

HBCU Louisiana Libraries Collaborative (HBCU-LLC)

Introduction

Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana is applying for the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian program and collaborating with Louisiana Historically Black Colleges and Universities' (HBCUs) deans and directors from Dillard University, Grambling State University, Southern University New Orleans, Southern University Shreveport, and Xavier University. The project is called the Historically Black Colleges and Universities -Louisiana Libraries Collaborative (HBCU-LLC) with a goal to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse workforce, which directly supports LB goal 1 and objective 1.1. To accomplish this goal, the HBCU-LLC will join forces to provide a cadre of forums for a broad audience of HBCU undergraduate students and current library staff at HBCU libraries. Southern University and A&M College will serve as the lead applicant with Dr. Dawn Kight, dean of libraries at Southern University as Principal Investigator. Dr. Kight has managed numerous grant projects and she is the current chair of the LOUIS Libraries Statewide Consortium Executive Board. The HBCU-LLC will offer two tracks for forum participants. Track A online forums will focus on recruiting and exposing HBCU undergraduate students of color to library science graduate school education. Track B will provide a series of online forums for current library support staff with the goal of retaining and developing talent and sharing opportunities to become credentialed librarians. The series of forums will bring together experts in the field to discuss current library topics and best practices; share experiences through panel discussions with current librarians of color who went from support to librarian status; and intrigue interests of undergraduate students by amplifying the stories of current library science students of color. The HBCU-LLC requests \$149,520 to implement this national model of partnering for success of the library profession.

Project Justification

HBCUs are greatly impacted by the need to develop a diverse library workforce. According to the 2021 report of the US Bureau of Labor statistics, only 7% of librarians in the US are black. This is a decline from the 2010 numbers, where African Americans represented 10% of the librarian workforce. HBCU library administrators have expressed difficulty in hiring and retaining librarians. While this is a national problem, HBCUs are selecting from an even smaller pool of applicants desiring to work at HBCUs. The decline of black librarians in the work force is an issue worth illuminating for growth of diversity in librarianship. Furthermore, HBCUs have traditionally provided educational opportunities to underserved communities and the HBCU-LLC will focus on this population to recruit, develop, and mentor prospective undergraduate students of color and current library workers. Furthermore, HBCUs have been traditionally underfunded. Libraries at HBCUs are challenged with funding quality development programs that promote the empowerment of staff with 21st century skills. The HBCU-LLC will offer a series of virtual forums to recruit, inform, and develop students and library staff at HBCU institutions with the ultimate goal of participants attending library science graduate school. Informational forums will be offered to participants online, recorded for future viewing, and made accessible through multiple websites including the HBCU Library Alliance where one of the HBCU-LLC deans, Adrienne Webber, Grambling State University, serves as the Board Chair. The other deans are participating members of the Alliance.

Notable of this initiative, is the opportunity for participants to be advised by six African American deans and directors with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and expertise linked with the common desire to see more people of color choosing careers in librarianship. Participating HBCU-LLC library deans boast experiences in technology, archives, information literacy, research, instruction, digitization, design, leadership, and management. The forums will be designed with intentionality and inclusivity of the HBCU culture while providing pertinent information about the library profession. Presenting the forums and culminating institute in a virtual and in-person format allows for greater participation and inclusion of students and library staff from HBCUs throughout the United States.

Project Work Plan

HBCUs have access to thousands of students of color and will work closely with university faculty in diverse academic disciplines to recruit students for participation in Track A. HBCU library administrators will recommend library support staff for participation in Track B. Both tracks will include a minimum of four online discussion forums, as well as a culminating institute. From August 2024- June 2026, participants in Tracks A and B will be exposed to expert speakers, discussion panels, online social engagement, mentoring sessions, and a culminating institute (offered virtual and in-person) that includes a recruitment fair. While forums will be available virtually and open to a very broad audience of interested students and staff at HBCUs, mentoring and support for travel to the culminating in-person institute and recruitment fair will be for participants from Louisiana HBCU institutions. Participants in other states will have virtual access to institute sessions.

