

# AN ALTERNATIVE RANKING METHODOLOGY OF THE BEST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES FOR AFRICAN-AMERICANS

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## ABSTRACT

*For an African-American, choosing the best college or university is important since the choice of college includes the complex decision of whether to attend one of the nation's 89, 4-year Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU) or a Traditionally White Institution (TWI). Numerous periodicals publish annual rankings of the nation's "best colleges." Black Enterprise magazine (BE) focuses on the best colleges for African-Americans. Recently, BE's rankings were criticized by the editors of the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE 2005) for "stacking the deck" in favor of HBCUs by applying a low weight to important factors such as retention and graduation rates. This study uses a variation of the College-Football Success Model (Walker, Keogh, & Civils, 2006), to determine the rankings of the best universities for African Americans. With this model we also answer the question; what type of institution, the HBCU or the TWI, is the "best" college choice for African-Americans? The results collected on 411 of the most influential African-Americans in the country, indicate that HBCUs with approximately 32 percent of undergraduate degrees conferred nationally produced 156 of the 411 (or 38%) most influential African-Americans in 2005. It was also found that although HBCUs represent only 4 percent of the nation's approximately 1,800 four year colleges, 52 (or 26%) of the 202 undergraduate schools attended by these individuals were HBCUs. The study also indicates that there is no difference between HBCUs and TWIs in the movement of graduates into "top-quality" graduate schools.*

JEL: I21, I23

## INTRODUCTION

Attending College is an observable, positive trend in the African-American community. The decision to attend college results in several important choices for future students, such as deciding which type of college to attend. There are approximately 1,800 four year colleges nationally. Magazine based rankings of the nation's colleges and universities assist future students in sorting through the maze of colleges. Many college or university rankings such as U.S. News and World Report, and the Princeton College Review, utilize a multivariable index model employing a number of input and outcome factors to define "best" schools. For example: enrollment, accreditation, average SAT or ACT scores, retention and graduation rates are some of the factors in which schools are ranked. Other factors recently used have included social factors that filter in cultural issues and environment, such as campus infrastructure and student and faculty diversity. For the African-American student contemplating college, factors such as social life, the frequency and severity of racial incidents, the availability of scholarships, general reputation (including male to female ratios), and employment placement rates are also included in the definition of "best" college.

This research supports the idea that all of these factors are important at various subjective weight levels. However, since the subjective weighting scales employed can result in different outcomes, most if not all rankings using the existing multivariable index model are subject to bias. This is the crux of the differences noted in the BE and JBHE discussion. It is observed that HBCUs have a sizable population of students, yet none of these schools are ranked in the first or second tier of colleges or universities in the

existing rankings of the main stream media. The obvious bias is towards large richly endowed traditionally white colleges and universities. This is not an indictment of these schools, or the media, since the results reflects the majority view. For the majority of students sorting through the maze of colleges and universities the existing ranking methodologies are aligned with their (or the majority) expectation and although biased, provide a valuable decision guide. The BE rankings seek to fill the vacuum by providing information to the minority population reflecting the African-American experience “that what is good for the majority student may not be good for the minority student”. In this paper we introduce a competitive college and university ranking methodology that ranks schools based on the success of its alumni.

We posit that regardless of input factors and values added during the college years, the true test of a school’s desirability is the impact that its alumni have on the community in which it serves. A byproduct of this work is an alternative ranking of the 2005 best colleges and universities for African-Americans based on the achievement of the alumni of such schools.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

That the best college or university is ultimately determined by the impact of the institution on the “community” is not a new theme. For example: recently Humphreys & Korb (2006) in their study of the short-term economic impact of the nation’s HBCUs indicates that the driving motivation to conduct their study was to document “the economic roles that HBCUs play in the community.” The study indicates that for the 2001 year the combined spending by the 101 Title IV HBCUs was \$6.6 billion and the economic impact was \$10.2 billion. They further state that a college or university improves the skills of its graduates, thereby increasing their productivity and lifetime earnings.

The comparative merits of the HBCU vs. TWI educational structures have been debated for a number of years. The consensus by many is that the HBCU has a major advantage in the “best” comparison with respect to the African-American student, primarily due to its nurturing social environment and the absence of racial incidences. For example, Fleming (1984) and Love (1993) indicate that the HBCU environment promotes the graduation of black students because they are in the majority in a supportive environment which lacks racial incidents. Foster (2005) argues that the predominately white institution bombards the black student with countless interactions with the non-black majority that “involve subtle slights and misguided acts by professors, fellow students, resident assistants, academic advisors and in the university community- that lead to alienation among black students”. Allen (1992) adds that “African-American students must form cultural connections to survive on a TWI campus.” A competitive advantage also exists. Many have suggested that due to the scarcity of resources many lower and upper divisional courses at an HBCU are taught by experienced professors with terminal degrees. In contrast, it is well known that due to their emphasis on research, many TWIs delegate lower divisional courses to current graduate students who may not be experienced teachers and are often overburdened with the concurrent pursuit of an advance degree.

The advantage of the TWI education is the financial resources available for scholarships and infrastructure. In contrast, Gasman, Baez, Drenzer, Sedgwick, Tudico & Schmid (2007) indicate that between 1996 and 2005, “25 percent of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) sanctions pertained to black colleges. In addition since 1989 half of the institutions that lost their accreditation from SACS were HBCUs.” It is further noted that most reprimands and revocations of accreditation are due to financial deficits, faculty qualifications and campus infrastructure. All of these areas are directly or indirectly linked to the financial resources of the HBCUs.

The underpinnings of the HBCU vs. TWI educational comparisons can be traced to the long-standing debate found in the Supreme Court ruling of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, which resulted in the so-called doctrine

of “separate but equal”. It is clear, however that in 1896, separate but equal educational systems between black and white was a sham. Due to resource allocation at that time, separate education clearly was not equal. However, as stated by Wright (2005), “Segregation or separate but equal, whatever might have been the nefarious intentions of its creators, allowed black people the space for some level of self-determination. Even with secondhand textbooks and grossly underfinanced schools, black teachers produced students whose education was not merely equal to that of whites at the time, it was superior!”

