



Chapter Planting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Written by Various Authors, Edited by Marcia J. Wang

Excerpts from "InterVarsity HBCU Consultation Papers," January 19-22, 2010, authored by NaKhia H. Grays (Appendix B) and Tony Gatewood (Appendix C) and from "Some General Elements/Factors In HBCU Ministry" (Appendix H) by Tony Warner.

Contextualizing the Six Chapter Planting Essentials for HBCUs

1. Vision

Know the Campus's Legacy, Values and History

Many chaplaincies and administrators at HBCUs have a heightened skepticism about InterVarsity and other campus ministry organizations. They may perceive us to have little understanding of how to minister to Black students, and there may be suspicion of our motives. The staff needs to learn the campus's legacy, values and history, and must be able to communicate an appreciation for them. And the planter needs to have the willingness and capacity to build trust with the key constituencies on campus.

Being Afrocentric and Christocentric at the Same Time

At the core, a staff worker at an HBCU has to learn how to be both Afrocentric and Christocentric at the same time. HBCUs are by nature very Afrocentric, and so a staff worker who works on that campus will have to learn how to function in that type of environment. Thus, the training program will have to include large doses of black history, an understanding the black church, and a sophisticated analysis of cultural trends in the black community. However, that person will still maintain a focus on the centrality of Christ for his or her faith. Here is where I think that the idea of both being ethnic and inclusive is relevant. You can take the black community very seriously, and yet be committed to the universal reality of the gospel of reconciliation. The key lesson in the success of Barack Obama is that he was able to understand different communities in a deep and profound way, including the very black and Afrocentric parts of the Southside of Chicago.

2. Prayer

Community Support for the Staff Worker

This has two different components: first, there is the need for support from people in the community who are plugged into the mission to reach the campus for the gospel. This may or may not include financial support. Second, there is the need for staff to have a supportive community of people who understand what they do and the situation that they face on campus and in their lives. In short, there needs to be support for the mission, and for the staff worker on a personal basis.

3. Outreach

Religious vs. Secular Students

On many HBCUs (as is the case with black students on other campuses), there is a division between the students who have religious and spiritual zeal and the students who are either unchurched or totally turned off from church and are very secular. There is a challenge in helping the spiritually attuned students to learn how to communicate the gospel to their sisters and brothers who have become secularized or postmodern. Staff will need to have to find ways to help students to deal with this reality.

Gospel Choirs

Former BCM Director Alex Anderson used to identify gospel choirs as “black synagogues” especially at predominantly white institutions. However, there are some black choirs at HBCUs, which have a different role and function. Here, one has to be sensitive to the responses of the music department of the HBCU to the presence of a gospel choir on the campus. Ironically, and historically those departments tended not to look with favor on gospel choirs. However, it seems like the whole scene has changed significantly especially since the choirs in my observation do not any longer have the power or influence that they used to have.

Graduation Rates

Unfortunately, some HBCUs have relatively low graduation rates. That means that a lot of the students with which we will work may be struggling academically. This state of affairs will need to be addressed in our ministry, and may impact how we do ministry in these situations. We may be depending on a particular student leader only to discover that he or she may be on the verge of having to leave school for academic reasons.

4. Gathering:

Less Felt Need for "Black Community"

On a predominately white campus, gathering Black students is somewhat easier because they often feel isolated and are seeking greater “Black community.” On an HBCU this dynamic is not present in the same way, and a planter’s ability to gather Black students becomes even more critical.

Physical Location of the School

Especially in the South, there was a tendency to build HBCUs in the heart of the inner city community. That raised a whole dynamic concerning the situation with the “Town-N-Gown” communities. On some campuses there could be some security issues in the communities near campus, and it could impact staff being on campus late at night. It also raises the whole question of what the responsibility of the educated black classes to the folks who are left behind.

5. Leadership Development

Influence of Young Ministers as Students

On some campuses there will be young ministers who come from a strong black church tradition who are very much aware of their ministerial status and prerogatives. In that paradigm, there is a clash with a ministry like InterVarsity, which in their minds would be too much of a lay ministry that does not give the adequate amount of respect to the black ministerial tradition. Yet, there is some room for our ministry dealing with their issues as we think through how they plan to be pastors of churches or see the mission of the church from a biblical point of view.

Influence of Women on Campus

Since two thirds of all black collegians are female, we have to factor that into our consideration of ministry to HBCUs. Apart from the male-female dynamics which are substantial both on campus in the black community as a whole, we have the challenge to serve both black male and black female students in a way that honors them, and will be sensitive to their needs and the relational dynamics. In many cases, it is the female student who shows the most interest and zeal in regard to spiritual matters, and there is this sense of the dearth of godly men who can potentially be good marriage partners.

