Internationalization and International Recruitment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Administrative Structure, Challenges and Support

Kishmar A. Best

University at Albany
Introduction

In this era of globalization, higher education institutions must marshal resources and act strategically in order to provide a comprehensive learning experience that prepares students to be productive citizens within an interconnected society. Knight (2015) defines globalization as, “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas...across borders” and notes that this phenomenon affects each country differently based on national histories, traditions, cultures and priorities (p. 3). Globalization impacts the academy in several ways, including “…the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communications firms and of multinational and technology publishing, and the use of information technology (IT)” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p 291). How colleges and universities in the United States respond to this phenomenon has significant implications for their own success and for the health of the nation’s economy.

Comprehensive internationalization is “a strategic and integrated approach to internationalization in which institutions articulate internationalization as an institutional goal (if not priority), develop an internationalization plan driven by sound analysis, and seek to bring together the usually disparate and often marginalized aspects of internationalization”(Olsen, Green & Hill, 2006, p. viii). Internationalization in higher education is not a completely new phenomenon, as the movement of students & ideas across countries was common in 12th and 13th century Europe (Hudzik 2011). However the scope and scale of internationalization in contemporary higher education, and the increasingly common view of college degrees as a commodity to be freely traded as a private good rather than a public responsibility (Altbach &
Knight 2007), make comprehensive internationalization strategies an imperative for survival rather than a desired outcome for colleges and universities.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 designated Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as “accredited institutions of higher education founded before 1964 whose primary mission was, and continues to be, the education of black americans” (Ricard & Brown, 2008, p. 1). There are many different types of institutions (research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges etc.) in a variety of settings (rural, urban etc.) under this designation. What they all share is their unique and historic mission of access to higher education and racial uplift for Black Americans. The nation’s HBCUs play a key role within American higher education. Though this group constitutes less than 5% of the nation’s higher education institutions, they produce approximately 25% of Black college graduates (Willie, Reddick & Brown, 2006). HBCUs provide more access to higher education for first generation Black students than any other group of institutions. They are also successful at creating nurturing environments that lead to degree attainment and have been instrumental in building the Black middle class (Legon & Schexnider, 2017). Like all colleges and universities in the United States, HBCUs must reckon with the implications of globalization. However, Davis (2014) argues that the unique HBCU environment and culture present unique challenges to comprehensive internationalization.

The purpose of the study is to learn more about internationalization and international recruitment at HBCUs. Research addressing comprehensive internationalization at HBCUs is virtually non-existent. The current literature tends to focus on specific components of internationalization, such as student mobility or international curriculums, rather than overarching institutional vision, strategy, or action. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring
if internationalization and international recruitment are prioritized within HBCU mission statements, how offices charged with internationalization are structured and supported, and to identify common challenges to internationalization and international recruitment that these institutions face and the strategies used to overcome them.

**Literature Review**

This section provides a review of existing literature on comprehensive internationalization, including the model which serves as the conceptual framework for this study. Next it provides a brief history of HBCUs, their missions and accomplishments before examining current internationalization efforts at these institutions. It then summarizes the known challenges to internationalization at HBCUs before concluding with a call for further research on comprehensive internationalization at HBCUs that goes beyond individual components such as student mobility.

Globalization has significantly influenced higher education and the role of colleges and universities. Now more than ever before, institutions expected to provide their students with the learning experiences and skills to thrive within a global context. Morris (2010) writes that, “Universities are being asked to help meet major international challenges, to educated students in their disciplines with a sense of global competence and engagement, and to contribute to local and national economic competitiveness”(p. 2). According to Hovland (2014), “Over the last ten to fifteen years, more and more colleges and universities have adopted mission and vision statements that link their degrees to successful preparation for a complex, globally interconnected world”(p. 3). Many institutions in the United States aggressively recruit international students, implementing methods such as formatting websites in multiple languages
and turning to data analytics to boost international enrollment. Fernandez (2011) describes the International Student Barometer (ISB), which collects data from over 170,000 international students every year, from over 700 colleges and universities across 24 countries. This tool provides institutions with the results of their own student surveys, but also the opportunity to compare their student responses to those of similar students from other campuses. Colleges and universities have also established senior international officers (SIOs), high level administrators who are tasked with internationalizing an institution’s programs and activities. Typical goals for an SIO include creating international partnerships with institutions abroad, increasing the number of domestic students studying abroad, and raising funds, awareness and support for internationalization on campus (Dessof, 2010).

