

**Jackson State University the Sonic Boom of the South: Strategies for Recruitment and  
Retention through Marching Band Enrollment**

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## Abstract

Athletic sports and the university marching band play a central role in the success of tertiary institutions as they are the most effective recruitment tools for colleges and universities. They project an institution's vision, values, and identity, which are critical aspects appealing to potential learners. There is a concern about low recruitment and retention rates in institutions of higher learning. To address the low enrollment issues, historically black colleges and universities are reinvesting and funding marching bands since they are central to their ability to attract potential students. In addition, the marching band's effect on an institution influences its ability to retain learners. To this end, developing frameworks that assist historically black colleges and universities with marketing, increasing institutional awareness, and fostering recognition are crucial. It resonates with the need to expand the institutions' presence as it makes them known to their target clients, which will improve recruitment rates. Therefore, utilizing the marching band as the primary recruiting tool is a feasible solution to the issues facing historically black colleges and universities. It will enable the institutions to attract more learners and increase diversity and inclusion within the student populations.

This thesis supports the notion that marching bands are effective recruitment and retention tools in historically black colleges and universities. The report focuses on Jackson State University, a diverse, technologically-advanced four-year historically Black University located in Jackson, Mississippi. It is ranked the fourth-largest university in Mississippi in terms of student enrollment. Institutional strategies were developed and witnessed institutional growth in enrollment. The study examines recruitment plans and structural policies that facilitate growth in higher learning institutions. Steps for continued success are delineated, and alternative rehearsal techniques are discussed.

Keywords: *Retention, Recruitment, Academic stability, Jackson State University, Sonic Boom of the South Marching Band, College social stability, Extracurricular Activities, Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Matriculated student, Marching Band, Social Risk Factors, Social stability.*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the historical lens, participation, and need for the use of marching band as the primary recruiting and retention tool for Jackson State University, Jackson, MS. Once recognized, this practice provides a new recruiting model that may be applied to growth and retention principles and processes at other historically black institutions.

### Background

The relationship between marching bands and the black community dates to 1826 when African Americans played drums and fifers for the army<sup>1</sup>. College marching bands operate as institutions' brand ambassadors and are, therefore, crucial in optimizing marketing and recruitment efforts. The bands also foster visibility and prestige among universities and colleges; they serve as vital cultural features and are central to the campus experience. Students and alumni of historically black colleges and universities claim that marching bands significantly influenced their choice of higher learning institutions<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, Black marching bands are effective vehicles for increasing student recruitment and retention. They portray institutions' excellence beyond academics and create a source of pride and identity for the students<sup>3</sup>. The marching bands also directly impact the members as they rely on cohesion and strong bonds.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band: Toward a Historicultural Understanding." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 41, no. 1 (2019): 5-32. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/3801c2272f50c82853ddee876e93347d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1059>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Milburn, "An Oral History of Marching Band Traditions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities" (Master's Theses, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 2019), 4, ProQuest.

They establish a sense of family connection which is crucial for building a social life in higher learning institutions<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, marching bands promote discipline, hard work, creativity, and self-confidence, essential life skills. They also motivate academically challenged students to excel. Marching bands give their fans a sense of belonging and cultivate norms that help students to thrive. They also foster crucial values such as mutual respect, tolerance, inclusion and diversity, time management, and teamwork.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) culture is an influential media machine<sup>5</sup>. It augments visibility which is crucial for identifying talent and aligning learners with job market opportunities. The marching bands often put their schools on the world map when they perform at Super Bowls, Presidential inaugurations, TV dramas, or music recordings<sup>6</sup>. They increase their institutions' popularity and provide a platform to identify talent. Traditionally, marching bands gathered instrumental artists who fused coordinated steps and created melodies. They comprise of moving music troupes who frame words, logos, or vivified pictures. The band's efficacy is built on creativity, mastery, and a passion for the arts. HBCU bands are unique due to their evolution over the years. Initially created to attract people to college football matches, the marching bands have transformed into special showbands<sup>7</sup>. They often feature in

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<sup>4</sup> Jason P Cumberledge and Amy I. Acklin, "From Competition to Exhibition: Student Perceptions of the Transition from High School to College Marching Band." *Journal of Band Research* 54, no. 2 (2019): 26-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536600619847933>

<sup>5</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band," 9.

