study point to several important implications for HBCUs and other stakeholders to consider regarding educational planning:

1. HBCU leaders may consider prioritizing strategic enrollment management plans to diversify their student portfolio, including fostering intentional recruitment pipelines in Africa. This necessitates allocation of institutional resources and staffing capacity devoted to international recruitment and enrollment.
2. HBCUs may consider pursuing partnerships with African universities and governments to enable bilateral exchanges, collaborative degree programs, shared research projects, and other mutually beneficial activities. This requires dedicated personnel and infrastructure.
3. Policymakers and funders should support initiatives that foster HBCU linkages with Africa through providing targeted grants, exchange fellowships, and funding streams that incentivize these partnerships.

4. HBCU leaders may advocate for inclusion of Africa engagement in their institutional strategic plans and overall brand strategy to signal high-level commitment to prospective partners on the continent. But rhetoric must be matched with resource allocation.

CONCLUSION

This study illuminated perspectives from select institutional leaders on engagement between HBCUs and Africa. The findings point to interest in enhanced collaborations among respondents, but also barriers like resource constraints. Key opportunities include student and faculty exchanges, joint research, and strategic partnerships to bolster HBCUs' sustainability while contributing expertise to Africa's higher education capacity needs and development priorities. Realizing this potential will require dedicated financial resources, administrative buy-in, and planning guided by the values of equality, justice, and reciprocity. With concerted effort on both sides, there is much promise for HBCUs and African nations to collaborate innovatively along shared missions of inclusive, relevant education. This begins with a paradigm shift to approach partnerships as mutual cross-cultural learning, rather than one-way aid. By coming together, HBCUs and African nations have much to gain - both furthering symbiotic sustainability and leaving a meaningful legacy for future generations.

On a macro level, the inauguration of the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States (PAC-ADE) (announced by Vice President Kamala Harris on behalf of the Biden-Harris administration during the 2022 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in D.C.) demonstrates renewed attention to strengthening linkages between the United States and peoples of African descent worldwide. As this study showed, there is a long legacy of engagement between HBCUs and Africa that can be revitalized and expanded. The Council presents opportunities for industry leaders to advise the administration on policies that support institutional partnerships, student and faculty exchanges, and other collaborations with African nations. With representation from leaders across industries, the Council could also help fundraise and marshal resources from public and private sectors to catalyze HBCU-Africa ties. Overall, by shining a spotlight and providing high-level coordination, the Advisory Council has potential to take HBCU-Africa relations to new heights, unleashing untapped possibilities for mutual learning and advancement. This continues the historic quest for shared excellence and shared value. This study is offered to catalyze a transformative journey toward the realization of grand possibilities between HBCUs and Africa.

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