Later, in the 1954 case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* “separate but equal” doctrine was put to the test by attorney Thurgood Marshall and his team of lawyers. The result was the reallocation of resources and the general commitment by existing authority to desegregate educational facilities. “The Court in 1954 was right to act against the forced social isolation it decreed in 1896. What was unequal was the division of resources allocated for black education at local, state, and national levels. What was excellence was the legacy of schools under the control of the black community” Wright, (2005). Phillips (2005) adds that while *Brown vs. the Board of Education* “worked to dispel the fallacy of separate but equal, it created other challenges to create an environment [on TWIs campuses] that is inviting to students of color”.

Boykins and Jones (2005), amplify the argument of effective black educational systems and the general idea that the social environment is important in the enhancement of education for African-Americans. Their research suggests that learning and performance conditions imbued with a communal theme..., one that is historically associated with people of African descent, can lead to higher performance outcomes on a variety of tasks and cognitive demands.” Boykin (1994) further adds that “Today psychological well-being is increasingly associated with embracing and valuing social identities. Research suggests that ethnic or racial identity may often be a source of elevated psychological well-being.”

We now witness a public debate among African-American scholars and practitioners regarding the desirability (or lack thereof) of the educational structures of TWIs versus the HBCUs. The current debate among blacks has intensified to the point that those in the TWI camp find it incomprehensible that those in the HBCU camp would find HBCU educational structures superior to TWI education. And, those in the HBCU camp find the opposite just as incomprehensible. It appears that the TWI camp is anchored on the resource view: greater resources and endowments must result in a first class education. The HBCU camp reflects the prior and future success at the production of results given scarce resources as a measure of academic effectiveness. This study takes a closer look at long-term outcomes, to answer the question: are HBCUs better, worse, or on the same playing field as TWIs in the education of African-American students.

### Retention Issues

According to the Black Enterprise Ranking survey (2004), a total of 16 HBCUs were identified among their “50 Best Colleges for African-Americans.” The top three schools listed were Morehouse, Spelman, and Hampton Universities. These rankings were based on the review of the educational structures of 482 colleges collected from 1,855 African-American educators, based primarily on variables such as academic strength and social environment. This approach was considered flawed by the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2005). The Black Enterprise (BE) 50 best colleges and universities listings during 2004 and 2005 are noted in Exhibit A.

The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2005), in its article, “News and Views; There Are Serious Flaws in the Black Enterprise Ranking of the Best Colleges for African-Americans” is critical of the BE rankings claiming that the BE approach “stacked the deck” (or reflected a bias) in favor of HBCUs. The disagreement was primarily due to the low weight assigned by BE to what JBHE describes as “vital factors such as retention and academic rigor” and the relatively high weight BE employed in areas of

“less important factors” such as enrollment rates and social environment. Since BE included a large number of HBCUs with relatively low retention and graduation rates, that were ranked higher than select TWIs, the retention rate issue appears prominent in JBHE’s concerns. Subsequent to the Black Enterprise’s 2004 rankings and JBHE’s 2005 critique, the *Virginian-Pilot* daily newspaper published an article entitled, *Virginia College Graduation Rates (2005)*, based on data from the 2003 Department of Education which highlighted the relatively high retention rate of the University of Virginia (UVA). At 85 percent, UVA had the highest retention rate for African-Americans of all schools in the State of Virginia. Moreover, since the best college rankings published by U.S. News & World Report (2006) placed Princeton University at number 1 alongside Harvard, JBHE also criticized BE for excluding Princeton from its rankings. According to JBHE, Princeton “has the highest black student graduation rate in the nation”.

However, it should be noted that the JBHE (2005) and the *Virginia Pilot* (2005) articles did not include the number of degrees conferred or enrollment by headcount in support of their statistics. The use of percentages without the underlying numbers, calls into question the conclusions reached, since it must be acknowledged that a 100 percent retention rate is meaningless if extracted from a small population. For example: the total number of African-American students attending Princeton in 2005 was approximately 450 (College Board, 2007).

The University of Virginia has a very high black student graduation rate and there is no question that UVA is an educational powerhouse. According to JBHE, with respect to the black student retention rate, “clearly, black students are more likely to succeed at the University of Virginia.” However, when one reviews enrollment numbers rather than percentages, it is found that the total African-American student population at UVA is approximately 1,150, which means at maximum, 975 (assuming an 85% graduation rate) of these students will graduate in six years. In comparison, Hampton University, a Virginia-based HBCU, ranked number 3 on the BE list, has a graduation rate of 54.2 percent during 2005, and a total population of approximately 6,000 students. Roughly 3,300 Hampton students are estimated to graduate in a six-year period (*Virginia Pilot*, 2005).

When one reviews enrollment figures rather than percentages, it is clear that UVA will graduate less than one third, and Princeton will graduate approximately one eighth of the number of African-American students graduating from Hampton University. Therefore, the general idea suggested by BE that certain HBCUs would be the “best” place for African-American students, appears correct with respect to the impact that these schools will and have had on the African-American community.

We can also dismiss the call for a greater emphasis on retention and graduation rates in the multivariable criteria for the best school, by considering the profile of the population of students that are being recruited by the TWI. Unlike many HBCUs the TWI is not as accessible to the average, nor the below average non-athletic African-American student. Since HBCUs can be accessed by most students, on this point alone the best colleges for the majority of African-Americans students (other than student athletes) must be the HBCUs. On the other hand, due to the mission of many HBCUs of providing higher education to promising students who may be less prepared or possess lower financial endowment, retention is a factor. In the final analysis an HBCU would obviously exhibit greater volatility regarding retention rates than a TWI since a greater proportion of its students may be financially or academically challenged. The competing TWIs do not have this problem due to student selectivity, and its unlimited available scholarship resources.