<sup>6</sup> Claire Milburn, "The Development of Marching Band Traditions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: The Human Jukebox versus the Sonic Boom of the South." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 43, no. 2 (2022): 205-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15366006221081883>

<sup>7</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band," 22.



marching band duels, political occasions, and motion pictures. Therefore, their influence goes beyond the learning institutions since the bands have a huge following outside the colleges and universities.

The annual thematic show augments the HBCU band's popularity. It entails stylistic presentation changes from one institution to the other, with each show style mirroring the school's way of life and traditions. It features diverse music repertoires, on-field movements, and showmanship. Incorporating classical musical instruments and modern moves augments the bands' ability to present America's traditions and attract audiences from diverse backgrounds. HBCU bands have maintained the marching band traditions using syncopation, body-moving rhythms, and foot-stomping techniques that resonate with minstrel bands, local and municipal brass bands, and black military bands<sup>8</sup>. These aspects augment HBCU institution's uniqueness and appeal to learners as they distinguish them from the marching bands found in other institutions. The bands incorporate dancers, drum majors, wind instrument players, and percussion. Each division plays an integral role in making the presentation exciting and memorable<sup>9</sup>. The dancers add pomp and flare to the presentation by donning colorful costumes and displaying graceful and technical dance moves that align with the marching band's sounds. The wind instrument players create the music while percussion maintains the tempo. On the other hand, the drum majors have a uniform entrance with knee-high dance moves.

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<sup>8</sup> Milburn, "An Oral History of Marching Band Traditions," 4-7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 210.

### Statement of the Problem

There is an alarming rate of declining nationwide student enrolment and retention at HBCUs<sup>10</sup>. This issue has detrimental implications for institutions' longevity and thus requires actionable mitigation measures. Jackson State University's marching band, 'The Sonic Boom of the South,' presents an effective and innovative recruiting and retention initiative for the institution<sup>11</sup>. The university should capitalize on the band to address issues of declining enrollment.

### Statement of the Purpose

This thesis aims to solve the recruitment and retention challenges facing Jackson State University. The report investigates the history and organizational application of marching bands as a primary recruiting and retention tool in HBCU institutions. In addition, it highlights the efficacy of the Sonic Boom of the South in driving recruitment at Jackson State University and how the institution can capitalize on the marching band to optimize appeal and student retention.

### Significance of the Study

This study provides insights into how HBCU institutions can improve recruitment and retention rates. It addresses a critical issue with ripple implications for the success of higher learning institutions and education outcomes of marginalized communities. The research

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<sup>10</sup> Ivon Alcime, Ashla Hill Roseboro, and Carlos Morrison, "Keeping It Real" on the Decline of HBCU Student Enrollment." *Historical Black Colleges and Universities in a Globalizing World: The Past, Present, and Future* (2022): 71.  
<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781666902747/Historically-Black-Colleges-and-Universities-in-a-Globalizing-World-The-Past-Present-and-Future>

<sup>11</sup> Milburn, "The Development of Marching Band Traditions," 207.

prompts HBCU institutions to capitalize on marching bands as a primary agent for student recruitment and retention.

#### Research Question and Sub Questions

RQ1: Do historical patterns show that HBCU institutions used marching bands as recruiting tools?

RQ2: In what ways does the marching band influence students' musical, cultural, and learning experiences?

RQ3: What techniques equip marching bands with the ability to assume recruiting roles at HBCU institutions?

RQ4: How do marching bands equip students with life skills?

#### Hypothesis

H1: Historical precedents indicate that marching bands are effective recruiting and retention tools in HBCU institutions.

H2: Marching bands allow students to express themselves and optimize their musical and cultural experiences.