Conceptual Framework

The American Council on Education’s Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) model for comprehensive internationalization consists of “six interconnected target areas for institutional initiatives, policies, and programs” (para. 1). These target areas are articulated institutional commitment, administrative leadership, structure & staffing, curriculum, co-curriculum & learning outcomes, faculty policies & practices, student mobility and collaboration & partnerships (“CIGE Model”, n.d.). Articulated institutional commitment is defined as, “Strategic planning involving key stakeholders articulating an institution’s commitment to internationalization and provides a roadmap for implementation. Formal assessment mechanisms reinforce this commitment by framing explicit goals and holding the institution accountable for accomplishing them” (para. 2). The model goes on to state that strategic planning for internationalization should be featured and prioritized within the
institutional mission statement, institution-wide plans and via detailed internationalization plans. This study uses the CIGE model, specifically the target area of articulated institutional commitment as a conceptual framework to explore if internationalization and international recruitment are prioritized within the mission statements of historically black colleges and universities.

**Internationalization**

Internalization is an imperative for contemporary colleges and universities to be successful and meet their full potential. As an industry, higher education must internationalize to meet the demands of an interconnected society, and respond to a myriad of environmental pressures. Knight (2004) highlighted the increasing importance and complexity of higher education’s international dimension due to key drivers of change such as “the development of advanced communication and technological services, increased international labor mobility, more emphasis on the market economy and the trade liberalization, focus on the knowledge society, increased levels of private investment and decreased public support for education, and lifelong learning” (p 7). Internationalization is not an easy or short term task. Fernandez (2011) advocates for a data driven approach and cautions that establishing priorities and goals is critical. Identifying areas of weaknesses and developing solutions is a time consuming task, but time and money invested into gathering and interpreting data almost always moves the needle in the right direction. Hudzik (2011) described internationalization as a means rather than the end, and the correct approach to internationalization depends on a particular institution’s end goal. Hudzik goes on to emphasize that institutions will have different starting points and focuses for internationalization such as student mobility (study abroad & international students), integrating
global content into the curriculum, or developing global partnerships. Knight (1994) identified six elements of internationalization (curriculum development, international exchanges, external partnerships, recruitment of international students, study abroad & faculty exchanges and community involvement) advised institutions to view the internationalization cycle (awareness, commitment, planning, operationalization, review and reinforcement) as a series of flexible and interconnected steps. Morris (2010) outlined several key actions necessary for effective internationalization; define terms and purpose, construct an internationalization plan with the participation of key constituencies, connect the internationalization plan to the institution’s strategic plan, hold leadership and administration accountable for internationalization objectives, create and maintain structures that promote consistent communication, establish reliable funding sources for internationalization activities and lastly to recognize and celebrate success. Childress (2009) explored the internationalization plans at 31 institutions in the United States. Internationalization plans are written commitments to internationalization that may include “goal statements, mission statements, vision statements, implementation initiatives, allocated resources, timelines, and performance indicators” (p. 291). The researcher identifies three types of internationalization plans; institutional strategic plans (ISPs), distinct documents (DDs), and unit plans (UPs). Findings indicated that distinct documents were the most influential at integrating international initiatives across multiple units and into the fabric of the institution. Lastly, findings also suggested that “the more specifically internationalization plans articulated the process, resources, costs, and responsible parties for implementation across the institution, the more useful those plans were in advancing institution wide goals for internationalization” (p. 295).
Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as “accredited institutions of higher education founded before 1964 whose primary mission was, and continues to be, the education of Black Americans” (Ricard & Brown 2008, p. 1). There are currently 103 institutions with the HBCU designation and they are located primarily in the southeast, southwest and northeast areas of the United States (Evans, Evans, & Evans, 2002). These institutions began to emerge after the Civil War and were established to educate Black students who were prohibited from other colleges and universities in the United States (Nichols, 2004).