6. Catalytic Events

Capitalize on Events that are Celebrated by the HBCU

The university will most likely have events that celebrate its legacy, values, and history in its annual calendar. Support these events rather than compete with them, capitalizing on where there is already momentum, i.e. student involvement.

Leverage InterVarsity Retreats and Conferences.

This strategy will often will require building strategic partnerships to carry out the event:

Raise Supporters from Black Churches to Give to School Accounts

Fund Development ideas such as hosting a Pastoral Conference within the area or creating Campus Councils for particular schools could be long term steps for getting significant funding for HBCU events. Having funding focused on the school instead of on the staff worker could avoid credibility issues that the church might have with a particular staff. Unless the HBCU staff has a divinity degree, or has been ordained under the ministry of a known church or Pastor, the credibility of that staff would be significantly diminished and a hindrance to fund development.

Recruit a Staff Team

Life is easier when one is in a community! In November of 2007, we (Tony Gatewood shares) had a "Freedom Conference" in Knoxville, Tennessee where we brought from Emory University and the AU Center about 15-20 Black college students. In partnership with Amber Jipp, a white staff at Emory; we were both able to handle the responsibilities of food, transportation, and scholarship costs, making a 20 person student trip possible

Comparing HBCU's to Other Public/Private Schools

"The HBCU campus is a unique and exceptional experience. Some of our brightest students in our nation walk through the college doors of Morehouse, Spelman, Clark Atlanta, Tuskegee, and Fisk. Here, we see the influencers of the world molded and shaped, and like all the campuses here in the US, these students will either be leading for the glory of God or for their own glory; or even worse yet, the glory of the Evil One." – Tony Gatewood

NaKhia H. Grays, National Chapter Planting Cohort 3

"I have thoroughly enjoyed working with students at Bowie State University, the first HBCU in Maryland, over the last two years. Prior to my moving to the DC area, I have served six years at medium-sized; predominantly white private colleges and universities in Pennsylvania."

Tony J. Gatewood, National Chapter Planting Cohort 4

"My thoughts and insights come from my experience of 4 years working at three top tier HBCU campuses (Clark Atlanta University, Spelman College, and Morehouse College)."

Similarities Observed by Tony:

- High Pursuit of Identity
- Residential Student
- Homogeneity
- Credentials and Credibility

Similarities Observed by NaKhia:

- Students basically have some of the **same core issues** as far as Lordship (sex, time, money, etc.)
- Students have a **desire for community** and small groups are a benefit.
- **Overall principles of how to build a missional, witnessing community seems to be the same** no matter what the context.
- Surprisingly, both sets of **students have the ability to use the inductive method** to engage scripture (and are excited by the process).
- Students have **same basic hopes** as they graduate and leave, having been transformed by Jesus and becoming agents of transformation in the world.

Differences from Tony's Perspective:

	HBCU	Traditionally White Public Schools (e.g. Iowa)
Ethnic Identity/ Assimilation	High Identity Student	High Assimilation Student
Black Student Identity Development Process	1 year	3 years
Type of Institution	Top 10 Academic Institution (85 – 90 percent graduation rate)	Research Institution (research funds the University)
Culture	A Brotherhood/Sisterhood Culture (we are a brothers and sisters)	Midwestern Culture (<i>Bootstrap Theory</i>)
Prime Influencers	Black Church influenced (Inspirational Leader)	Bureaucracy Influenced (complex systems)
Student Recruitment Attractors	City Culture and School reputation recruits students	Strong Sports Program recruits students

Differences from NaKhia's Perspective:

- Students at Bowie definitely have **more respect for position and people in spiritual authority**. They gave me the title of “campus minister” and the “right” to speak into their lives very early on. I find that they are hungry for this kind of input and have a greater respect for those in authority.
- **Trust was gained very easily with Bowie students** I think because they were so hungry for input and were quick to acknowledge need for someone to invest in their lives. I also think being black helped me to connect with them more easily than having to cross culture barriers that I felt I always hit at my other universities.... Ministry at Bowie feels somewhat like a breeze in comparison.
- **Evangelism has been a challenge at Bowie State** where the secular and religious are so closely tied together is very different then my work at prior campuses. To say that Bowie has a very Christian culture would be an understatement. Shouting, clapping, thanking Jesus, even praying in Jesus’ name, and all the other clichés connected with more historically black congregations are so intertwined into the fabric of this black student generation. As a result, they say the things that they heard their parents and grandparents say and do the things they see in the media and end up seeming a little schizophrenic in their spirituality. Proclaiming to know Jesus but have never heard the gospel or looking religious and saying the right things, but having no personal relationship with Jesus. It has been rare for me to find student who is honest enough to say they are a seeker - to say they don’t know what they believe or never heard the gospel – because it is so easy to hide behind the religious language. Another factor affecting evangelism has been the oversaturation of ministries at Bowie. It is a largely commuter campus of approximately 5,000 students with six campus ministries.
- **(Bowie has a) more direct teaching (pedagogy) in large group settings**. This was very different from what I was used to.
- **Position, titles, and degrees** are of great value at Bowie State University to have a voice at the larger university table.
- **Many of my students are church**ed and are very gifted/charismatic leaders with whom I have to work more on character development and the basics of servant leadership and relational ministry.

