What are Minority Serving Institutions?

There are a range of federal grants supporting institutions that enroll and serve specific racial and ethnic minorities. A number of these institutions’ eligibility is determined by the undergraduate enrollment of certain groups, whereas others’ eligibility is based on past discrimination in our higher education system.

**ASIAN AMERICAN NATIVE AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER SERVING INSTITUTIONS** are nonprofit, accredited, degree-granting postsecondary institutions enrolling at least 10% of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students with a large proportion (>50%) of students eligible for federal financial aid.

**ALASKA NATIVE SERVING INSTITUTIONS** are nonprofit, accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities that enroll at least 20% Alaska Native undergraduates.

**HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES** are a group of around 100 colleges and universities established prior to 1964 focused on providing educational opportunities for African Americans.

**HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTIONS** are nonprofit, accredited, degree-granting postsecondary institutions that enroll at least 25% of Hispanic-identifying undergraduates and a large proportion (>50%) of students eligible for federal financial aid.

**PREDOMINANTLY BLACK INSTITUTIONS** are nonprofit, accredited, degree-granting postsecondary institutions enrolling over 1,000 students, of whom over 40% are African-American and a large proportion (>50%) of which are eligible for federal financial aid.

**TRIBAL COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES** are 37 authorized land-grant universities and colleges governed and run by American Indian tribes.

**NATIVE AMERICAN SERVING NON-TRIBAL INSTITUTIONS** are colleges and universities that are not designated as TCUs, yet have an enrollment of >10% Native American undergraduates.

**NATIVE HAWAIIAN SERVING INSTITUTIONS** are nonprofit, degree-granting and accredited colleges and universities that enroll at least 20% Native Hawaiian undergraduates.
“Collecting all of the data for the campaign was a rigorous and collaborative process, but that made it all the more important—spreading evidence-based data is one of the best ways to change people’s minds about all the great opportunities that MSIs really offer to students, especially those who need it most.”

CASEY BOLAND, a Research Associate at the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions and one of the campaign’s data specialists

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Throughout 2016, the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI) and its partners have spearheaded a data-driven national campaign focused on spreading factual awareness of the return on investment (ROI) on Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The national campaign followed on the heels of the National MSI Return on Investment Convening, which was hosted by the CMSI and Educational Testing Service (ETS), as well as the post convening’s report *Investing in Student Success: The Return on Investment of Minority Serving Institutions*.

The campaign featured 52 weeks of 52 data points. The data points were curated and contextualized by CMSI researchers as well as the organizational partners in order to highlight the many significant, yet largely unknown contributions of MSIs in the field of higher education.

The campaign’s goals were to bring more attention to MSIs, highlight the contributions of MSIs among higher education practitioners and general audiences, dispel common misperceptions about MSIs, and motivate scholars to conduct more data-driven research related to MSIs. MSIs disproportionately serve low-income and first-generation students as well as students of color yet often experience relatively high success (i.e., ROI) despite fewer financial resources.

*Understanding the complex and unique return on investment for MSIs is essential as these institutions serve the new majority in higher education. There is much that we can all learn from their impact and approaches to student learning and community uplift.*

—MARYBETH GASMAN, Director of the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions.

Sixteen partners joined the campaign to spread the data points through their respective networks and include the following organizations: American Council on Education; CIEE: Council for International Educational Exchange; American Indian College Fund; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; Thurgood Marshall College Fund; Educational Testing Service; Institute for Higher Education Policy; Diverse; Noodle; HBCU Lifestyle; HBCU Nation; Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund; The Sullivan Alliance; National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education; American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education; and the Human Rights Campaign.
Minority Serving Institutions served 40% of underrepresented students, totaling approximately 3.8 million students or 26% of all college students, in 2013-2014.


57% of faculty at HBCUs identify as Black, whereas nationally, Blacks make up only 5.5% of faculty.


The number of eligible Hispanic Serving Institutions grew by 218% between 1990 and 2014 (137 to 435 institutions).


There are currently 307 eligible Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions in the United States with student bodies that are comprised of more than 48 different ethnicities.


INDICATES “RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH,” which can be found on page 20.
Hispanic Serving Institutions receive 69 cents for every dollar going to all other colleges and universities annually, per student, from all federal funding sources.  

All Tribal Colleges and Universities contribute to their local economy. For example, the College of Menominee Nation added $37 million, provided 404 jobs, and generated $833,000 in tax revenues to its local economy in 2011.  

Hispanic Serving Institutions represent 12.9% of non-profit colleges and universities, yet enroll 21.9% of all students and 60.8% of all Hispanic students.  

Total revenue per full-time equivalent student is roughly $16,648 at four-year Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) compared to $29,833 at non-MSIs.  
Students at HBCUs enjoy a smaller student to faculty ratio (15:1).


21% of faculty at HSIs identify as Latino, whereas nationally, Latinos make up just over 4% of faculty.