H3: There is a need to develop standards for using marching bands as the primary recruitment and retention tool in HBCU institutions.

H4: Evidence shows that marching bands broaden students' social, cultural, and peer relationships, which impacts their lives positively.

#### Methodology

This investigation employed qualitative research methodology to identify ways Jackson State University can capitalize on its marching band to improve enrollment and retention. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or

groups ascribe to a social human problem.<sup>12</sup> A descriptive research design was used to systematically explore and interpret the research topic. It included a detailed review and summary of the ideas and results obtained from literature sources. A critical summary of the information obtained from the scholarly articles formed the foundation for the developed inferences and study conclusion. The study relied on opinions, insights, and positions taken by experts and scholars in issues relating to the efficacy of higher learning institutions. Furthermore, it focused on HBCUs since they have the most effective marching bands among tertiary facilities in the United States. The study results were obtained from secondary sources detailing the role of university and colleges marching bands in promoting recruitment, retention, graduation rates, and optimal education outcomes. To gather credible data, the research utilized a search strategy that resonated with the study topic<sup>13</sup>. It included searching for keywords and phrases such as HBCUs, marching bands, universities and colleges recruitment and retention, HBCU financing, marching bands and students' learning outcomes, Jackson State University, and the Sonic Boom of the South. The study searched scholarly articles from the following databases, ProQuest, JSTOR, Elsevier, EBSCO, and Directory of Open Access Journals. It focused on peer reviewed journals including, Journal of Historical Research in Music Education, Education Policy, Research in Higher Education, Journal of Bands Research, and Journal of Further and Higher Education.

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<sup>12</sup> Creswell, JW. *Chapter III Research Methodology - Universitas Pasundan*. Accessed June 22, 2023. <http://repository.unpas.ac.id/46189/4/Chapter%20III.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Graham Allan, "Qualitative research." In *Handbook for research students in the social sciences*, pp. 177-189. (Routledge, 2020).  
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003070993-18/qualitative-research-graham-allan>

The search strategy entailed filtering of results to include scholarly articles published within the last seven years. This aspect was vital in augmenting the timeliness of the study results<sup>14</sup>. The investigation also evaluated the authors to determine their authority on the subject. Furthermore, the articles' abstract, introduction, and conclusion helped to examine the article's relevance to the research. The study used literature sources that provided credible and verifiable information to augment the accuracy and validity of the study results. The next step entailed content analysis to identify opinions, thoughts, perceptions, and perspectives held by scholars and experts concerning the efficacy of marching bands in promoting recruitment and retention in higher education learning institutions. A thematic analysis helped pick out themes and patterns detailing how marching bands affect HBCUs' capacity to attract learners and promote school success. The identified patterns helped answer the research question and develop the study inferences.

#### Definition of Terms

**Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU):** Created by the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCUs define historically black colleges or universities established before 1964<sup>15</sup>. It refers to institutions whose principal mission was educating African Americans.

**Marching Band:** Often, in a parade or sports event, marching bands comprise a group of musicians who play instruments while marching<sup>16</sup>.

**Band Community:** An assembly of volunteer amateur musicians in a particular region.

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<sup>14</sup> Allan, "Qualitative research," 179.

<sup>15</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band," 6.

<sup>16</sup> Milburn, "The Development of Marching Band Traditions," 205.

**Fifth Quarter:** A traditional post-game band performance played primarily by HBCU bands<sup>17</sup>.

**Fifers:** A high-pitched transverse flute used commonly by marching musical groups or military bands<sup>18</sup>.

**Collegiate Level:** Relating to a college or college student<sup>19</sup>.

**Extracurricular Activities:** Student activities carried outside a classroom setting<sup>20</sup>. They include sports or band activities; they relate to an institution but carry no academic credit.

**Matriculated student:** A student who has been accepted for admission to the college, has registered in a major, and is pursuing courses toward a degree or certificate<sup>21</sup>.