The HBCU Archetype from Tony's Perspective:

Though this is not an exhaustive description of the prototypical HBCU student, and more likely the case of an HBCU student that attends a top-tier institution (private schools with a large funding base), and also noting that the categories listed are not exclusive to an HBCU student, HBCUs can recruit some of highest academically achieving African Americans of this nation and of the African

Diaspora. Many of the qualities and characteristics listed are sought after by the schools themselves:

1. Socioeconomically stable
2. Aimed Towards Leadership
3. Spiritually Sensitive
4. Legacy Driven
5. Academically Developed
6. Nationally Recruited
7. In Search for Identity
8. Faithful and Teachable
9. Not Always Available

The HBCU Archetype from NaKhia's Perspective:

I am finding that my students (at Bowie State) are way more diverse in backgrounds (class, culture, etc.) than I ever imagined. They come from rural, suburban, and urban areas. Some have been in predominantly black environments their whole lives; some have come from more diverse areas. Some have families that really struggle; some have families that are living quite comfortably.

- Even though Bowie is located in Prince George's county, the wealthiest black county in the country, I still find many students who come from working class families and have financial difficulty. I cannot figure out if this means they have more than what they think they have or that even though they have much they have a poverty or lack mind set
- Churched, probably more to do with black students than HBCU students
- I thought that it would be that they cared more about black history and social issues but I have not found that to be true at Bowie.
- Legacy is important to the student leaders on campus. They truly want to make a difference.
- Usually trying to balance many things (home, family, work, school)
- Family and social connections (like Greek system or social organizations) are of great significance.
- Community service is a value for them.
- They are likely to be involved in lots of things and lacking commitment to any one thing, especially when it comes to campus ministries. They would rather bounce around then commit to one.

Maintaining Healthy Working Partnerships with HBCU Students, Staff, Chaplaincy and Faculty

I (NaKhia) have a great working relationship with the Dean of Student Life. I see him face to face about 2-3 times each semester by stopping in his office. He also attends some of our events, particularly supportive of our prayer rooms. I also make sure to show my face in Student Government arenas trying to attend some of their meetings and going into their office now and again. They are all familiar with me. Also, I have good partnership with the part-time Episcopalian Chaplain and staff/faculty advisors of the other campus ministries. I have initiated and maintained monthly meetings with all of the campus ministry groups this year (Partnership of Christian Campus Ministries). I particularly have key relationships with counselors in our Counseling Services department. One of them is our faculty advisor and the rest of them are very supportive of my being on campus and of the ministry. That has been a blessing as they were one of the first open doors to me from faculty and staff at the University.

Importance of Team Ministry

Since the scope of the ministry and the need for the exercise of a different array of gifts make it difficult for one person to do it all, a team perspective is the best way to proceed. This tends to fly in the face of the perspective of practical managers who will need to justify the dollar resources with the numbers of students served. This is a fundamental challenge to our concern for increase in numbers for our ministry. However, a team approach has proved to be the most successful in our

experience in the Atlanta University Center. The time of our greatest success was when we had a team approach to our work there. This represents a real funding challenge, but it provides a great opportunity for wider ministry that will include not only students but also faculty and administration.

I, Tony Gatewood, think it would be helpful to recruit a team that is **multiethnic, with the main staff being African American**. There were specific ways that I was able to accomplish integrating white staff with my HBCU students:

1. I came in with a desire and plan to build cross campus fellowship with my other staff members in the Area Team.
2. Whenever I would be asked to speak on a campus from my Area Team co-workers, I would bring a contingency of students (mainly the leadership team) with me. I and the other staff would plan out a fellowship time afterwards, giving our students a chance to relate and value one another.
3. I began talking with my students about God's heart for multiethnicity a year before I did anything multiethnic. The reason for this was that I wanted there to be a critical mass of desire and people who would carry out the vision.

The full Spring 2010 Report of InterVarsity's HBCU Task Force on "InterVarsity and Historically Black Colleges and Universities" may be found online: <http://www.intervarsity.org/staff/mem/library/index.php?id=646>.

[Chapter Planting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#) is posted on the [Collegiate Ministries website](#) with related resources for InterVarsity staff and student leaders.