In addition to serving 15,000 American Indian & Alaskan Native students in academic year 2013-2014, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) also served 100,029 community members in TCU community programs.

Source: ABHEC AKIS AIMS, Academic Year 2013-2014

Funding for Title III aid for institutional development programs, which support Minority Serving Institutions, declined from $651 million (2010) to $567 million (2013).

The percentage of first-time, full-time undergraduate Pell grant recipients in two-year MSIs is 65%. Breakdown: AANAPISIs 54%, HSIs 61%, TCUs 81%, HBCUs 79%.


For biological and biomedical sciences, the top three HBCUs producing Black STEM PhD recipients are Howard (45%), Meharry Medical College (27%) and Morehouse School of Medicine (8%).


Out of the 34 Title IV-participating TCUs, 12 conferred bachelor’s degrees in 2012. These 12 institutions awarded 252 (88.4% of their total bachelor’s degrees) to American Indians or Alaska Natives.


Of the top 20 institutions that award science and engineering degrees to Asians or Pacific Islanders, seven identify as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions.

Of the 435 eligible Hispanic Serving Institutions, 202 were public two-year institutions, 93 public four-year institutions, 123 private four-year institutions, and 17 private two-year institutions in 2014.


There are currently 156 Predominantly Black Institutions, primarily public two-year institutions or private nonprofits concentrated in the Southeast.


In 2014, Tribal Colleges and Universities enrolled 1 in 10 Native American undergraduate students in the country.


California has more Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) than any other state: 79% of California Community Colleges, 74% of California State University campuses, and 30% of University of California campuses are MSIs.

Ten HBCUs are among the top 20 institutions that award the most science and engineering degrees to Blacks.


Two-year Minority Serving Institutions contribute to 21% of Asian, 18% of Latino, 14% of Black, and 4% of American Indian STEM credentials.


71% of Tribal College and University administrators are American Indians.


It would require an additional $22.8 million per year to provide grants to all designated AANAPISIs. To fund all eligible AANAPISIs would require an additional $52.8 million per year over the current level of funding.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities enrolled 8% and graduated 15% of all Black students in U.S. higher education (2013).


There are 248 two-year institutions eligible for Minority Serving Institution (MSI) designation; these institutions constitute 46% of all MSIs and 22% of the 1,132 community colleges nationwide.

Institutions eligible for AANAPISI grants enrolled 49% of all Asian American & Pacific Islander undergraduate students in 2014, even though they only represent 6% of all postsecondary institutions in the country.


Tribal Colleges and Universities awarded 1,292 (78.5% of their total) associate degrees to American Indians or Alaska Natives in 2012.
30% of Historically Black College and University presidents are women; the national average for college and university presidents is 26.4%.


During fiscal year 2008–09, there were 280 Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and federal appropriations were $227 million. During fiscal year 2013–14, there were 435 HSIs and federal appropriations dropped to $216 million.


46% of all Tribal College and University faculty are American Indians and Alaska Natives, whereas nationally, American Indians and Alaska Natives make up less than 1% of faculty.


Two-thirds of students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities receive Pell grants.

Of the top 25 institutions where Latinos earned bachelor’s degrees in 2012-13, 17 were public Hispanic Serving Institutions, which awarded 32,375 degrees to Latino students.


Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders are twice as likely to be enrolled at two-year Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) than at two-year non-MSIs, while American Indians or Alaska Natives are five times more likely to attend two-year MSIs.


22 institutions received Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution grants in 2016; they enrolled 13% of all Pacific Islander undergraduates in the nation.


1 in 5 Black students engaged in a study abroad experience hails from a Minority Serving Institution.

More than a third of Black STEM PhD holders earned their undergraduate degrees at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.


10 Hispanic Serving Institutions are among the top 20 institutions that award the most science and engineering degrees to Hispanics/Latinos.


The Tribally Controlled Community College Assistant Act (1978) authorizes funding of $8,000 per Native American student. Yet in FY 2011, operating funds only equaled $5,235 per Native American student, with no funding awarded to non-native students.


HBCUs producing the most Black STEM PhD recipients include Howard University (33%), Meharry Medical College (14%), and Florida A&M University (9%).

1 in 10 Black students engaged in a study abroad experience hails from a Historically Black College or University.


The 219 two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions enroll 1,024,772 Hispanics in higher education—73% of all two-year Hispanic students.


Historically Black land-grant universities provide vital access for low-income students. On average, 65% of undergrads attending land-grant HBCUs, founded in 1890, receive Pell grants.


The 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities experienced a 9% growth in enrollment between 2002-03 and 2012-13, enrolling nearly 28,000 full- and part-time students.

180 institutions were grantees of Title V Hispanic Serving Institution grants in 2016.


58% of undergraduate students at Tribal Colleges or Universities received Pell grants in 2014, higher than the 38% national average.


1 in 15 Hispanic students engaged in a study abroad experience hails from a Minority Serving Institution.