However, it is also obvious that the academically talented African-American student being recruited by a TWI with a scholarship is not concerned about a college’s retention or graduation rates. Stated differently, the advocacy by JBHE that a higher weight be assigned to the retention variable would result in a ranking emphasis on this variable, which would be irrelevant to an academically gifted African-American students

and an insignificant variable for a TWI bound student with a scholarship in hand. Because of this the retention variable for a TWI, *ceteris paribus*, would result in a positive variable while representing a harsh variable for the HBCU. Black Enterprise responded to the JBHE criticism of its 2004 rankings by adjusting the weights on the retention variable resulting in a 2005 best college rankings which was unrealistic. For example: Morehouse College dropped from number 1 in the BE's 2004 rankings to a number 46 rank in 2005. Florida A&M University was ranked number 1. These rankings were also criticized by JBHE (2006).

If there are other hidden factors perceived by the prospective African-American student to hinder their movement through a TWI's academic process. Such "hidden variable(s)" must be connected to the social environment of the school considered. Hence, BE 2004 in seeking a methodology to capture the best colleges for African-American was correct in weighting social environment at a higher level than retention rates. If anything, the social environment variable effectively captures the retention rate emphasis. It is suggested that the social environment or more pointedly the absence of racial incidents, of a school is of a greater concern to the academically talented student than retention, *per se*. Additional evidence of the value of "social environment" has been expressed by the managing editor of JBHE (2006), in response to a challenge by Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) regarding the inherit weaknesses, discrepancies, inaccuracy and the timing of retention rate data. In its response to CMU, the editor was quoted as follows: "Clearly, the racial climate at some colleges and universities is more favorable towards African-Americans than at other campuses." This was BE's point exactly, during 2004. Moreover, Sibulkin & Butler (2005) indicate the weakness of the retention variable noted in their critique of the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education's (1999) study of the NCAA. Their remarks show that the retention statistic is distorted since data on student transfers is not included.

The above discussion and the observed disagreement underscores the complexity of the "best college" debate and results in the primary question. The best college for African-Americans can be filtered through the discussion above, and is also implied by the following quote from the editors of JBHE (2004 & 2006): "The danger is that these [BE] rankings steer academically talented black students to schools that often have limited academic resources and whose graduates are less likely to go on to top-quality graduate schools or positions in the highest of the nation's corporations, law offices or other professional firms."

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study responds to the above "dangerous" quote by tracking the college degrees of the nation's most successful African-Americans in law, higher education, entrepreneurship, government, and corporate America as of 2005. The analysis compares the various degrees obtained by these alumni at the baccalaureate, graduate, and post-graduate level. The conceptual model in this research follows the Best College Football Index model (Walker, et al, 2006). The Best College Football Index used by Walker, et al (2006) to determine the nation's best college football program by tracing the number of a school's alumni that entered the National Football League. The assessment included the number of starters, the length of performance careers, whether or not the alumni were on a team that won the divisional playoffs, the number of Super Bowl rings, etc. The results indicated that the best college football program in the nation was Florida State University. A similar concept would extend to the best college or university for African-Americans, based on the school that produced the highest number of the most influential African-American leaders. This information was assessed as of 2005 and will be assessed biannually, henceforth. Since many of these individuals received advanced degrees in business, law, or education, a separate analysis tracks the movement of HBCU or TWI undergraduates into graduate level training. Our expected outcome is if the JBHE's remarks are valid, then TWI's would represent a disproportionate and significant number of schools attended by the most influential African-Americans. Given the full sample population we answer the following questions:

- 1.) What colleges or universities produced the largest number of undergraduate alumni who were the most influential African-Americans in the U.S. during 2005?
- 2.) Are there a greater proportion of HBCU graduates that are influential African-Americans than the proportion of all African-Americans completing undergraduate degrees? Likewise is there a greater proportion of HBCUs represented on the list of successful alumni, than TWIs?
- 3.) Was a higher ratio of alumni from HBCUs or those that graduated from TWIs capable of entering graduate schools?

Due to the large sample size and the uniqueness of the degree, while controlling for majority school and selection bias, we tested the issue of the quality of graduate schools attended by HBCU and TWI alumni using entrance into law schools of high quality as a proxy measurement. This effort resulted in the following question:

- 4.) Is there a difference in the ability of African-Americans who graduated from HBCUs or from TWIs to enter the nation's "top quality" law schools?

#### Definition: Influential African-Americans

The term influential African-American is defined by the researchers as those members of the black community publicly acknowledged as at the top of their chosen field. As an additional guide we followed the JBHE "dangerous quote" which highlights certain areas in which they believed students from HBCUs would have difficulty entering, such as the top graduate schools, or positions in the highest of the nation's corporations, law offices or other professional firms. Using this quote as a guide we sought publicly available lists of the top blacks in corporations and law. Since we are assessing those African-Americans of influence, the top entrepreneurs with sufficient gross revenues also fit the criteria as influential because of their collective economic impact on the community. We did not seek influential blacks in the fields of entertainment or sports directly, although it is acknowledged that many of these individuals have influence with respect to culture via entertainment, corporate product marketing and advertisement to African-Americans. However, in this area, members of the African-American community considered influential are filtered through the lens of Ebony Magazine's 2005 "100+ Most Influential Blacks" list. This list includes influential entertainers, politicians, billionaires, fraternity/sorority leaders, religious leaders, politicians, athletes, poets etc. In the educational field, black college presidents were chosen as those of influence rather than endowed professors or athletic coaches since ultimately the president is the representative spokesman for an institution. Clearly the list is not exhaustive and could be expanded to the top 1,000 African-Americans of influence. One could also find someone who should be on the list, but it would be difficult to argue that someone on the list should not be. For example: the Executive Leadership Council is composed of hundreds of members who represent the top African-American leadership in corporate America. Only 75 of those of the highest authority are included in the sample based on publicly acknowledged lists.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

