



Bennett COLLEGE



LeMoyne-Owen COLLEGE



Delaware State University



FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

FLORIDA MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY



SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY



HBCU

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Optimizing the Synergy Between Governance and Executive Leadership at HBCUs

Vernell Bennett-Fairs, Ed.D.

The White House Initiative on HBCUs
AGB Executive Search panel
Arlington, VA
September 26, 2023



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE



UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE LeMoyne-Owen College *Presidential Profile 2020* (AGB Executive Search)

“The next president will be expected to re-establish transparent and structured decision processes that can reduce internal conflict, disengagement and misinformation. LeMoyne-Owen campus culture has suffered during a period of declining enrollment and financial pressures and the instability that these pressures bring. The Board of Trustees and the student body are planning to support a president that will engage with the campus and community in an effort to rebuild the culture of support, service and student development.”

“LOC suffers from fractured relationships with some of its faculty members.”

“The incoming president will engage in a renewal or rebuild of the college’s relationships with many city entities and agencies. The need to build new partnerships with local government and Pre-K-12 education is apparent and will inure to redefined outcomes for academic and professional preparation programs.”

“A stronger culture focused on student development and the inculcation of a strong intellectual culture are expected.”

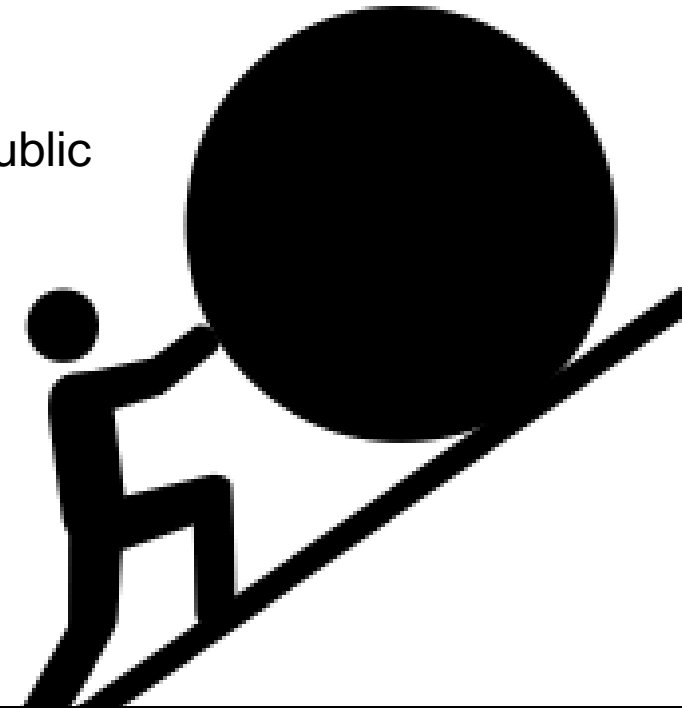


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DAY-1 CHALLENGES

- Third Monitoring Report (facing probation of accreditation)
- Fiscal unit in need of restructuring (staffing, processes, operations, technology)
- 11-year-old Faculty Handbook
- 10-year SACSCOC reaffirmation self-study/on-site visit preparation
- Declining enrollment
- Historic low retention
- Broken and/or untrusting relationships across campus, community, alumni, public school system
- Damaged institutional brand due to years of negative media coverage
- Aging facilities
- Too many manual processes
- Outgrown footprint
- Culture resistant to change
- Fiscal unit reorganization needed



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Reintroducing Lemoyne-Owen College Using 4 Rs:



- Recruitment
- Retention
- Revenue
- Relationships

Collaborating with the Board to Achieve Institutional Goals



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Optimizing the Synergy Between Governance and Executive Leadership at HBCUs

I) Humanize the Board to the Campus and Alumni

- Incorporate into programming and campus activities so the campus can see the president and the board as a team working together
- Create opportunities for the board to engage with the campus outside of commencement
- Create opportunities for the campus to see the board in their element
- Include the board in the Faculty/Staff Institute each semester

II) Higher Education Representation

- An advocate who speaks the language
- Educate board on their role per the accrediting body's board standards
- Involve in reaffirmation process

III) Capitalize on Board Expertise to:

- Build community and corporate relationships
- Fundraise
- Create networks to advance the college
- Meet the institution's strategic vision



