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Thurgood Marshall College Fund, Grant Thornton and American Express Create Program to Help Career Counselors Prepare HBCU Students for Post-College Success

Unique new program helps ready Black students for professional careers in corporate America

WASHINGTON, DC (Oct. 4, 2021) – The Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) is working with accounting and consulting firm Grant Thornton LLP and global financial services and lifestyle company American Express to create a Train the Trainer Career Readiness program. This program equips faculty and staff at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with the tools they need to help students navigate an increasingly competitive employment landscape.

From November 16-18, talent and client service professionals from Grant Thornton will virtually join talent professionals from American Express as well as campus educators and career trainers from eight HBCUs. The two-and-half-days of programming will focus on fostering professional preparation skills and resources at each institution, with a goal of ensuring students can thrive in internships and full-time positions.

The Thurgood Marshall College Fund believes the program is necessary to prepare Black students for professional careers in corporate America. Since its founding in 1987, TMCF has supported education and career opportunities for underrepresented groups and has a history of success creating pathways to economic mobility for HBCU students through degree attainment and lucrative careers.

A recent study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago found that Black employees often feel pressure to work harder to prove themselves but have “barriers to advancement that are largely invisible to white professionals.” And even though African Americans make up 10% of college graduates, only 3.2% of executives and senior manager-level employees are African American.

“With the support of Grant Thornton and American Express, TMCF is uniquely equipped to bring this important professional development experience to life for HBCU faculty and staff across the nation,” said TMCF Chief Programs Officer Eric D. Hart, Ed.D. “Train the Trainer is another step toward creating an inclusive workplace environment and even more critical in our current climate as we strive to establish a more just and equitable society.”

Rashada Whitehead, Grant Thornton’s national managing director of Culture, Immersion & Inclusion, believes the program will help prepare college graduates for success in a competitive job market.

“People of color continue to face high barriers of entry in corporate America, and historically, they have been kept out of the top tiers of leadership,” said Whitehead. “Grant Thornton believes that we can help change that narrative. Train the Trainer will further empower career educators and prepare students to thrive in any profession they choose.”

Sonia Cargan, American Express’ Chief Colleague Inclusion and Diversity Officer, said HBCUs are known for creating leaders — and, through the company’s partnership with TMCF, students are being set up for success.

“HBCUs have long played a critical role to educate and produce the next generation of leaders,” said Cargan. “American Express is committed to supporting the customers and communities we serve. Through our partnership with TMCF, we are ensuring member schools have access to tools and resources for students to achieve success and this program is one example of our continued collaboration.”

The eight institutions participating in the event are each part of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the nation’s largest nonprofit organization exclusively representing HBCUs and Predominantly Black Institutions. They include:

- Central State University
- Florida A&M University
- Jackson State University
- Medgar Evers College
- Morgan State University
- North Carolina A&T State University
- Prairie View A&M University
- Tennessee State University

Grant Thornton’s support of this initiative aligns with the firm’s ongoing commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I). In addition to almost a dozen programs promoting DE&I within the firm, Grant Thornton is committed to recruiting students from a diverse range of schools and broadening its experienced-hire recruiting process.

As part of American Express’ \$1 billion action plan to enhance diverse representation and promote equal opportunities, the company is committed to allocating resources to initiatives that are focused on advancing equality. Additional information about American Express’ inclusion and diversity efforts can be found in [here](#).

About the Thurgood Marshall College Fund

Established in 1987, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) is the nation's largest organization exclusively representing the Black College Community. TMCf member-schools include the publicly-supported Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominantly Black Institutions, enrolling nearly 80% of all students attending black colleges and universities. Through scholarships, capacity building and research initiatives, innovative programs, and strategic partnerships, TMCf is a vital resource in the K-12 and higher education space. The organization is also the source of top employers seeking top talent for competitive internships and good jobs.

TMCf is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, charitable organization. For more information about TMCf, visit: www.tmcf.org.

About American Express

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