The most influential African-Americans was compiled from the BE list of the "75 Most Powerful African-Americans in Corporate America" (Meeks, 2005), the Black Enterprise (2005) BE 100s list (of entrepreneurs) and Black Enterprise's (2005) list of "America's Top 50 African-American Lawyers". In addition, we included without duplication the list of Ebony Magazine's "The 100+ Most Influential Blacks" (2005) and black presidents of the nation's four year colleges and universities. From this data, after the elimination of duplications a total of 432 influential African-Americans emerged. Each of these

individuals was traced by graduate student researchers using a GOOGLE search engine to derive data on education background. A separate check of the data was made by an instructor and where discrepancies were noted each of the two remaining authors reviewed data and conducted independent searches. Data regarding the educational background of black college presidents of four year institutions was based on a GOOGLE search and assistance in data collection with the research office of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (Berger, L., and 2007 March). Seven of the 432 individuals did not attend, or did not complete college and another 14, (primarily entrepreneurs) with missing background data were excluded from the analysis.

The remaining 411 individuals were identified with the colleges or universities attended. Data regarding the type of school attended were segmented by undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate educational categories. Since a large number (135), of the samples are attorneys, to test for the quality of graduate schools attended, a separate category was devoted to law schools. The Distribution of data sources of the most influential African-American is shown in Figure 1. The college education distribution of the most influential African-American is included in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Source of Data for Most Influential African-Americans (N= 411)

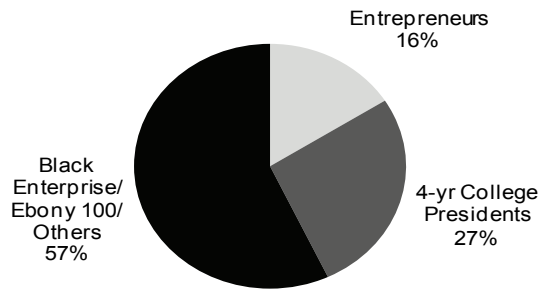
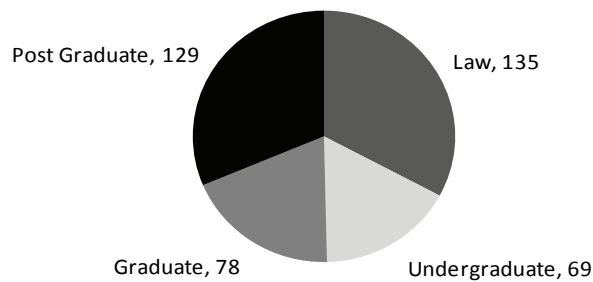


Figure 2: Education Level Distribution of Most Influential African-Americans



## RESULTS

In response to question 1, although HBCUs represent approximately 4 percent of the nation’s four year colleges, the data indicates that 156 of the total 411 African-Americans of influence (or 38%) received their undergraduate degrees from an HBCU. There were 202 undergraduate colleges and universities attended by the African-Americans represented in the data. Of this number 52 were HBCUs and 150 were TWIs. There are approximately 89 Title IV HBCUs and roughly 1,700 four-year TWI colleges and universities in the United States. Hence, roughly 58 percent of the population of HBCUs contributed to the list of influential Black alumni while only 9 percent of the population of TWIs contributed to the list.

As indicated in Table 1 below, of the top 42 colleges and universities, two HBCUs, Howard University and Morehouse College had the greatest number receiving undergraduate degrees, at 15 each, followed by Harvard and Yale Universities with 12 and 9 graduates respectively. The top schools are grouped by their relative impact and influence on the black community. For instance, Morgan State, Hampton, and Fisk Universities are considered to have the same impact on the black community as Cornell, Northwestern and the University of Michigan.

It is also clear from the above discussion that a very small number of TWIs contributed to the list of the most influential African-Americans. In fact, if we exclude graduates from a few top schools as indicated in the U.S. News & World Report “Best College and Universities” (2006), the impact on the African-American community from TWIs is insignificant. The primary competition facing HBCUs are the Ivy League institutions. If we combine the 89 HBCUs and the 8 Ivy League institutions these 97 colleges and universities, which represent approximately 5 percent of the total population of the 1,800 4-year colleges, produced 48.42 percent (199 out of 411) of the most influential African-Americans listed in 2005. If we consider the number of schools that do not appear on the list, there is very clear evidence that the remaining TWIs contribute little to the African-American community other than scholarships and some interesting retention statistics.

In Figure 3, the top 27 schools with at least four of the most influential African-Americans are presented. Thirteen of the 27 are HBCUs. These 13 colleges and universities produced 94 of the 167 (or 55%) African-Americans represented in the “top group”.

Figure 3: Undergraduate Schools Attended by the Most Influential African-Americans (2005)  
Based on 4 or Above