**Student retention:** Sustaining learners such that they remain enrolled in the college every semester until graduation, which is usually in about four years<sup>22</sup>.

**Academic stability:** Consistency associated with maintaining or retaining students in their institution of origin<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Milburn, "The Development of Marching Band Traditions," 215.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Cumberledge, "From Competition to Exhibition." 29.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> Errick Farmer, et al., "Where Do We Go From Here?: Exploring Retention and Engagement at HBCUs." In *Examining Student Retention and Engagement Strategies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, (IGI Global, 2019). 149-180.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.145.

**Attrition:** Measures the dropout rate of students who do not return during their first and second year of college. It indicates the number of students who withdraw from their classes indefinitely, usually leaving before graduating<sup>24</sup>.

**Social stability:** Reliable routines and life structures that maintain connections with social resources and societal expectations<sup>25</sup>.

### Summary

This chapter introduces the thesis and provides insights into the ways in which marching bands play an integral role in showcasing an institution's brand image, values, and identity. Consequently, they are vital for improving recruitment and retention in higher learning institutions. The chapter contains the history of HBCUs and marching bands, the problem statement, the significance of the study, research questions and hypotheses, methodology, possible limitations, and definition of terms.

The section documents the decline in enrollment and student completion rates in Jackson State University, the largest HBCU in the United States, and how this reduction affects the university's efficacy in providing quality education. It also outlines how marching bands are crucial ambassadors for institutions of higher learning, particularly HBCU institutions, where the African American culture influences the marching bands. The chapter emphasizes the role of HBCU marching bands in recruiting and retaining students, indicating that it is a viable solution to Jackson State University's predicament.

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<sup>24</sup> Alcime, "Keeping It Real," 71.

<sup>25</sup> Cumberledge, "From Competition to Exhibition." 28.

HBCU institutions are experiencing alarming recruitment and attrition rates, which require actionable mitigation measures. Thus, the proposed initiative involving marching bands can be replicated in institutions of higher learning facing recruitment and retention issues. The chapter provides an overview of the research design and the subjects of interest in this investigation. This section sets the pace for the rest of the research by providing background information and outlining the steps that will define this study. It serves as the cornerstone for chapter two, which contains the literature review.

Furthermore, this section provides insights into marching bands, HBCUs, and recruitment based on literary sources. Chapter one also lays the foundation for chapter three, which provides a historical overview of Jackson State University, and chapter four, which outlines the role of the Sonic Boom of the South in Jackson State University. Additionally, this section underpins the information provided in chapter five, which offers insights into the proposed marching band recruitment model at Jackson State University.

Therefore, this chapter is vital as it facilitates the study's authority in hypothesizing that Jackson State University can capitalize on its marching band, the Sonic Boom of the South, to optimize its recruitment and retention rates.



## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two contains the literature review which expounds on marching bands and their role in higher learning institutions, recruitment, and retention in HBCUs, and ways marching bands influence finances in HBCUs. This section reviews literal sources to identify the historical use of marching bands to recruit students at HBCU institutions. It evaluates themes and patterns showing how marching bands positively influence students' lives. The inferences developed from this literature review will help answer the research questions and develop feasible conclusions. It forms the foundation for the recommendations on improving Jackson State University's recruitment and retention strategies by investing in the Sonic Boom of the South.

### Research Related to Marching Bands in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

According to Milburn, there is a need to revamp HBCU marching bands to address retention issues in these institutions<sup>26</sup>. The bands benefit the learning institutions and the surrounding community and are an effective marketing tool. They effectively showcase the accomplishments of HBCU institutions, helping people to understand the value of attending HBCUs and reach a wide audience. The bands is also vital for showcasing the institutuion's image and thus increases attention towards HBCUs. Cumberledge claims that exposure is integral in recruiting learners, and marching bands increase institutions' recognition<sup>27</sup>. In addition, their involvement in athletics influences teams' success which plays an integral role in attracting potential learners. Successful HBCU marching bands boost enrollment which positively impacts finances in learning institutions. Financial strengths guarantee quality

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<sup>26</sup> Milburn, "The Development of Marching Band Traditions," 214.

