

EDUCATION: Cornerstone of the Dream

The Executive Leadership Council: Building Corporate Leaders



Council member Jessica Isaacs, Senior Vice President, AIG, looks on as AIG CEO Martin Sullivan (left) greets Executive Leadership Council CEO Carl Brooks at the CEO Diversity Summit. Some 40 Fortune 500 CEOs attend The Council's annual event.

For two decades, leadership in the African-American community has been evolving, expanding. Along with civil-rights leaders and educators, corporate executives like Ken Chenault, CEO of American Express, and entrepreneur Cathy Hughes, Founder and Chair of Radio One, are demonstrating the power of inclusive leadership and opening doors for others.

The link connecting Chenault and Hughes as well as a multiracial coalition of CEOs and corporate executives committed to building an inclusive business pipeline is The Executive Leadership Council™ (ELC). In 2005, at the organization's annual black-tie gala in Washington, DC, His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and E. Neville Isdell, CEO of The Coca-Cola Company, acknowledged The Council's contribution to the global economy and leadership. As Ms. Hughes received the organization's Achievement Award, she looked out at the audience of some 2,200 and exclaimed, "I get it now. This room is the power structure of the African-American community, the future."

Throughout 2006, The Executive Leadership Council hopes other corporations and executives will also "get it" as the organization celebrates 20



Founding member Jim Kaiser co-directs The Council's Seniors Roundtable, a group for members who retire from corporate America to become entrepreneurs or to pursue other community leadership activities.

years of advocacy. Martin Sullivan, CEO of AIG, has signed on as Lead Dinner Sponsor of the 20th Anniversary gala and CEO leader of The "Leadership/Legacy 20" — a recognition and strategic thought leadership initiative linking The Council to Fortune 500 companies working to make the business case for diversity. Companies engaged in the initiative with AIG include BP, The Coca-Cola Company, MasterCard, Tyco International, The Altria Group, and Verizon, among others.

"Twenty years of building the diversity pipeline in corporate America is a significant milestone," says Mr. Sullivan, commenting on AIG's engagement and the support of The Leadership/Legacy 20. "We are honored to partner and to share this moment with The Council. The ELC initiatives, particularly those related to professional development, mentoring, and education, will ensure its

future as an organization and deliver a corps of highly skilled and educated executives for the future. We, The ELC corporate partners, will be the benefactors of the organization's success, which will allow us all to compete more effectively globally."

"This is a coming-out party," says Carl Brooks, President and CEO of The Executive Leadership Council and its charitable affiliate, The Executive Leadership Foundation. "For 20 years we've been behind the scenes doing the serious work of mentoring, coaching, supporting historically black colleges, building a pipeline of senior executives, working to advance the level of African-Americans in senior corporate positions and on boards."

Says Mr. Brooks, a former executive with GPU Energy, "We've taken an organization that was good, and now we're positioning it to become great and to have a serious impact on the African-American community and the nation."

But before The Executive Leadership Council could reach this milestone it had a beginning. The journey began with education.

In Support of Higher Education

From obtaining a solid elementary school education to striving for an MBA or a Ph.D., a quality education is the equalizer that has broken social barriers and opened doors to the American dream.

"Education remains the key to both economic and political empowerment," said the late Barbara Jordan, who in 1972 became the first black woman from a Southern state to serve in the House of Representatives. "That is why the schools charged with educating African-Americans have, perhaps, the greatest, the deepest challenge of all."

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) continue to meet, and overcome, this challenge. Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, founded in 1837 as the Institute for Coloured Youth, is the oldest HBCU and counts the journalist Ed Bradley of TV's 60 Minutes among its graduates. It is part of a network of more than 100 HBCUs across the nation that have produced leaders in virtually every field of endeavor. Half the members of the Congressional Black Caucus have

attended HBCUs and nearly 60 percent of Executive Leadership Council members.

The seeds of the organization's founding took root two decades ago when Al Martins convinced a group of community-minded African-American business executives to meet in Dallas, Texas, to discuss saving Bishop College, an HBCU facing serious money problems. Despite numerous attempts to restructure debt and raise funds, Bishop closed in 1988. However, the camaraderie and peer-mentoring enjoyed by the executives fueled a spirit of self-help and philanthropy that continues today in The Council's initiatives and programs.

The formula is straightforward: Use The Council's educated, highly motivated, and well-connected corporate members to leverage their influence, contacts, and business savvy to create networks and educational and mentoring programs.