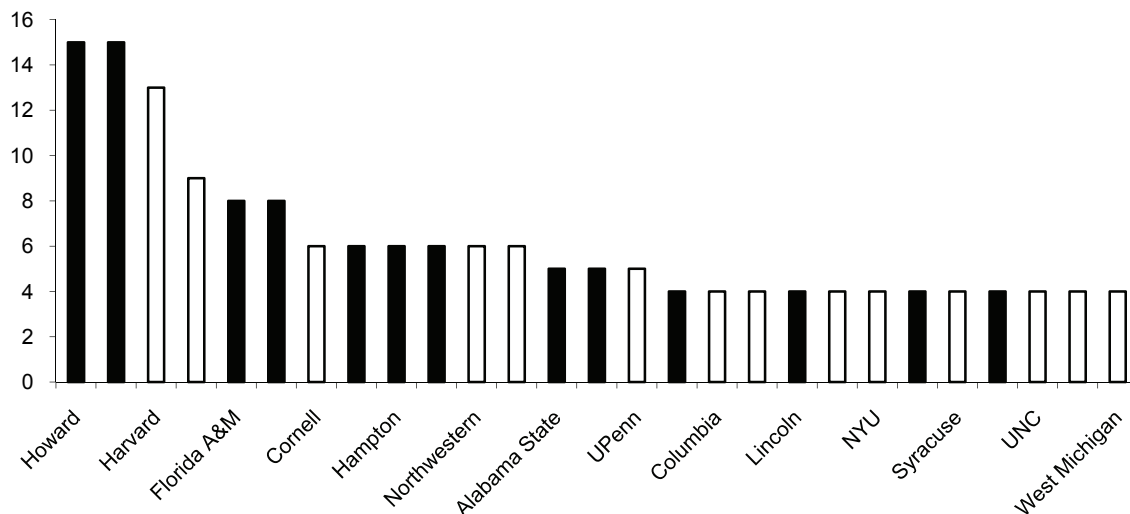




Table 1: The Hampton Rankings of Best Colleges & Universities for African Americans

Type	Name of The Institution	TWI Graduates	HBCU Graduates
HBCU	<b>Howard University</b>		15
HBCU	<b>Morehouse College</b>		15
TWI	Harvard University	13	
TWI	Yale University	9	
HBCU	<b>Florida A&amp;M University</b>		8
HBCU	<b>North Carolina A&amp;T University</b>		8
TWI	Cornell University	6	
HBCU	<b>Fisk University</b>		6
HBCU	<b>Hampton University</b>		6
HBCU	<b>Morgan State University</b>		6
TWI	Northwestern University	6	
TWI	University of Michigan	6	
HBCU	<b>Alabama State University</b>		5
HBCU	<b>Tennessee State University</b>		5
TWI	University of Pennsylvania	5	
HBCU	<b>Central State University</b>		4
TWI	Columbia University	4	
TWI	Georgetown University	4	
HBCU	Lincoln University		4
TWI	University of Maryland	4	
TWI	New York University	4	
HBCU	<b>Shaw University</b>		4
TWI	Syracuse University	4	
HBCU	<b>Tuskegee University</b>		4
TWI	University of NC, Chapel Hill	4	
TWI	Wesleyan University	4	
TWI	Western Michigan University	4	
TWI	Antioch College	3	
HBCU	<b>Grambling State University</b>		3
TWI	Kettering University	3	
HBCU	<b>Oakwood College</b>		3
TWI	Princeton University	3	
HBCU	<b>South Carolina State University</b>		3
HBCU	<b>Talladega College</b>		3
HBCU	<b>Tougaloo College</b>		3
HBCU	<b>University of Arkansas Pine Bluff</b>		3
TWI	University of California- Berkley	3	
TWI	University of California- LA	3	
TWI	Wayne State University	3	
HBCU	<b>Johnson C Smith</b>		3
HBCU	<b>North Carolina Central</b>		3
TWI	West Virginia State University	3	
42	HBCU= 21(50%) TWI=21 (50%)	95 (45.00%)	116 (55.00%)

Since most of the individuals observed in the sample are older that 45 (and assuming a graduation age of 21), the average graduation rates of 20 to 30 years ago is used to prepare tests of the significance of

observed data. The number of bachelor degrees conferred by category during the periods 1976 and 1985 is presented in Table 2 below.

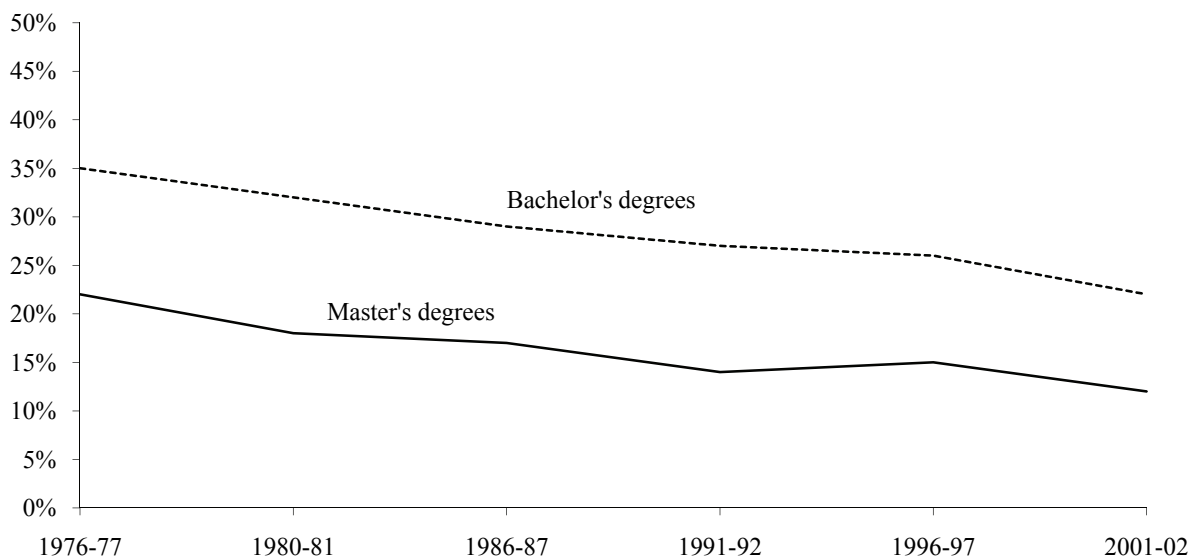
Table 2: The Number of Undergraduate Degrees Conferred to African-Americans (1976-1985)

Year	TWI	HBCU	Total African-Americans	TWI (%)	HBCU (%)
1976-77	37,882	20,754	58,636	64.61%	35.39%
1984-85	41,147	16,326	57,473	71.59%	28.41%
Average	39,514	18,540	58,054	68.06%	31.94%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004 & 2005)

According to the data above there were on average 58,054 bachelor degrees conferred annually to African-Americans for the years 1976-77 and 1984-85. It should be noted that the percentage of the total number of bachelor degrees awarded to African-Americans by HBCUs has decreased consistently since 1976. The number of bachelor degrees conferred by HBCUs decreased from 35 percent in 1976 to 23.6 percent in 2002. Figure 4 below provides evidence of this trend.