Today, HBCUs continue to be powerhouses of access and opportunity, educating generations of Black students and establishing themselves as indispensable drivers of uplift to a community that has long been marginalized in the United States. Brown & Davis (2001) argue that “African American students, more than any other group, face incalculable barriers to higher education participation and attainment. These barriers include social backgrounds that are incongruous with Eurocentric campus climates, limited financial resources, and trepidation of school failure” (p. 45). The authors continue to state that HBCUs are firmly rooted within American higher education and provide a unique and irreplaceable purpose. Legon and Schexnider (2017) write that, “No group of institutions is more responsible for providing first generation African American students access to higher education, and few are as successful in setting high expectations and providing a nurturing environment that leads these students to attain a degree” (para. 2). Allen & Jewell (2002) write that HBCUs have “functioned as multifaceted institutions, providing not only education, but also social, political, and religious leadership for the African American community” (p. 242). According to Kim & Conrad (2006),
HBCUs provide low student faculty ratios and higher rates of student and faculty interaction, and Allen (1992) found that Black students at HBCUs report higher academic achievement and levels of social involvement, while possessing higher educational aspirations due to more positive social & psychological environments. Kim (2004) examined the learning experiences of Black students HBCUs in comparison to those attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Using a longitudinal data set obtained from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), the researcher found that Black students attending HBCUs were more involved within the academic community and had more informal contact with faculty. Additionally, though HBCUs serve students who are less prepared, with less wealthy parents and with fewer institutional recourses at their disposal in comparison to PWIs, HBCUs have a positive or neutral impact on the intellectual and academic develop of their students. HBCUs assume responsibility to provide remedial instruction for academically underprepared Black students (Allen & Jewell, 2002), and use a pedagogical approach that links the most talented faculty to incoming students (Willie, Reddick & Brown, 2006), rather than the practice of using adjuncts and graduate students to teach entry level courses that is common at other institutions. Gasman and Commodore (2014) also note the Afrocentric focus on teaching & learning at HBCUs, and their tendency to take a blended approach rather than choosing between liberal arts and practical curriculums. HBCUs also serve to preserve Black American historical and cultural tradition and to develop key leadership and role models for the Black community. These institutions are responsible for producing over half of all Black middle class and white collar professionals (Nichols, 2004).

Though HBCUs continue to fulfill their missions and make a profound impact, they are also forced to grapple with a variety of historical and contemporary challenges. According to


Wilcox, Wells, Haddad & Wilcox (2014), HBCUs typically have small endowments and face economic constraints that limit their strategic responses. Due to their missions of access and serving low-income students, HBCUs limit the use of adjuncts and online courses, strategies that other institutions use to lower costs. Additionally, HBCUs struggle to recruit the best Black students since predominantly white institutions tend to have better infrastructure and can offer more financial support. Evans, Evans & Evans (2002) provided recommendations for HBCUs to continue to thrive moving forward: maintain or increase enrollment, recruit competent and dedicated administrators and faculty, develop accredited programs and curriculums and build institutional partnerships. Legon & Schexnider (2017) discussed current challenges faced by HBCUs and made a call to action in order for these institutions to remain relevant and successful. They listed “declining enrollment, underperforming leadership, reductions in state funding, obsolete business models, uncertain federal funding, a dearth of future leadership talent, inadequate financial support from alumni and intercollegiate athletic scandals” as challenges these institutions must address (para. 4).

HBCUs serve a unique and important mission within higher education in the United States. They provide supportive learning environments while producing positive academic outcomes despite fewer resources and facing a variety of challenges. Despite a long history of underfunding and inadequate resources, HBCUs have continued to persevere and produce a legacy of success.