"When you look at the accomplishments of the executives who make up The Executive Leadership Council, it's amazing to think of the business accomplishments they create every day," says Council board member Alfred W. Zollar, General Manager of Tivoli Software, a division of IBM.

Through Mr. Zollar's advocacy efforts and that of Council member Ted Childs, IBM Vice President of Global Workforce Diversity, IBM recently provided more than \$2.1 million in support to jump-start Phase 2 of The Technology Transfer Project, a Council initiative designed to enrich teaching and learning at nearly a dozen HBCUs.

"Being able to take that know-how and expertise and apply it to needs at our historically black colleges and universities is very exciting and motivating," says Mr. Zollar. Other member companies leveraging human and financial resources to support HBCUs include The Coca-Cola Company, Microsoft, and DaimlerChrysler.

Council member Virgis Colbert led the Miller Brewing Company to develop two educational pipeline programs for African-Americans. In 1987, the company became founding sponsor of the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund (TMSF), which has provided more than \$50 million in scholarships and in-kind support to 45 HBCUs. Some 98% of TMSF recipients have graduated from college and 55% have enrolled in graduate programs. The Milwaukee Tutorial Program developed by Miller transports area students to the company's Milwaukee headquarters to be mentored and tutored by employees. Though recently retired as Executive Vice President of Worldwide Operations for Miller, Mr. Colbert continues to support the initiatives. He has been Chairman of the TMSF Board from its inception and is now Chairman Emeritus, and also serves on Miller's Board of Directors and is a senior advisor to the company.

Dreaming in Focus

The success rate of HBCUs to guide African-Americans to graduation has led some to make



Founding member Elynor Williams (left) at the Annual Recognition Dinner with Council member Donna Brooks Lucas, CEO of DBL Multi Media Group in Chicago.



Al Zollar, an IBM General Manager, works with The Council and other associations to encourage minorities and women to study science, technology, engineering, and math.

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Jerri DeVard, Senior Vice President, Verizon Communications, has helped The Council develop mentoring activities for black MBAs and other college students.

attending a top HBCU an educational goal. In the case of member Jerri DeVard, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Brand Management for Verizon Communications, her zeal to attend an HBCU led to an unorthodox college admissions strategy. She wanted to be a "Spelman woman" so badly that she only applied to the Atlanta school.

"I don't know what would have happened if I didn't get in," says Ms. DeVard. "I just felt that in terms of the experience I had with other Spelman women growing up, the reputation it had, being on campus, looking at the confidence and the positive attributes of these women, I wanted to be just like them." Ms. DeVard earned an economics degree from Spelman and then received an MBA from another HBCU, Clark Atlanta University.

No Longer Lonely at the Top

Over the years, Council leaders and members have refined an educational and programmatic mission that resonates with the needs of corporate America and Black America.

"Those of us who formed The Executive Leadership Council formed it with the sense of giving back," says James G. Kaiser, a founding member and former Corning executive who is now CEO of Avenir Partners, an automobile business. The founder also discovered a unique dividend to their philanthropy.

"I found there were people who were struggling as I was and that I wasn't alone in the system. Everybody had the same kinds of issues," says Mr. Kaiser, referring to the isolation of being the only minority in upper management at Corning.

Says Clarence "Buddy" James, another founding member and an attorney: "It's lonely when you're the only brother in a major corporation. It was probably double for women."

Elynor Williams, the only woman among the 19 founding members of the organization, agrees.

"When I got to be vice president I was the first and only black vice president there," the former Sara Lee executive says.

As The Executive Leadership Council matured it became clear that education was key in "leveling the playing field."

Herman Bulls, President and CEO of Public Institutions at Jones Lang LaSalle, a division he founded, and CEO of Bulls Capital Partners, a Fannie Mae-approved lending firm, says:

Transferring Technology

The Executive Leadership Council's passion for education and its legacy of service have created a perfect union for the Information Age — the Technology Transfer Project (TTP), which supports HBCUs with software, hardware, and computer expertise.

The project began in 1995 when The Executive Leadership Foundation — the 501 (c) 3 charitable affiliate of The Council — researched the digital divide, specifically regarding the state of information and communications technology on black campuses. The conclusion was clear: HBCUs trailed majority institutions in the acquisition and implementation of technology. Thus, their graduates would be less qualified to perform well in technology-dependent careers.

