

March 3, 2017

A Message from Lincoln University Interim President Richard Green Regarding the White House Visit in February 2017

Dear Lincoln University Community,

I had the privilege of joining presidents and chancellors from 85 Historically Black Colleges & Universities at the White House and with members of Congress earlier this week. The meetings on February 27 and 28 were coordinated by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (named for the distinguished graduate of Lincoln University) of which Lincoln University is a member. When given an opportunity to speak directly to the President of the United States, I determined that it was a special opportunity for which our university should be present.

The meetings were intended to provide a platform to express our desire for increased funding from the federal government in the form of grants and contracts, and to make the President and lawmakers more aware of the purpose and value of HBCUs and the outstanding contributions our students and graduates make to the economic growth and development of the nation and the world. As you may have read in the news, the visits produced a variety of responses.

On February 27, we met with Vice President Mike Pence who affirmed the President's commitment to HBCUs. However, that affirmation fell short of offering specific resources that would be allocated to our institutions. An Executive Order was signed by President Trump—though not made public, only announced—moving the White House Initiative on HBCUs from the Department of Education to directly under the White House, reporting to the President.

While this move gives HBCUs direct access to the President—and I hope a quicker turnaround for the allocation of desired resources—it did not provide any substantive funding. Hopefully this symbolic gesture can be translated into positive actions and a significant increase in funding for HBCUs.

During a luncheon on February 28, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos spoke about the historic nature and creation of HBCUs by stating:

“They started from the fact that there were too many students in America who did not have equal access to education. They saw that the system wasn't working, that there was an absence of opportunity, so they took it upon themselves to provide the solution. HBCUs are real pioneers when it comes to school choice.”

Of course she could not be more incorrect in her statement of why HBCUs were created. If we use her statement as the premise for why HBCUs started, it implies that education of former slaves wasn't a problem in America. It further states that equal education in this country was not an issue and that individuals of color could freely decide which college or university to attend without being marginalized. This statement by Secretary DeVos provides a compelling reason for why we need to continually tell our story and frame the HBCU narrative.

As we continue to work with the new administration, we will have to observe how the move of the White House Initiative on HBCUs plays out. Time will certainly tell if this gesture was meant to begin a process toward truly supporting HBCUs, which is needed now more than ever before. Lincoln University, along with all of the HBCUs, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the United Negro College Fund and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, will continue to seek the funding required to sustain the high quality education we offer to our students.

Sincerely,



Richard Green, Ph.D.
Interim President