**Internationalization at HBCUs**

HBCUs have a long legacy of international engagement and have “…educated generations of political, business and scientific leaders, from Africa as well as from countries
such as India, whose graduates were not always welcome at other American institutions” (Fischer (2014, para. 1). According to Oguntoyinbo (2013), African students began to enroll at HBCUs during the late 19th century due to available scholarships and word of mouth. Prominent African leaders like Nnamdi Azikiwe (former president of Nigeria, Lincoln University), Kwame Nkrumah (former prime minister of Ghana, Lincoln University) and Hastings Kamuzu Banda (former president of Malawi, Meharry Medical College) are all HBCU alums. Mullen (2014) detailed contemporary internationalization efforts at Morgan State University and Spelman College. Morgan State’s Center for Global Studies & Exchange consists of four full time staff members that oversee international activity at the institution. The center is described as a “university wide support unit aimed at facilitating the internationalization efforts of the university” (p. 153), and works collaboratively with academic departments to enhance the student experience, oversee study abroad, exchanges and international education programs. Spelman College’s Gordon-Zeto Center for Global Education “serves as the institutional focal point to cohere, enhance and lead the college’s global strategic initiatives” (p. 153). This center was established with a $17 million grant and encompasses a study abroad office and other international learning experiences such as Spelman’s Model UN Program, Student Activities Global Experience Program, international community service trips. As an institution, Spelman has made it a priority for all students to have an international experience before they graduate.

Challenges to Internationalization at HBCUs

Despite the successes of some institutions, HBCUs overall do face significant challenges in regards to internationalization and international recruitment. International offices at HBCUs can be poorly staffed or saddled with financial limitations that constrain international travel.
Additionally, potential partners overseas may not be familiar with the concept of an HBCU, and many institutions may not have international name recognition. Lastly, campus constituents may view internationalization as a threat to the core HBCU mission (Fischer, 2014). Some internationalization efforts fail because they are developed with little institutional support and become isolated while international partnership and exchange programs with foreign entities can become too cumbersome to manage effectively (Roach, 2013). HBCUs may also struggle to create programs that are both appealing and affordable to African American students. Formerly colonized countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America may lack formal programs and the resources to support students once they are abroad Brown (2002). There is also the challenge of generating interest and education students about study abroad opportunities, since students of color are less informed about study abroad, less likely to understand the benefits and less likely to have role models who support participating in study abroad Covington (2017). Barriers to study abroad for students of color include financial constraints, lack of familial support and lack of programs at sites of interest. Tensley (2015) also highlights is the current lack of Black representation in study abroad, which limits the number of Black Americans moving into international careers.

Despite a long history of foreign born Black students on HBCU campuses, there little empirical work examining the experiences of these students. In one study that did explore the topic, Mwangi (2016) examined Black international students’ sense of belonging at HBCUs and the factors that impacted their sense of belonging. The study indicated that institutions may not be providing adequate tools and support for them to succeed, both personally and academically. The author suggested potentials strategies address this that included, 1) pairing Black international students with a cross cultural native born Black student, 2) developing formal
events where groups can have dialogues, 3) reframing curriculum on Black studies & history and 4) encouraging & supporting collaborations between Black diaspora organizations. There is also minimal research regarding the international experiences or perceptions of domestic students attending HBCU campuses. Walker, Bukenya and Thomas (2011) explored student perceptions of globalization and study abroad programs and HBCUs. The researchers surveyed 5000 undergraduate students from Alabama A&M University, asking them questions about their perception of globalization. Findings suggested that while a number of variables such as major and class status were found to have statistically significant relationships with the perception of globalization, demographic variables were not strong indicators. Lastly, as the level of education increased, so did skepticism about globalization while business students were more favorably inclined toward globalization than non-business students.

A review of the literature reveals a need to learn more about internationalization and international recruitment at historically black colleges and universities. Though there are a few HBCU institutions with clear and robust internationalization goals and programs, the body of empirical work focused on HBCUs overall is thin. There is no clear picture about the status of internationalization and international recruitment at HBCUs as an institutional group or a comprehensive view of the work that is currently being done within the HBCU community. There is also a need to learn more about how HBCUs are addressing the challenges they face to internationalize their campuses. These strategies will be informative and should be shared within the HBCU community. Lastly, there is a need to examine comprehensive internationalization at HBCUs rather than simply components such as study abroad or exchange programs. It is clear that today’s college and university graduates need global experiences and skills to be successful
in an increasingly interdependent world (Fischer, 2014) and HBCUs must demonstrate that they are achieving these learning outcomes to remain competitive and vibrant.

