

President Williams Attends Obama's HBCU Event

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DSU President Harry Lee Williams spent Feb. 26 in Washington, D.C. with other HBCU leaders to witness President Barack Obama's signing of an executive order that renews the White House's commitment to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The executive order renews White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities that was begun in 2002 under the administration of President George Bush. According to a White House press release, the event – which took place in the White House East Room – demonstrates President's Obama's strong appreciation for the historic role these institutions have played in the education of citizens as well as the Administration's commitment to assist HBCUs in accomplishing their missions.

Specifically, the executive order establishes the White House Initiative on HBCUs to be housed in the U.S. Department of Education under the leadership of Executive Director John S. Wilson Jr., as well as establish a President's Board of Advisors in HBCUs.

Dr. Wilson was in attendance at DSU when Dr. Williams announced that establishment of a Blue Ribbon Commission to create a new vision and set of core values for the University. He also met that same day with the DSU president and commission members to explain President Obama's commitment to HBCUs.

DSU President Williams said that it was a tremendous experience to attend President Obama's executive order signing along with the entire Congressional Black Caucus and more than 40 other HBCU presidents.

"President Obama made it clear that he is in full support of HBCUs," said the DSU president. "He cited the importance of the sustainability of HBCUs because it is going to be important of his 2020 goal of improving the number of people earning degrees.

Dr. Williams added that President Obama has requested \$98 million in new money for HBCUs, with a large percentage of that going toward financial aid for students and increasing the Pell Grant.

According the White House press release, the Obama Administration is also requesting \$20.5 million for a HBCU Capital Financing Program. This would provide HBCUs with access to financing for the repair, renovation and construction or acquisition of education facilities, instructional equipment, research instrumentation and physical infrastructure.

Including Delaware State University, there are 105 HBCUs located in 20 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which serve more than 300,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

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