<sup>27</sup> Cumberledge, "From Competition to Exhibition." 27.

academics and investment in extracurricular activities, which further benefit the marching bands. Milburn posits that marching bands provide a crucial engagement platform for new students as they identify their interests and areas of study within the higher education curriculum<sup>28</sup>. It is a source of pride and identity and gives students a sense of belonging which augments their loyalty towards the tertiary institution. Therefore, the marching bands foster student retention given that their attachment to the band goes beyond the college years. Milburn points out that HBCU alumni are loyal to the marching bands and attend their functions<sup>29</sup>. They, therefore, play an integral role in advocating for HBCUs based on their experience with the marching bands.

According to Abramo, marching bands are integral in shaping the HBCU experience. Apart from their efficacy in fundraising and recruiting students into historically black higher learning institutions, the bands are vital cultural institutions. They act as HBCUs' ambassadors and are crucial for promoting institutions' ideals and thus attracting potential recruits<sup>30</sup>. Their performances focus on black music, culture, and excellence, which are popular among African Americans. The reputation of a school's marching band plays a central role in informing peoples' decisions to work and learn in HBCUs. The bands' cultural connection with the local community is also a crucial aspect fueling individuals to enroll in HBCUs. The bands also provide entertainment and are, therefore, a critical component of tertiary institutions. With a military service background, marching bands are effective in the teaching discipline, performance, and

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<sup>28</sup> Milburn, "An Oral History of Marching Band Traditions,"11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.214.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Abramo, "Media, and Marching Bands." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 3 (2016): 113. [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Abramo15\\_3.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Abramo15_3.pdf)

structure. They are vital tools for equipping HBCU students with life-long lessons crucial for academic success, personal growth, and career development. HBCU bands performances on the regional and national stage create a significant television and social media audience. They, therefore, increase learning institutions' presence and visibility and therefore augment the capacity to attract and retain learners. Furthermore, the bands perform during presidential inaugurations and large football events such as the Superbowl<sup>31</sup>. They provide HBCUs with an opportunity to showcase their talent, capabilities, and ideals and thus appealing to potential learners.

Hardy claims that HBCU institutions' success is hindered by limited resources, including finances, manpower, and infrastructure<sup>32</sup>. However, HBCUs have effective athletic programs that work with marching bands to provide opportunities for academic and extracurricular activities' excellence to minority groups<sup>33</sup>. Furthermore, mass media gives HBCUs' athletics and marching bands coverage which publicizes the institutions and attracts prospective students. Showing performances on television creates interest in potential learners and therefore increases recruitment rates in these institutions. Investigations by Gordon indicate that HBCUs have the highest six-year graduation average among tertiary institutions<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, there is a need to

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<sup>31</sup> Abramo, "Media, and Marching Bands," 113.

<sup>32</sup> Precious M Hardy, et al., "Below the surface: HBCU Performance, Social Mobility, and College Ranking." *Journal of Black Studies* 50, no. 5 (2019): 468-483. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934719847910>

<sup>33</sup> Joseph N Cooper and Ajhanai Newton, "Black Female College Athletes' Sense of Belonging at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU)." *Journal of Negro Education* 90, no. 1 (2021): 71-83. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/417/article/820505/summary>

<sup>34</sup> Ethan K Gordon, et al., "The Paradox of HBCU Graduation Rates." *Research in Higher Education* 62 (2021): 332-358. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-020-09598-5>

address misconceptions surrounding the quality of education offered in these institutions. Gordon claims that HBCUs must devise better ways to market their accomplishments and help local communities to understand the value of attending HBCU institutions<sup>35</sup>. To survive and succeed, HBCU institutions should rethink their marketing strategies to augment improved endurance and capacity to manage risks. Fundamental changes are crucial for enhancing establishments in these advanced education foundations. They will enable HBCUs to reach broader markets and eliminate misconceptions regarding these learning facilities. For example, teaching learners the culture and values that govern HBCU marching bands is crucial in increasing recruitment and retention. Indicating that the bands influence teamwork, student involvement, and life-long relationships is vital.