**Methods**

The researcher developed a qualitative study to gain a greater understanding of internationalization and recruitment at HBCUs. The researcher hoped to be able to get a sense of how internationalization and recruitment is prioritized at these institutions while uncovering strategies used to overcome common challenges/obstacles these institutions face.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Do historically black colleges and universities prioritize internalization and international recruitment within their mission statements?
2. How are the offices charged with implementing comprehensive internationalization & international recruitment at HBCUs structured & supported?
3. What challenges do HBCUs face to internationalize their institutions?
4. What strategies are used at HBCUs to achieve their internationalization goals?

The mission statement of each HBCU was the primary source of data for the inquiry. According to Morphew & Hartley (2006), higher education mission statements allow members of an institution to determine what actions fit institutional priorities, provide a shared purpose that inspires and motivates, and communicate values to external constituents. Bowen (2009) advises that the analysis of documents is typically used in combination with another research method to provide triangulation. This allows the researcher to corroborate findings across data
and reduce potential bias. This study used a questionnaire of HBCU administrators who oversee internationalization and international recruitment as a secondary data source.

Data Collection & Analysis

Institutions were identified using the National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) list of colleges and universities designated as HBCUs. Mission statements were then collected from institutional websites and strategic plans for review. Community colleges and medical schools were removed from the sample in order to provide an equitable comparison, leaving 84 mission statements for analysis. The text of each mission statement was then organized and uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package.

The qualitative data from collected mission statements were reviewed using thematic analysis. This method is used to identify and interpret patterns within qualitative data and to provide a summative description that interprets that data in relation to research questions (Clark & Braun, 2014). Thematic analysis consists of six phases and is a recursive process where the researcher may move back and forth as needed within the phases. The first step of analysis was for the researcher to become fully immersed in the data through repeated reading and re-reading of the data in an active way. Initial notes were made during this phase, to mark ideas for potential coding, as recommended by Braun & Clark (2006). The following step consisted of generating initial codes from the data. This was done deductively, using the comprehensive internationalization conceptual framework to highlight relevant ideas. In the third phase, the researcher began to collate the codes and search for potential themes in relation to the research questions. Thematic maps were used to support this process and to visualize relationships between potential themes. The following phase involved refining the themes on two levels, first ensuring that the codes for each theme formed a coherent pattern, and then re-reading the entire
dataset to verify that the themes made sense in relation to the overall whole. Next, in the fifth phase, the themes were defined and named. The researcher sought to identify the essence of each theme captured about the data and wrote a detailed analysis of each theme. The sixth and final phase involved producing a final report and analysis that went beyond description to provide a concise and logical account of the story that the data told. The researcher also selected extracts that would illustrate the focus of each theme.

A questionnaire was designed and administered using Survey Gizmo (an online survey software platform). This questionnaire consisted of 17 multiple choice and open ended questions designed to learn more about the structure/staffing of international offices, identify shared obstacles to internationalization, and strategies used to overcome them. A purposive sampling method, where the researcher uses a range of methods to locate all possible cases of a specific and difficult to reach population (Neuman, 2011), was implemented to identify the population from which to sample. The researcher identified administrators responsible for internationalization and international recruitment by reviewing the organizational charts and websites from the HBCUs in the sample. Ultimately, the questionnaire was distributed to a total of 48 administrators.

Participants received 4 invitations via email over a 4 month period and there were a total of 8 respondents for a 17% response rate. Participants’ multiple choice responses were then analyzed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, while the short answer text responses were reviewed via thematic analysis.

**Findings**

Findings gleaned from two sources of data (mission statements and a questionnaire of administrators) provided valuable insight about how internationalization and international
recruitment are prioritized at historically black colleges and universities. Findings also provided a look at the administrative structures and support in place to implement internationalization and international recruitment. Patterns and themes from each data source are presented and described before a discussion of conclusions.