Track A: The HBCU-LLC Forum for Library and Information Science Graduate Education – This track will focus on recruiting and informing underrepresented and underserved students from HBCU institutions about the academic library profession. Library Science educators, along with current library science students, recent graduates, and librarians of color will lead Track A forums, sharing experiences, resources, and opportunities in library and information science education and the library profession. Track A will conclude with a one-day institute with in-person and virtual options for greater reach. The institute will include a Library and Information Science Graduate Programs recruitment fair, along with discussions, seminars, and presentations. Students from HBCU-LLC institutions will attend in-person and present on their experiences and information gained in the forums. The Advisory Team, made up of library administrators from each institution, will select two (2) students to participate through an application process. Students from outside of Louisiana will be invited to attend forums through electronic fliers posted via social media, BCALA and HBCU Library Alliance listservs and shared by HBCU library administrators.

Track B: The HBCU-LLC Forum to Build a Diverse Workforce – This track will focus on support staff working in HBCU libraries who have already earned a bachelor’s degree and want to expand their skills and education by obtaining a graduate degree in library and information science. Topics in Track B will differ from Track A since these individuals are currently employed in libraries. Online forums will focus on skill-building topics, library issues and advocacy, best practices, and trends to improve resources, services, student success, research, and scholarship. Local and national speakers/experts will be from within and outside of the library field for broader impact. The Advisory Team will select two (2) support staff members from each HBCU-LLC library to participate through an application process. Staff outside of Louisiana will be invited to attend forums through electronic fliers posted via social media, HBCU library administrators, BCALA and HBCU Library Alliance listservs. Southern University will provide the online platform for live forums which can include up to 1,000 attendees.

Phase I (August 2024 – November 2024) consists of formative planning meetings, recruitment, and selection of participants for each track. **Phase II** (November 2024 – November 2025) will include online forum sessions for both tracks, online social engagement, and mentoring sessions for participants from Louisiana institutions. HBCU-LLC deans/directors will serve as mentors. **Phase III** (December 2025 – June 2026) will include finalizing the culminating institute, which will take place in the spring allowing participants time to submit applications to graduate schools. Participants will present on their experiences and meet graduate programs’ representatives at the recruitment fair. The recruitment fair will be open to any interested undergraduate student and library staff. However, travel stipends to the institute will only be provided to HBCU-LLC institutions’ selected participants.

Project Results

The goals of the forums are to: provide information to increase the number of underrepresented persons attending library school; and develop, expand, and strengthen current library workers’ skills at HBCU-LLC institutions. By the end of this project, undergraduate students of color and HBCU library support staff will be exposed to best practices, opportunities, skill development, and resources available in library and information science education and the library profession. Surveys and oral feedback will be used to capture data from the 24 Louisiana HBCU forum participants and virtual participants from HBCUs throughout the US. Proceedings from the culminating institute will be published in the Southern University Online Open Repository. Evaluative feedback from participants, along with data from the number of graduate school applications submitted and accepted will be disseminated at the HBCU Library Alliance Conference, other library conferences, and provided in a report to IMLS.

The impact of this project will not only be measured quantitatively, but also in the stories, strength, and empowerment of HBCU students and staff connecting with black library administrators who have successfully accomplished goals, risen from the falls of defeat, and utilized opportunities through mentored career paths.

Budget Summary: Total Project Cost: \$149,520 | Total Requested from IMLS: \$149,520 | Cost Share: \$0

The \$149,520 will support:

1. **Stipends** for participation and travel- 2 undergraduate students and 2 support staff members at each of the 6 participating Louisiana institutions. (4 participants x 6 institutions x 2200 stipend) = \$52,800; Advisory Team – (6 members x 1500) = \$9000; Forum speakers/presenters - \$30,000. Total Stipend Support - \$91,800
2. **Supplies** \$5,000 - Materials and supplies for the forums, culminating institute, and recruitment fair
3. **Travel** \$10,000 – Conference registration, travel, and lodging for dissemination of project information for PI or Advisory Team member, and a participant. Target Conference Presentation at either the HBCU Library Alliance Membership Meeting, ACRL, or National Conference of African American Librarians (NCAAL).
4. **Indirect Cost** \$42,720 - Southern University’s federally negotiated indirect cost rate is 40%.