



# Message from the President

## U.S. BLACK CHAMBER, INC.

1156 15TH ST. NW, STE 1100 | WASHINGTON, DC 20005  
202.552.2954 [P] | 202.872.8543 [F]

[www.usblackchamber.org](http://www.usblackchamber.org)  
[www.facebook.com/usblackchamber](https://www.facebook.com/usblackchamber)  
[www.twitter.com/usblackchamber1](https://www.twitter.com/usblackchamber1)

May 2, 2012

## **HBCUs: The (re)Birthplace of Entrepreneurship**

I had the pleasure of attending (and serving on a panel) the recent White House HBCU Entrepreneurship Conference. A blue-ribbon panel of luminaries from academia and industry was on hand at the invitation of avid USBC-supporter Marie Johns, Deputy Administrator of the SBA.

Enlightening. Encouraging. Affirming. Each of these could describe the outcomes of the all-day session. It really had my "Rattler" (FAMU)/Clark Atlanta University blood pumping!

The unanimous consensus of everyone in attendance? America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities *must* commit themselves to: develop the next generation of Black business leaders; be centers of excellence and thought leaders on entrepreneurship; jumpstart innovation in the communities they serve; and encourage and foster entrepreneurial activity among students *before graduation!*

As you might imagine, the discussions were wide-ranging, touching on globalization, technology, re-engineering education models, access to capital, and the lingering impacts of discrimination on all of the above. There were reports of real-world successes from most recent Bennett College President, Dr. Julianne Malveaux, and Johnson C. Smith University's Ron Stodghill. Though not HBCUs, Silicon Valley's Mission College (represented by President Laurel Jones) and Dr. d.t. ogilvie of Rutgers delivered highlights of real-world examples of the kind of innovation that HBCUs can emulate and monetize.

The stark harshness of the reality as presented by one panelist brought home just how critical it is that HBCUs embrace this latest challenge: the total revenues of all 2 million Black-owned businesses contribute less than 2% to America's GDP! As incredible as that sounds, that figure represents *growth* in performance – and highlights just how much room to grow Black business owners have.

So, it's pretty simple to me... the USBC is going to pitch in and do what we can to help. We'll start by making sure several student business leaders are able to attend our upcoming School of Chamber Management this July 24-28 here in Washington, D.C. Maybe they'll learn something... maybe we'll learn a thing or two from them.

We'll also commit to encouraging closer cooperation between our member chambers and the business departments of HBCUs located near them. I'm certain only good things can come from increased interaction between current and future business leaders.

There is no question that the rebirth of Black Entrepreneurship will take root and grow on the campuses of America's Black colleges and universities. Thousands of bright, talented young men and women focused on using their brains to change the economies of their communities *and the world...* What's not to like about that?

And finally, I must acknowledge President Obama's Administration. I have mentioned Deputy Administrator Marie Johns from SBA, Donald Cravins from the Senate Committee on Small Business and others, but the President *gets it!* Virtually every agency has embraced his insistence on inclusion. Maybe I'm just feeling good because I'm the product of two HBCUs, but to have the White House in the fight with us... that's really a good thing!

In the spirit of success,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Busby', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ron Busby, President  
U.S. Black Chamber, Inc.