Mission Statements

Mission statements of the historically black colleges and universities in the sample provided a clear view of the publicly articulated goals of each institution. 5 overarching themes emerged from the analysis of HBCU mission statements: 1) Academic Programs, 2) Identity, 3) Community, 4) Purpose, and 5) Global.
**Theme One: Academic Programs**

The first emergent theme from the mission statements is academic programs, which included degree offerings, learning environment and institutional values. The mission statements clearly articulated the types of degrees they offered (bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, professional) and in some cases emphasized specific disciplines for which they prepared students to enter. For example, one mission statement included the following: “_____________________ offers contemporary baccalaureate, masters, educational specialist and doctoral level degrees to prepare students for careers in the arts, sciences, business, engineering, education, agriculture and technology”. There were also descriptions of the particular learning environment or academic tradition within particular institutions, for example the liberal arts or focusing on a specific population of students: “___________has distinctive strengths in the sciences, architecture, business, engineering, health, and other professions, all structured on solid foundations in the liberal arts”. Lastly, the mission statements provided detail about what the institutions’ values or specializations such as teaching, research or service: “Through teaching, research, and community engagement, the institution’s rich heritage and its current multicultural student-centered focus provide a firm foundation for its endeavors”.

**Theme Two-Identity**

The second theme within the mission statements articulated the identity of these institutions. This included statements that indicated status as a historically black college/university, land grant status, membership within a state university system, religious affiliation and institutional control (public vs. private). Below are two examples:
1. “Founded in 1891, ____________ is a public, land-grant, historically black university, which has evolved into a fully accessible, racially integrated, and multi-generational institution”

2. “___________” is a historically Black, co-educational, senior liberal arts college founded in 1866 by the Freedman’s Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church

Theme Three-Community

The third emergent theme was community. This theme involved the relationship between these institutions and their community, and the value they provided by offering access, economic development and public service. Describing their commitment to access, one institution wrote that “This historical African American institution was founded in 1886 to meet the growing demands of our community for better-educated and trained ministers, missionaries, and public school teachers”. Another institution specifically articulated their purpose of developing their local area stating that, “Its mission is to meet higher education and economic development needs of the state and region through innovative teaching and applied research”. Lastly, the idea of public service and social responsibility was also central to the HBCU mission statements, with one statement including the following language: “Acknowledging its covenant relationship with The United Methodist Church, the College affirms the ideal of social responsibility and seeks to contribute to the welfare and revitalization of its community”.

Theme Four-Purpose

The fourth theme, purpose, describes why the institution exists. Digging deeper, it encompasses the objectives that the institution seeks to accomplish and the strategy to achieve
those objectives. Within this theme findings indicated that the self-described purpose of these colleges and universities included leadership development, academic excellence, empowerment for social change, and nurturing personal character and faith. One institutions succinctly captured this theme stating that their purpose was “to prepare confident, competent, reflective, visionary leaders and responsible citizens. We uphold our tradition of academic excellence as we maintain our historical commitment to opportunity and access for students of diverse backgrounds”.

**Theme Five—Global**

The final emergent theme from the mission statements was “Global”. This theme explored how these colleges and universities provided a global experience for their students, in addition to preparing them to live, work and lead within a global society. Within this theme, the mission statements expressed the global experiences that they provided for students. One example is an institution’s statement that “The University continues to embrace our African American heritage along with appreciation for other cultures and ethnic groups in our global community”. The mission statements also declared how these institutions prepare their students for a global society, typically centering on leadership and productive citizenship. One institution’s mission statement included the following: “With an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community”. In another similar example, a mission statement claimed that the institution “develops productive members of a global society through high quality instruction, scholarship, research, service and community involvement”.

**Questionnaire—Senior International Officers**
Administrative Structure

Of the 8 participants, 6 identified themselves as the senior international officer at their respective institutions. The professional titles of the participants varied and included coordinators, assistant directors, executive directors and a vice provost. Only one participant held a faculty appointment (Associate Professor). 5 of the 8 participants reported directly to the provost or chief academic officer at their institution while 1 reported to an administrative vice president. 5 of the 8 participants served in offices that were located within academic affairs. 2 were located within an academic department and 1 located within student affairs. In regards to staffing, 6 participants reported directly or indirectly supervising 5 or less full time employees while 2 participants directly or indirectly supervised between 11-15 full time employees. The responses were similar for student employees, with 6 participants reporting that they directly or indirectly supervised 5 or less student employees. 1 participant directly or indirectly supervised 11-15 student employees while the last participant directly or indirectly supervised 11-15 student employees.

