



Building 21st Century Legacies that Matter

USC BAA Guidance for
Strengthening Institutional
Black Experience & Engagement

USC Black Alumni Association, 2018
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—The Historical Presence of Black Alumni Associations

Numerous incidental articles describe that the first Black graduates of the most highly selective institutions date commonly to the late nineteenth century, but scholarly research of Black alumni associations in predominately white institutions is quite rare. A great void historically has failed to catalogue the academic work or experiences of how Black students or alumni created spaces for themselves in these environments, and contributed to the overall diversity of these institutions.

Accepted opinion regarding the actual inceptions of Black alumni associations on these campuses places them in the late 1970's, when due to the increases of Black enrollments as a result of the civil rights efforts, Black graduates wished to create supportive environments that were sensitive to



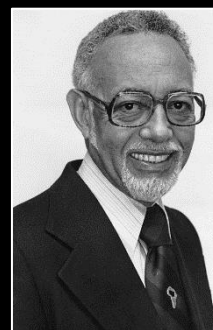
the needs of newly entering students. Traditionally, Black alumni associations have never held leadership authority on the campuses of predominately white institutions, as their missions were directed to serve in response to student and alumni needs for representative inclusion. While Black alumni associations have always had principal interests to ensure access and to reduce inequities, ironically they

have been/are relegated primarily as social organizations.

Consequently, literature or discourse that examines the complexities of Black alumni leadership within these environments is difficult to find. In fact, qualitative and quantitative data that measures engagement or impact minimally exists. While philanthropy and non-monetary behavior has been studied, it is in the scope of limited research. However, these studies condition the circumstances of how Black alumni experiences are critical to institutional engagement. Findings correlate volunteerism and giving to highly visible acknowledgement by the institution's President with actionable diversity strategy, social uplift and trust.

—The USC Black Alumni Association and Its Future Outlook

Founded in 1976, by a group of concerned alumni at the request of Rev. Dr. Thomas Kilgore, Jr. (a peer and mentor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and advisor to 3 USC Presidents), the USC BAA sought to provide a solution for needed scholarship funds for students of color by fundraising on their own to provide critical tuition assistance. The group was originally named "Ebonics," but was renamed in 1988. Over time, the organization expanded their mission to include the recruitment, retention and mentoring of Black students, being the first to prioritize this institutionally.



While the past compelled service to the needs of newly entering students, the USC BAA moves forward today with substantive leadership emphasis and alumni involvement, providing collaborative solutions to improve enrollment yields and completion rates of Black students. To date, the USC BAA has raised over \$10 million in pledges and annual awards provided, and has

served over 3000 students. High-touch retention support programs, which include cultural affinity mentoring, have resulted in a 100% graduation rate of USC BAA scholarship recipients (since 2008)—a rate unmatched in higher education for students of color.



USC BAA resources are available to all 19 USC Schools. Due to root causal insight and partnership, offered from experience-based and leadership perspectives, institutional challenges associated with optimization of Black student outcomes can be easily identified and effectively addressed. Consequently, matriculation rates for Black students could be critically improved, and alumni institutional relationships greatly strengthened.

Thus, while the cycles of experiences for both Black students and alumni are closely bound, they can be successfully aligned within the mission and values of the university overall with great mutual benefit.

Suggested Guidance for School Initiatives:

1. **Black Alumni deeply remember their student experiences**—What types of programs provide targeted and efficient support?
 - a. Tutoring (free or low cost);
 - b. Mentoring, with career focus/cultural affinity;
 - c. Networking inclusion, with scale and authenticity;
 - d. Equitable participation experience in career & personal development activities (study abroad; group programs);
 - e. Exposure to ethnic and cultural leaders within scope of study.
2. **College choice and persistence is Price Sensitive**—How is the Black student data profile understood to support affordability?
 - a. Assessment of ethnically disaggregated data sets that underscore differences between first generation, moderate and middle income funding needs within the demographic;
 - b. Specific fund raising, especially for middle-income families, to reduce loans or create “no loans”, with targeted demographic application of financial aid (merit and need based) to support retention and completion goals and objectives.
3. **Students/Alumni seek to engage against stereotype**—How are affinity communities identified, supported and synergized with academics?
 - a. Acknowledgment of stressors that increase pressure(s) to assimilate to norms of institution, classrooms and social groups;
 - b. Identification of, encouragement for, and collaboration with, social or professional affinity activities and groups;
 - c. Established and fluid relationships with affinity groups as strategic partners;
 - d. Career development with “First in Career” vs. “First Generation” focus and support.

USC BAA Resources:



BAA Scholar Program

Cohort—BAA

Scholarship awards average \$3,000 per student; with some awards ranging from \$10,000 to \$12,500.

Contact: Gary Brown, BAA Manager

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213-740-8342

BAA Mentoring Program—Alumni affinity mentoring; highly programmatic, with high-touch administration. Mentee sign-ups each semester.

Contact: Tensie Taylor, M.Ed., Assistant Director

tjtaylor@usc.edu

213-821-1526

BAA Toastmasters Chapter—Independent chapter of Toastmasters, International. Student governed/staff advised; chapter memberships paid by BAA.

Contact: Tensie Taylor, M.Ed., Assistant Director

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BAA ABEHE Summit—Aligning for Black Excellence in Higher Education; annual alumni/student think tank conference; topical social, professional and leadership development workshops.

Contact: Michele G. Turner, MBA, Ed. D.

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Advancement/Donor Relations—Relationship development, stewardship and engagement, with emphasis upon scholarship initiatives which fund annual gifts and endowments.

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Student/Alumni/Donor Cultivation Events—BAA key events per academic year: **Pinning and Affirmation Ceremony** (August—all incoming Black students—350 attendees typical); **Trojan Legends Homecoming Celebration** (Oct or Nov—all Black alumni—500 attendees typical); **ABEHE Summit w Diversity Networking reception** (March—students/alumni—300 attendees typical/some topics livestreamed); **Annual Scholarship Benefit event** (April—275 to 1300 depending on event type).



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