Figure 4: The Number of Degrees Conferred by HBCUs to African Americans as a Percentage of All of Degrees Granted 1976-77 to 2001-02.



Source: (NCES, 2004)

In Table 3 data is provided which indicates that 37.96 % of the most influential African-Americans in 2005 received their undergraduate degrees from a HBCU. The data also indicates that 31.94% on average of the total population of African-Americans graduated from HBCUs during the relevant years. To statistically test the difference between the contribution of TWIs and HBCUs of the most influential African-Americans, we constructed a null hypothesis following Question 2 that the proportion of the HBCUs graduates on the list of the most influential African-Americans is greater than the average percentage of all African-American graduates from HBCUs during the relevant time period.

This hypothesis could not be rejected at 5.0% (p-value .0069.) The data indicates that the proportion of African-Americans graduates on the list in 2005 is significantly larger than the proportion of the average number of African-American graduates from HBCUs during the relevant years. The proportion of

African-American graduates from the nation’s TWIs is significantly lower than the average percentage of African-American that graduated from a TWI during those years. This is strong overall evidence that the best type of college or university for African-Americans is the HBCU.

Table 3: Proportional Data Analysis of Bachelor Degrees

	<b>TWI</b>	<b>HBCU</b>	<b>Total African-American</b>	<b>TWI (%)</b>	<b>HBCU (%)</b>
Number of Alumni the 2005 List	255	156	411	62.04%	37.96%
Average number of African-American Undergraduates in 1976-1985	39,514	18,540	58,054	68.07%	31.93%
Influence ratios	0.0064	0.0084	0.0071		
Differential				-6.02%	6.02%

Assessment of Graduate School

The sample has 342 African-Americans with a graduate degree representing 83 percent of the sample population of 411. This data is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Graduate Degrees Earned by Influential Alumni

<b>Undergraduate Institution Type</b>	<b>Number with Graduate degrees</b>	<b>Number without Graduate Degree</b>	<b>Total Degrees by Type</b>	<b>Percentage with Graduate Degree</b>
HBCU	131	25	156	83.97%
TWI	211	44	255	82.75%
Total	342	69	411	83.21%

The proportion of HBCU in the sample of influential alumni with a graduate degree was 83.97 percent (131/156) while the proportion of TWIs alumni with a graduate degree was 82.74% (or 211/255). The test of differences in the proportion of graduate degree holders in the two sub-samples indicated no difference. The observed p-value of this test was 0.37 with an insignificant Z-score of -0.33. This result indicates that there is no disadvantage in the ability of a graduate of a HBCU or an observable advantage of a graduate of a TWI to attend graduate school. A list of the top graduate schools attended by the most influential African-Americans in 2005 is noted in Figure 5.

The top graduate school by far is Harvard University with 42 individuals attending, followed by Columbia and the University of Michigan with 23 and 16 persons attending respectively. Only three of the top schools were HBCUs with Howard (primarily law), Clark Atlanta (MBA) and North Carolina Central (Law) Universities attended by 14, 11, and 5 of the most influential African-Americans attending graduate schools, respectively. This is general evidence that at the graduate level the TWI is the best type (or the primary type) of college or university attended by African-Americans. We did not segment the sample based on the numerous types of master degrees earned, since tests conducted on the small “scattered” data sets would not result in tractable statistical inferences.

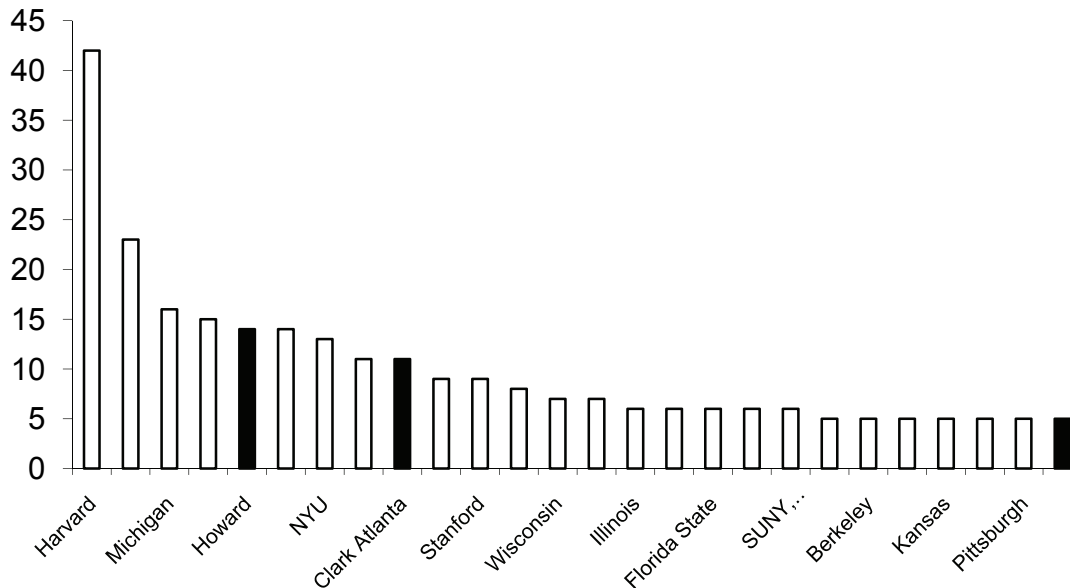
Quality of Graduate Schools Attended

There are 135 individuals of the sample that attended a law school. Of this number 35 were alumni of a HBCU and 100 were alumni of a TWI. We tested the proportion of law school graduates who were alumni from HBCUs versus the TWIs. The following hypothesis was constructed: the proportion of law school graduates from HBCUs is less than the proportion of law school graduates from TWIs. The results indicate that there is no difference (p value of 0.0196). Statistically, the same proportion of lawyers with

undergraduate degrees from TWIs made the list of the most influential African-Americans as the undergraduates from HBCUs.

