



# **American Treasures: Building, Leveraging, and Sustaining Capacity in Historically Black College and Universities**

*Christopher Shults, Joseph Martin Stevenson*

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This work uses current research data and interviews to present a cogent discussion of strategies and tactics needed to keep the HBCU community a healthy vital component of American educational life. The threats and problems of institutional life are not glossed over rather they are discussed within the parameters of successful planning and implementation. American Treasures may seem like an unusual title for a book designed to assist traditionally under resourced colleges and universities overcome weaknesses, develop strengths, communicate success, develop capacity, and leverage strengths into competitive advantages, but the authors believe that the title should reflect the underlying premises of the publication and at the same time, counteract the attitudes and perceptions detrimental to our higher education system. As scholars of color they believe America's historically Black universities and colleges (HBCUs) have been, and will continue to be, treasured intellectual capital and cerebral currency in historical and future higher education. Treasure is something which is not only valuable, but is also something highly valued and desired. Treasure, and more accurately, the thrill of the journey that takes antagonists through a gauntlet of emotions, has been at the heart of great works of literature spanning generations from literal treasure hunts in *Blackbeard* and *Treasure Island* to the more metaphorical search for treasure in works such as *Romeo and Juliet* (Love), *The Odyssey* (Home) and *The Invisible Man* (Self-Identity). Treasure largely lies in the eye of the beholder and some of the underlying and overarching premises within this work include the following: Institutions of higher learning both take in and enhance treasure (students) and are a treasure in and of themselves. Institutions of higher education other than those defined as Ivy League, elite private, or those with substantial endowments and or numerous lucrative grants (i.e. large and well-known state colleges and universities) play a crucial role in the development of human potential, continuation of the most robust economy in history, and search for social equity and justice. Finally, while treasure has value and is often desired, it is oft times and hidden and occasionally hidden within plain sight and research shows this is often the case with HBCU entities whether public, private or religious in origin.

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