Showcasing HBCUs as institutions that offer value beyond graduation degrees is vital for building a positive reputation and thus attracting more learners. HBCUs also need to improve their service offerings by introducing evening and weekend classes and expanding the number and scope of summer classes offered. This will play an integral role in attracting more students and, therefore, increasing recruitment and retention rates<sup>36</sup>. Additionally, embracing nontraditional students is effective in enhancing college access and reducing dropout rates<sup>37</sup>. The campus climate is another critical aspect HBCUs must consider since it resonates with students' experiences, ratification levels, and learning outcomes<sup>38</sup>. They should also partner with local

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<sup>35</sup> Gordon, et al., "The Paradox of HBCU Graduation Rates." 339.

<sup>36</sup> Farmer, et al., "Where Do We Go From Here?" 145.

<sup>37</sup> Marybeth, Gasman, Benjamin Baez, Noah D. Drezner, Katherine V. Sedgwick, Christopher Tudico, and Julie M. Schmid. "Historically Black colleges and universities: Recent trends." *Academe* 93, no. 1 (2007): 69-77. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40253820>

<sup>38</sup> Gordon, et al., "The Paradox of HBCU Graduation Rates." *Ibid*, p.337.

school districts, other colleges, and progressive community organizations to establish novel approaches of benefiting society<sup>39</sup>. This endeavor will prove instrumental in increasing HBCUs' recognition, reputation, and ability to attract learners.

Elpus and Carlos maintain that past experiences influence people's perception of HBCUs, and that marching bands are at the center of this worldview<sup>40</sup>. The image of HBCUs needs a revamp, as misconceptions regarding these learning institutions are anchored on the marching bands' inability to give these institutions the attention they deserve. Despite being in existence for decades, marching bands face organizational and financing issues. Addressing these hindrances is therefore vital for attracting more students and retaining them until graduation. Any details the need to align HBCU marching bands with contemporary trends. Cumberledge claims that the HBCU marching style influences the school's culture, climate, and surrounding communities<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, potential learners evaluate the marching band's culture to understand the underlying values that define an HBCU institution. In the long run, the marching band influences student involvement, lifelong relationships, and team building, and is therefore a pivotal program in the learning process. Additionally, it is an effective student recruitment and retention tool, and thus HBCUs must devise novel ways to continually improve their marching bands.

Hines insist that while marching bands are a critical success factor in HBCUs, there are

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<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Elpus, and Carlos R. Abril. "Who Enrolls in High School Music? A National Profile of US Students, 2009–2013." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 67, no. 3 (2019): 323-338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429419862837>

<sup>40</sup> Elpus, and Carlos, "Who Enrolls in High School Music?" 329.

<sup>41</sup> Cumberledge, "From Competition to Exhibition." 25.

numerous difficulties facing these organizations<sup>42</sup>. The ever-declining recruitment and retention rates in these institutions present a challenge that requires actionable mitigation measures. Bovin claims that the success of HBCUs is subject to the underlying governance structures, purpose, and ability to optimize educational outcomes<sup>43</sup>. These institutions also provide lifelong lessons that augment lifespan development. Other strengths include low educational costs, commitment to the local community, instructional moderateness, and administration preparation of people in the future. While the scholarship on HBCUs is restricted, increased access to grants is pivotal in enabling learners to thrive. However, these institutions face numerous difficulties that affect educational outcomes and their capacity to achieve the set organizational objectives. HBCUs have low graduation rates, insufficient maintenance of infrastructure, and inadequate monetary assets<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, they experience operational difficulties that have ripple implications on their recruitment and retention levels. HBCUs also face fierce rivalry from historically White establishments and an inability to showcase how they have overcome adversity. They are treated as second-class institutions, reducing their appeal to potential learners. The issues adversely affecting HBCUs also hinder the institutions' ability to integrate and maintain their mission. It is a critical success barrier limiting HBCUs' efficacy, capacity to attract future researchers, and optimize educational