Support

In regards to institutional strategy and support, 5 participants reported that their institution had an internationalization plan in place and 6 institutions engaged in international partnerships or agreements. 7 participants agreed or strongly agreed that both their president/chancellor and their provost/chief academic officer are advocates for internationalization/international recruitment. 6 participants agreed or strongly agreed that as an overall group, the faculty on their campus were supportive of internationalization/international recruitment. To identify the sources of financial support for internationalization/international
recruitment, participants were asked to select from the following options how their offices were funded: operating budgets, student fees, state funds, federal funds and philanthropy/gifts. The option to write in an alternative funding source was also available. The three most common sources of funding among the responses were an operating budget, student fees and philanthropy/gifts. There was also 1 write in response that named grants as a source of funding. In terms of total dollars available for internationalization/international recruitment efforts, all participants reported budgets of less than $300,000 while 3 participants listed their total amount of funding at less than $100,000.

Challenges & Strategies

Participants were invited to share the challenges to internationalization and international recruitment that they have encountered in their work. The challenges fell into three main areas: limited funds, lack of resources for international students and uncertain priorities.

One participant wrote that “As a small, private institution, we struggle with maintaining a budget that allows for international recruitment. We have lost several international students due to lack of funding." Participants also voiced concerns regarding a lack of assistantships, campus jobs and scholarships available for international students. Finally, participants expressed uncertainty about where internationalization fell among campus priorities. One participant wrote, “I'm not sure if this a priority at the moment. Our institution is undergoing a change in administration with the search and hiring of a new president”.

In addition to the challenges they face, participants were also invited to share the strategies they have used to overcome them. Three strategies that were consistent throughout the responses were collaboration, providing support for international students and external
funding/fundraising. Participants collaborated with third parties and external entities, including agents, recruiters and nonprofits to achieve their goals. One respondent wrote that working with a recruiter leads to higher yields, as they help to encourage applicants to complete the lengthy application and visa process. A second strategy was to provide support for international students through initiatives like international student study halls, ESL (English as a Second Language) programs and assistance in securing academic scholarships. The last strategy consisted of looking outside of the institution for funding to meet internationalization/international recruitment objectives. One participant shared that, “We utilize funds provided by donor organizations to cover tuition, room and board, and fees for a number of international students”. Several other respondents discussed applying for grants to fund study abroad programs and other internationalization initiatives.

Successful Programs/Initiatives

The administrators in the sample also shared a number of successful internationalization programs and initiatives. These programs fell into three broad categories: academic activity, international student support and cultural exposure/enrichment. Academic activities included initiatives like visiting Fulbright scholars, exchange programs and lecture series for visiting international scholars. Participants also shared successful international student support programs such as international orientations and advocating for international students that experienced issues with faculty. Finally, a number of events and programs providing cultural exposure and enrichment on their campuses were reported. These include international festivals, international weeks, campus wide celebrations for international holidays and symposiums on the topic of internationalization at HBCUs.
Suggestions

The final portion of the questionnaire gave participants an opportunity to share any additional information, comments and/or suggestions they had. All of the participants who responded to this question chose to provide suggestions of how to improve internationalization and recruitment efforts at HBCUs. One suggestion was for United States federal agencies (US Department of Education, US Department of State, Department of Defense and National Intelligence Services were specifically named) to provide funding for international studies at HBCUs. Another suggestion was for HBCUs to form a consortium in order to pool resources and offer their best programs to students abroad. This participant also called for investment in China, India and Taiwan, saying that “We build, they come will not always work. We should build where they are”.