After accounting for selectivity within institutions, Hispanic students graduating from Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) have comparable earnings to Hispanic graduates from non-HSIs.

The average net price per year for on-campus students enrolled at public HBCUs is $11,004. Comparatively, the national average net price of public institutions during the same year is $13,850 (2014-2015).


Institutions receiving Hispanic Serving Institution grants under Title V enroll 13% of all Pell grant recipients in the country, yet account for only 4% of all postsecondary institutions.


For engineering, the top three HBCUs producing Black STEM PhD recipients are Morgan State (30%), Florida A&M University (24%), and North Carolina A&T University (22%).


Hispanic Serving Institutions meeting the federal HSI enrollment criterion in 2014 enrolled 1,836,870 Hispanics.

DATA POINT NO. 1
Researchers must evaluate how MSIs serve their students, particularly as the number of MSIs will continue to grow. How do programs foster student success? Can such programming be scaled up for an entire institution or systemwide set of institutions in specific states?

DATA POINT NO. 4
Unlike HSIs, many institutions that are eligible for federal AANAPISI grants are unaware of their eligibility. Research could explore why this is the case. Additional research is also necessary to explore how AANAPISI grants are used and if designated institutions as a whole are aware of their AANAPISI grant-funded program.

DATA POINT NO. 5
Inequitable funding between MSIs and non-MSIs has been documented to a small extent. More research is critically needed to assess the longitudinal, state-based effects of these disparate funding streams across all MSI categories and institutional sectors.

DATA POINT NO. 6
How do TCU’s contribute to their local economies? Does this vary by region and state? Which of their practices might be suitable for other types of MSIs? What programming or specific functions contribute to the local economy?

DATA POINT NO. 10
Much remains to be learned about how the race and ethnicity of faculty members have an impact on student success. This is an area worthy of study in all categories of MSIs. Previous studies point to a positive impact, yet more research is necessary to investigate whether this is the case in a large swath of MSIs.

DATA POINT NO. 13
Little research looks at connections between Pell Grants and performance across all of higher education. As MSIs enroll a high percentage of Pell recipients, it is essential to better understand the role of Pell Grants in student completion and how this varies between institutions and states. This is especially important for two-year institutions, as they have historically been viewed as inexpensive alternatives. In many states, community colleges are becoming much more expensive.

DATA POINT NO. 15
More research is needed on the many ways TCU’s foster student success. Their emphasis on culture and heritage as well as community could be investigated and potentially translated to other categories of institutions.

DATA POINT NO. 18
There is very little research on PBIs. How do they serve their students? How do student experiences vary from HBCU students?

DATA POINT NO. 23
While some studies have focused on faculty race/ethnicity, almost none have assessed administrators and college staff. Researchers could explore if there is any relationship between race and ethnicity of administrators and student success.

DATA POINT NO. 29
The continuing problem of HCBU boards dismissing women presidents demands closer attention. What factors contribute to the friction between boards and presidents, particularly female presidents?
DATA POINT NO. 30
Research tells us that the number of HSIs will continue to increase as the population becomes increasingly Hispanic. More research is needed to determine how competitive federal funding is for HSIs (and other MSIs). With a decline in federal funding, are fewer institutions receiving funding and being designated as MSIs?

DATA POINT NO. 32
HBCUs and other MSI categories enroll a substantial proportion of Pell Grant recipients. More research is needed to assess how Pell Grant recipients in MSIs perform. Does performance vary compared to students who do not participate in MSI-grant funded programs (institutions other than HBCUs and TCUs)? Do Pell recipients receive other forms of aid, including loans?

DATA POINT NO. 34
Little research exists on AAPI students and enrollment in MSIs according to Socioeconomic Status. There is a crucial need for more research that disaggregates AAPI students by specific nationality and ethnicity and examines how this has an impact on enrollment and performance in AANAPISIs, other MSIs, and all higher education.

DATA POINT NO. 36
Scant research discusses the impact of study abroad on students, especially at MSIs. More research could determine how study abroad benefits students and how institutions could encourage study abroad. It could also explore obstacles from the student as well as institutional perspectives.

DATA POINT NO. 37
More research should investigate what HBCUs do to foster high production of STEM PhD graduates. Is there more advising and forms of student support? Do specific institutions routinely graduate a disproportionate number of STEM students?

DATA POINT NO. 39
A study of TCU federal funding is warranted given the large deficit in what was promised to what has been allotted. What specific policies addressed/did not address this? How have individual institutions continued to finance programming given declines in federal funding?

DATA POINT NO. 42
As with other MSI categories, more research must explore how MSI grant-funded programs benefit participants. Do they graduate at a higher rate than non-MSI program students? Does this vary across sector (2- and 4-year public and private)? And does this vary across states?

DATA POINT NO. 48
More research is needed to demonstrate how MSIs lead to earnings of their graduates. Do specific programs or categories of MSIs lead to different earnings? Does this vary by sector and state?
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