To answer Question 4, our test responds to the issue of whether students that attended HBCUs have less success in securing admission to “top quality” graduate schools than those students that attended a TWI. To test this area, alumni that graduated from either a HBCUs or a TWI that attended law school are provided a “quality score” based on the rankings of the law school attended, according to the U.S. News & World Report rankings for 2005-06.

Figure 5: Top Graduate Schools for African Americans by Type - 2005



We use the law schools as a proxy of the quality dimension of the movement of African-Americans into graduate schools since most if not all law schools are TWIs. Although the use of the U.S. News & World Report (2006) is a multi-variable index subject to bias, the populations of the nation’s law schools in the rankings are predominately TWIs. Hence, whatever bias may exist should be minimal. None of the four HBCU law schools were ranked in the top 100 by U.S. News and World Report “Best Law School Rankings”. These law schools are ranked either 3rd, or 4th-tier. The majority-based bias in the U.S. News & World Report Rankings is painfully obvious when one considers that Howard University produced a Supreme Court Justice and is yet relegated to third tier status below lesser known TWI ranked schools that lack such a distinction. Eleven of the influential African-American alumni attended both an undergraduate HBCU and a HBCU law school and four of the TWI alumni attended a HBCU law school.

This result is problematic since the assignment of a value to the quality index (either high or low) to the HBCU law school could confound results. In addition, since all members of the sample are influential, the attendance at a HBCU law school may be by choice (selection bias) rather than by default. Because of this, to remove any perceived bias in the U.S. News & World Report rankings, all alumni either of a TWI or a HBCU attending a HBCU law school was eliminated for purposes of conducting quality-based statistic tests. After this adjustment the remaining 120 law schools are all TWIs, thus increasing the power of subsequent tests and inferences thereof.

Law schools were assigned point values as the inverse of their respective rank. Where rank 1-10 equaled 300, rank 31-40 equals 270, and rank 71-80 equaled 230 points and so on. Since all 120 law schools are

TWIs 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> tier school were assigned a value of 165 and 125 respectively. The scoring system is noted in Table 5 below:

Table 5- Law School Quality Scoring Index

Scoring system	Score
Rank 1-10	300
Rank 11-20	290
Rank 21-30	280
Rank 31-40	270
Rank 41-50	260
Rank 51-60	250
Rank 61-70	240
Rank 71-80	230
Rank 81-90	220
Rank 91-100	210
Tier 3	165
Tier 4	125
Unranked	75

In this test the “quality” or average score was determined by dividing the total quality points earned by the number of influential alumni members of the HBCU and TWI groups. The results indicated that on average the HBCU alumni law school quality index was 258.54 and the TWI law school quality index was 272.65. The results indicate that the quality scores of the TWI law schools attended by the HBCUs’ graduates is not significantly lower than the quality of TWI law schools attended by the alumni of TWI graduates. The p- value is .088 on a one tailed t test, and is not significant at the 10 percent level. On average there is a non-significance difference in the number of graduates of HBCUs who attended a “top quality” TWI law school in comparison with the number of alumni of TWIs who attended a top quality TWI law school. This analysis is summarized in Table 6:

Table 6- Tests of the Quality of TWI Law Schools Attended by Influential Alumni

	Number	Average Quality Score
HBCU Alumni with Law degrees from a TWI	24	258.54
TWI Alumni with Law degrees from a TWI	96	272.65
p-value (one-tail t-test)	120	0.088

We thus conclude that the JBHE assertion that the BE rankings may steer gifted students to HBCUs and that they will have a difficult time in entering the nation’s top quality graduate schools is not sustained by the results noted in these tests.

Summary of Results

Numerous magazines and journals publish annual rankings of the nation’s “best colleges” and among these publications Black Enterprise magazine (BE) focuses on the best colleges for African-Americans. Recently, the BE rankings were severely criticized by the editors of the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE, 2004) for “stacking the deck” in favor of HBCUs by applying a low weight to important factors such as retention and graduation rates resulting in misleading rankings (JBHE, 2006). This study uses a variation of the College-Football Success Model (Walker, et al, 2006), to determine the rankings of the best colleges and universities for African-Americans. With this model we answer the question, what type of institution, the HBCU or the TWI is the “best” college choice for African-Americans. The results collected on 411 of the most influential African-Americans in the country,

indicates that HBCUs with approximately 31.93 percent of undergraduate degrees conferred nationally during the relevant time period, produced 37.96 percent or 156 of the 411 of the most influential African-American in 2005. It was also found that although HBCUs represent only 4 percent of the nation's approximately 1,800 four year colleges, 52 (or 26%) of the 202 undergraduate schools attended by these individuals were HBCUs.

Howard University and Morehouse College had the largest number of influential undergraduate alumni at 15 each, followed by Harvard and Yale Universities with 12 and 9 graduates respectively. Of the top 27 contributing schools 13 were HBCUs. Moreover, of the total 167 influential African-Americans included in the top 27 schools, 90 (or 53.9%) attended an HBCU for their undergraduate education. The study also indicates that there is a no difference between HBCUs and TWIs in the movement of graduates into the "top-quality" graduate schools.

### Future Research

This study was conducted based on information available publicly during 2005 and early 2006. It is expected that the annual rankings will change over time. The researchers consider this project on-going with updates to the rankings bi-annually. In the future, the standard used to develop the database of this research may include (without duplication) African-American members of the board of directors of U.S. corporations, and partners of Certified Public Accounting firms.

The ranking of colleges and universities based on the number of influential alumni provides interesting, reliable and useful information to assist African-American students in choosing the best colleges. However, the methodology results in groups of schools that are tied by the number of the most influential members. With this methodology it is difficult to discriminate between similar schools. We can sort schools by using a deflator. An excellent deflator would be the number of degrees conferred or the endowment of a school.