Summary of Findings

A thematic analysis of HBCU mission statements and a questionnaire of international administrators revealed several key findings. The five emergent themes from the mission statements demonstrate that among other areas of focus, internationalization and international recruitment are prioritized at HBCUs, to the extent that these concepts are addressed in their mission statements. The “global” theme from the mission statements encompassed the international experiences that HBCUs provide for their students and a commitment from these institutions to prepare their graduates for leadership within a global society. A questionnaire of international administrators at HBCUs revealed insights about how offices charged with internationalization are structured (in terms of leadership titles, place within the institution, staffing patterns) and supported (financial resources, support of institutional leadership &
(faculty). Common challenges to internationalization and international recruitment were identified, in addition to strategies used to overcome them, and suggestions for the growth/improvement of internationalization efforts at HBCUs were also revealed.

**Discussion & Conclusion**

The study’s findings suggest that internationalization and international recruitment are prioritized within the mission statements of historically black colleges and universities. These institutions include language in their mission statements that focuses on providing global experiences for students and preparing them to be successful within a global society. This finding may be used to convince those within the HBCU community who question the value of internationalization and international recruitment or view these concepts as threats to the HBCU core mission. It may also be a tool for international administrators to use in advocating for additional resources to accomplish their goals and to streamline strategic planning and internationalization efforts across the institution.

Findings also indicated that among the institutions within the sample, those leading internationalization efforts tend to be individuals in administrative roles without a faculty appointment. Their offices are typically located within academic affairs, they report to the provost and they oversee staffs of up to 5 full time employees and student employees. Institutions generally have international plans in place and engage in international partnerships/agreements. While there is strong leadership (president & provost) and faculty support for internationalization, financial support appears to vary. Funds devoted to internationalization range from less than $100,000 and up to $300,000 with operating budgets, student fees and philanthropy/gifts being the most common sources of support for internationalization.
As HBCU international administrators confront the challenges of limited funds, lack of institutional resources for international students and uncertain institutional priorities to internationalize their campuses, they turn to collaboration, providing their own support for international students and external funding/fundraising to address them. It may be fruitful for HBCU international administrators (who are typically housed within academic affairs) to establish or deepen collaborations with the student affairs portfolio at their institution. This relationship would provide a mechanism to further support international students and connect them to resources and staff that aid their success. Collaborations and formal agreements with other HBCUs may also serve to pool limited resources to achieve internationalization goals. For example, a consortium of HBCUs may be able to offer a wider variety of academic programs to prospective international students or provide greater infrastructure that allows larger groups of students to participate in study abroad experiences. HBCU international administrators can also collaborate with local immigrant communities or local organizations to offer international initiatives at lower costs (cultural events, seminars etc.)

As an overarching strategy, HBCU international administrators must champion the benefits of internationalization on their campuses and make the connection to the central HBCU mission clear. HBCUs have historically served as beacons of access, diversity (both among student and faculty populations) and inclusion within American higher education. There is a great opportunity for these institutions to continue that legacy in the nation’s current political climate and provide a welcoming experience for international students while preparing domestic students to be leaders within a global society.
Limitations

This study faced several limitations. The first, and perhaps most impactful, was the small sample size of the questionnaire. The questionnaire likely did not uncover findings that are generalizable to all HBCUs but rather speak more closely to the experiences of the participants (and their institutions). However, it can serve as a starting point to investigate the central topic of internationalization and international recruitment at HBCUs. Additionally, the research methods captured a limited perspective. Using public mission statements and the aforementioned small sample size of the questionnaire may not have captured a full picture of internationalization and international recruitment at HBCUs. The perspectives of other constituents (students, faculty, senior leadership) may offer valuable additional insight and other institutional documents (strategic plans, internationalization plans etc.) may offer more detail about how the nation’s HBCUs continue to internationalize.

Future Research

A central challenge to executing the study was a lack of access. A contributing factor to this challenge may have been the researcher’s status as an HBCU “outsider”, someone who never has never attended or worked at an HBCU. It was difficult to acquire internal documents and to make contact with individuals at these institutions. A researcher from within the HBCU community may have greater success in gathering more extensive and complete data to address the research questions. It may also be more informative for the HBCU community to share their own stories and provide the necessary context for research about these unique institutions.
References


Oguntoyinbo, L. (2013, February 25). HBCUs produce leaders not only domestically, but also abroad. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*.