The Council established the TTP the following year with support from members at companies like Amoco, The Coca-Cola Company, Booz Allen & Hamilton, DaimlerChrysler, Oracle, and Williams, to name a few. The overall mission of the initiative is to prepare graduates to compete for leadership and corporate management positions that demand technical aptitude. Ramon Harris, TTP Director, says making HBCUs the focus of the project, rather than community centers or other neighborhood organizations, was a sound business decision.

"Resources must be focused to have maximum impact," he says. "We chose HBCUs because they are actually a strong pipeline for African-Americans going into corporate America."

Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork

During what is now called "TTP Phase 1," members helped The Executive Leadership Foundation raise more than \$10 million in corporate support to help about 85 HBCUs develop and apply technology upgrades to teaching, learning, and living models. From 1996 to 2004, hardware, software, and expertise focused on helping the schools with information strategic planning, infrastructure development, student and faculty access, ubiquitous technology applications training, faculty training, and instructional technology.

The initial twelve HBCUs that developed, tested, and refined program initiatives during Phase 1 were: Bennett College, Bethune-Cookman College, Fisk University, Hampton University, Jarvis Christian College, Lincoln University, Morehouse College, North Carolina Central University, Oakwood College, Talladega College, Wilberforce University, and Wiley College.

Margaret Massey was Vice President for Technology and the Chief Information Officer at Bethune-Cookman for most of Phase 1. She is now the Associate Vice President for Technology at Norfolk State University in Virginia. She credits the TTP with enhancing the scope and credibility of technology at her institution.

"The TTP assisted in developing and implementing a strategic plan in situations where resources were very limited. Every expenditure and personnel

action must fit into a long-range plan," says Ms. Massey. "If there is not a well-defined plan which is diligently followed, the opportunity to achieve the desired goals can more easily be missed."

Phase 2: Building on Success

Launching TTP Phase 2 was an easy decision thanks to the success of Phase 1 and the advocacy of Executive Leadership Council members at IBM.

"We have some fantastic institutions in our historically black colleges and universities that still produce a significant number of black professionals in the work force today," says Alfred W. Zollar, General Manager of Tivoli Software, a division of IBM, and a Council Board Member. "That why it's important to us at IBM to work with The Executive Leadership Council in sponsoring the Technology Transfer Project, Phase 2, which is aimed at injecting the most modern, open, and collaborative technology into the curriculum of the HBCUs."

Phase 2, the current stage of the Technology Transfer Project, uses instructional and non-instructional activities to help students build skills for the changing IT and communications market. They include instruction aids, mentoring, labs, career assistance, internships, and grants.

IBM and The Council cite current statistics on global competition, work force needs, and emerging technology as reasons to continue and expand the TTP, critical to HBCUs, which, in many cases, are already struggling to catch up.

"The shelf life of many IT skills is growing shorter," the groups declared in a statement announcing Phase 2. "Many technical specialties, once leading edge, are being standardized, automated, or can be sourced from low cost countries that have invested in education and raise their work force skills."

Mr. Zollar adds: "The graduates coming out of these institutions need to be prepared for the modern world of innovation that is a key driver of our economy."

The TTP Phase 2 project will continue to advance in technology strategic planning with help from Booz Allen Hamilton.

Two-Step Process

The TTP Phase 2 initiative will be implemented in two steps: step one created competency centers for various curricula at "hub institutions": Florida A&M University, Hampton University, Howard University, Morehouse College, Morgan State University, North Carolina A&T State University, and Tennessee State University. These schools received instructional materials to support course creation and delivery, and create labs stocked with IBM hardware and software.

During the second step, the network will be expanded to other HBCUs that will collaborate with the hub schools, enabling students to enjoy self-paced classes, audit live classes broadcast by the hub school, and participate in virtual communities.

"Education is the catalyst that brought this group together. We understand how important education is to the upward mobility of all people. It's at the core of our people being able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and move forward."

"Look at the schools our members have gone to — from historically black colleges to the top of the Ivy League," says Bulls, an engineering graduate of West Point and a Harvard MBA. "If we don't have an opportunity to compete, everything we do from a business perspective will be at a disadvantage."

Education, Education, Education

Today, The Executive Leadership Council enjoys a growing role as a channel between academia and the corporate world. As debates over diversity and economic issues widen, the organization continues to expand its view of education — in the boardroom, the courtroom, and the classroom.