IV) Work Together to Raise the College's Profile and Expand Its Brand Recognition

- 807 Day
- PBS documentary
- Connections to offset operational budget
- Partnerships within Memphis
- Introductions to the Memphis community that helped create networks to advance LOC and increase exposure



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Ensuing Successes



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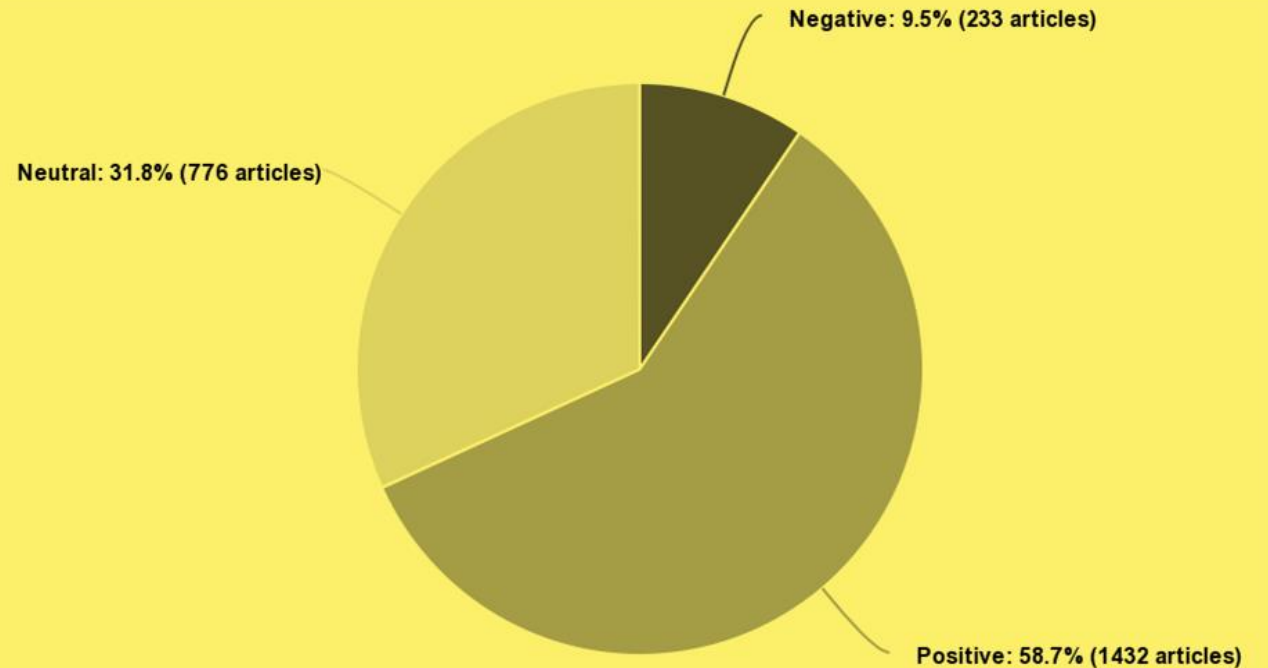
- Resolved Monitoring Report with no recommendations
- 10-year reaffirmation with no recommendations
- Almost \$3.5M in fundraising including two, million-dollar gifts
- New student enrollment increased 49% between years one and two
- Retention increased 9% between years one and two
- Summer Bridge 85% persistence
- Fall 2023 new student enrollment highest in over a decade
- Identified grant funding to offset operational budget after depletion of CARES/HEERF funding
- Acquisition of new land
- Four Fulbright faculty in two years
- Named Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader
- City of Memphis Partnership for entrepreneur certificate
- Established Office of Student Success and Retention
- Single highest day of fundraising 2 years in a row
- The college's profile and brand recognition improved
- Improved campus relations
- Expanded footprint
- \$1.6M Campuswide technology upgrade
- Created Center for Digital Teaching Excellence
- Deployed CANVAS and a CRM
- Opened a food pantry (grant funded)
- Identified grant funding to establish a Cyber Café in the Student Center
- Truist Career Readiness grant - \$350K
- Shelby County Commission grant - \$320K
- PBS Documentary

Improved Positive Media Coverage



Since 2021, LOC maintained 90% of positive-neutral stories for media.

2021 - 2023





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