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Differences between the two types of schools, the HBCU and the TWI included in this study are clearly present. For example, the resources available to the top TWIs that the HBCUs are directly competing with are in the billions. The JHBE statement that the HBCUs have limited resources is true. However, it would seem from the results of this study that although TWIs financial endowment is a key variable for recruitment, institutional resources have a minor direct impact on the "striving" of a school's alumni. For example, one argument presented by JHBE in its critique of the BE 2004 rankings was that it was "highly unlikely that Tuskegee University would be ranked higher than MIT". However, the results of this study suggest rather conclusively that Tuskegee University is a better choice for an African-American undergraduate education than MIT. The research indicates that 4 of the most influential African-Americans in the U.S. during 2005 were graduates of Tuskegee University while on this basis MIT is not of the top 42 universities. JBHE also questioned Black Enterprise for its low ranking of the University of Virginia. UVA has the highest retention rate in the State of Virginia. The argument presented by JBHE is that African-Americans would be more successful at UVA because of its high retention rate. However, important the retention rate is, UVA does not appear on the list of the top 42 best colleges and universities for African-Americans. In contrast, Hampton University a Virginia based HBCU has 6 graduates on the list. JBHE however, is correct in its assessment of the stature of Princeton University. Princeton has 3 African-American alumni, placing it in the top 42 list consistent with JBHE's discussions.

The main point of this research is that only a few HBCUs with relatively limited resources are competing directly and clearly succeeding against richly endowed Universities such as the Ivy League schools and other highly successful TWIs. Most of the nation's 1,700 or so TWIs are not in competition at all with the

top HBCUs. Moreover, based on the results of this study, it is not at all dangerous (JBHE, 2004) for a gifted African-American student to attend a HBCU. In fact, the evidence indicates that all things considered, the opposite is true. With the exception of Harvard, the collective success of the undergraduate alumni from HBCUs greatly out-distanced the collective success of those who graduated from the “top” at TWIs. It is also clear from this research that there is no observable penalty or benefit from attendance of an HBCU or a TWI with respect to the ability to enter, or the quality of the graduate school attended by African-Americans. This result also supports the ranking methodology used by Black Enterprise magazine in its annual rankings of the Best Colleges for African-Americans during 2004.

In the final analysis, the determination of what is the best college is summarized by our current graduate students; “It should be recognized that all data can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and the determination of the best school or group of schools is inherently subjective. This is especially so with opinions and abstract terms such as what is best. Ultimately it is the current student and active alumni who determine if an institution of higher education is truly best. It is the alumni who utilize the knowledge gained in school in pursuit of his or her career. It appears from this study that the alumni of Historically Black Colleges & Universities collectively have both learned and subsequently applied such knowledge, more successfully than the African-American alumni of Traditionally White Institutions”.

**APPENDIX**

Exhibit A: 50 Top Schools for African American

<b>50 Top Schools for African Americans (Black Enterprise 2004, 2005)</b>			
<b>2004</b>	<b>College / University</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>College / University</b>
1	<b>Morehouse College</b>	1	<b>Florida A &amp; M University</b>
2	<b>Spelman College</b>	2	<b>Howard University</b>
3	<b>Hampton University</b>	3	<b>North Carolina A &amp; T University</b>
4	<b>Howard University</b>	4	Harvard University
5	<b>Xavier University</b>	5	<b>Spelman College</b>
6	<b>Florida A&amp;M University</b>	6	<b>Hampton University</b>
7	Stanford University	7	Stanford University
8	Columbia University	8	Columbia University
9	Harvard University	9	University Of Pennsylvania
10	Duke University	10	Wesleyan University
11	Georgetown University	11	Dickinson College
12	<b>Clark Atlanta University</b>	12	Wellesley College
13	Berea College	13	Amherst College
14	Univ Of N. C.- Chapel Hill	14	Duke University
15	Oberlin College	15	Smith College
16	Williams College	16	Bernard College
17	<b>N. C. A&amp;T State University</b>	17	<b>Tennessee State University</b>
18	Emory University	18	Georgia State University
19	Wesleyan University	19	Brown University
20	<b>Fisk University</b>	20	Yale University
21	University of Maryland- College Park	21	Georgetown University
22	<b>Tuskegee University</b>	22	Wake Forest University
23	University Of Pennsylvania	23	Babson College
24	Cornell University	24	Williams College
25	University Of Michigan	25	Florida State University
26	George Washington University	26	Cornell University
27	Amherst College	27	<b>Prairie View A&amp;M University</b>
28	Mount Holyoke College	28	<b>Jackson State University</b>
29	Wellesley College	29	Oberlin College
30	University Of Southern California	30	<b>North Carolina Central University</b>

50 Top Schools for African Americans (Black Enterprise 2004, 2005)			
2004	College / University	2005	College / University
31	Wake Forest University	31	Mills College
32	New York University	32	University Of North Carolina
33	<b>Johnson C Smith University</b>	33	Grinnell College
34	<b>Morgan State University</b>	34	<b>Morgan State University</b>
35	John Hopkins University	35	University Of Virginia
36	Swarthmore College	36	Mount Holyoke College
37	Florida State University	37	Emory University
38	Yale University	38	Princeton University
39	Vassar College	39	Swarthmore College
40	<b>Southern University A&amp;M College</b>	40	University Of Michigan
41	Brown University	41	Temple University
42	<b>Dillard University</b>	42	Washington University
43	<b>Tennessee State University</b>	43	Davidson College
44	Ohio State University	44	Simmons College
45	Temple University	45	<b>Morehouse College</b>
46	<b>Bethune-Cookman College</b>	46	Johns Hopkins University
47	Florida International University	47	Dartmouth College
48	Mass. Institute of Technology	48	Vassar College
49	California State University- Los Angeles	49	Northwestern University
50	University Of Chicago	50	University Of Maryland, College Park

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