"Education does become somewhat of an equalizer," says Roderick Gillum, Vice President of Corporate Relations and Diversity, General Motors. "You never want to be in a position where someone can say that you're lacking in that area. But my definition of success is that you need both preparation and opportunity."

As they prepare the next generation and support colleagues, Executive Leadership Council members may lend a sympathetic ear when obstacles arise but accept few excuses for why African-Americans can't succeed.

Ms. Williams remembers a particularly rough period in her career at a major food-service company. It got so bad she was ready to quit. "I used to always say I could push pencils on the street

rather than take this nonsense," she says.

One of her mentors, ELC founding member Robert Johnson, then a senior executive at Sears who is now Chairman of Johnson Bryce, Inc., a packaging company with accounts like Frito-Lay and Colgate Palmolive, invited her to lunch. "He lit into me," says Ms. Williams. "I'll never forget that. He said, 'Why don't you let them win? Go ahead. Give up all this hard work. You're not a vice president. It was a mistake.' Whether or not I really would have quit, who knows? But he made me think."

"I have many mentors and they're in all walks of life," says Ms. DeVard. "Don't ask someone to mentor you. Say, 'I need your help. Can you help me with this situation?'"



Herman Bulls, Foundation Chair, is a mentor in The Council's pipeline development programs for college students and corporate mid-level managers.

Creating a Buzz

LeeRoy Bronner, Research Associate Professor in the School of Engineering at Morgan State University in Baltimore, says the TTP is creating a buzz — scholastically and personally.

"I have a feeling of fulfillment. Gaining access to relevant technical tools and methods has placed our students on the leading edge of the information technology arena," says Dr. Bronner. "TTP has been critical in bringing participants together to exchange ideas and learn from each other. This interaction has increased my motivation for the program and my commitment to educating students at my HBCU."

Gerald Whitaker, Special Assistant for Engineering and Science Programs at Morgan, says the new computers, new labs, and access to expertise have rekindled a spirit of collaboration and innovation.

"Since we got the new lab, instructors are looking at even starting some new courses using material provided in this program," he says. "TTP sort of brought things to life."

Similar praise for the TTP comes from other participants.

"The TTP is unique in its vision and mission," says Maurice A. Tyler, Director of Systems and Support, Information Technology and Telecommunications at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro. "It creates a symbiotic relationship between the dot-com and dot-edu space. The magic of the formula is that for a relatively small investment, you reap exponential rewards — students are equipped with the necessary tools for their post-graduate careers and employers are provided with a larger selection of qualified individuals that can hit the ground running."

Shaneé Wright, a computer-engineering major at North Carolina A&T State, helped set up the student lab and participated in a workshop on PC hardware. "I received credit for class and learned about modern computer architecture," she says. "It deepened my understanding of what I learned in class."

At Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, student Ronald L. Stevens Jr. is using Eclipse, an open-source platform to create programs and other content. Open source encourages users to modify or customize accessible source code.

"It gives me experience in professional programming," the computer-information science major says. "Understanding open-source environments is important in the software engineering and programming fields."

Excitement, experimentation, and discovery are exactly what TTP leaders want. Says Mr. Harris: "The Council and The Foundation are about helping in Africa-Americans achieve the dream of being in a land of opportunity where one can be successful based on merit and commitment to excellence. What keeps me optimistic is to see that corporate America and higher education can work together. The closeness of that relationship can have a substantial impact on learning outcomes in higher education."

"Young executives still need to learn how the system is played in corporate America," Mr. James says. "There's no textbook that will tell you that. But there's a lot they can learn from junior and senior members" in The Executive Leadership Council.

Jessica C. Isaacs, a Senior Vice President with AIG, is a member of both the Council board and the board of The Next Gen Network. A positive outlook is an invaluable part of her arsenal and the advice that she gives Next Gen members who are junior and mid-level executives in some of the nation's largest Fortune 500 companies.

"Executive leadership comes from within. One must have a strong educational background, self-confidence, support networks, and endurance to climb the corporate ladder and to succeed," says Ms. Isaacs. "These are core strengths of Council members and the young people we are mentoring."

Educating Corporate America About Diversity

The Executive Leadership Council believes that lifelong learning must also continue in corporate America, which needs to fully comprehend the value of diversity.

Says Ms. DeVard: "I would really like companies to search within their organizations and make sure their diversity and inclusion programs have the rigor that all their revenue-generating programs have, because they're just as important."

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