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<sup>42</sup> Erik M. Hines, Paul C. Harris, Renae D. Mayes, and James L. Moore III. "I Think of College as Setting a Good Foundation for my Future: Black Males Navigating the College Decision Making Process." *Journal for Multicultural Education* 14, no. 2 (2020): 129-147. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-09-2019-0064>

<sup>43</sup> Amy J Bovin, "Breaking the Silence: The Phenomenology of the Female High School Band Director." *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 38, no. 1 (2019): 34-45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123319841664>

<sup>44</sup> Gordon, et al., "The Paradox of HBCU Graduation Rates." 334.

outcomes. HBCUs also experience sex holes in student enrollment, which further taints the institutions' image and ability to foster diversity and inclusion.

#### Research Related to Marching Bands in Higher Education

Milburn examines the excitement surrounding the culture of the Fifth Quarter after a football game<sup>45</sup>. The audience looks forward to the band performance, with more than half of the 55,000 people attending a football game remaining for the Fifth Quarter<sup>46</sup>. According to Clark, band directors claim that a marching band presentation is an event within an event, with band members taking pride in providing entertainment during a football game<sup>47</sup>. It also resonates with the local community's ability to relate with the school since the marching bands are integral to local culture. In addition, the halftime diversion serves as a source of energy for the competing teams and an attraction to the games<sup>48</sup>. The marching bands entertain a wide range of football lovers and help the spectators to unwind. They are especially crucial for African American males whose presence in football games is a crucial consideration. The strong correlation between HBCU bands, college football, and education experiences makes the marching bands vital in fostering learning within African American communities. Furthermore, HBCUs' marching bands augment the role of the community in school music and the institutions' influence on the local community. The value of HBCU band programs is also evident in the impact of competition between music groups since it influences learning

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<sup>45</sup> Milburn, "The Development of Marching Band Traditions," 211.

<sup>46</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band," 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

institutions' sense of pride.

HBCUs have different approaches to organizing their marching bands. Cumberledge claims that marching bands resonate with the institutions' image and culture. However, the bands have similarities regardless of the HBCU institution they represent. They have walking groups that engage members in perplexing dance steps, drill moves, and old songs. These teams are crucial in attracting the audience since they incorporate complicated and synchronized acrobatics in their performance. The marching bands are experts in entertaining diverse groups with a wide age range. They win the endorsement of their crowds by finding harmony in show content based on a particular theme to achieve an entertainment objective. The path-goal theory is essential in optimizing the dynamics at the collegiate level and fostering different levels of motivation among the band members. Regier argues that the role of community colleges in society contributes to the high number of Black American males in higher education. HBCU marching bands effectively contribute to this endeavor since they provide a platform for learners to express themselves. In addition, they offer a way of contributing to the learning institution and community, thus giving learners a sense of purpose.

Stern points out that marching bands are central to higher learning institutions a culture that was adopted by the US school system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>49</sup>. Unlike in other nations where marching bands are primarily in military institutions, the US adopted the bands in learning settings. Most high schools and colleges in the United States hold marching bands in high regard; they are a source of pride and play a critical ambassadorial role. Marching bands are especially crucial in HBCUs since apart from providing entertainment, they promote the African American

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<sup>49</sup> Curtis Inabinett Jr, *The Legendary Florida A&M University Marching Band The History of "The Hundred"*. (Page Publishing Inc, 2016).



culture. Stern claims that in some HBCUs, marching band members are more popular than athletic players. Therefore, the marching bands are an integral part of the learning experience in these institutions. The origin of marching bands in US colleges and universities can be traced to the University of Notre Dame. The band was founded in 1845 and had its first performance at a football event in 1875<sup>50</sup>. It created a gateway for the development of marching bands in higher learning institutions based on the success of a strong and effective musical program at the University of Notre Dame. Purdue university became an early adopter since the learning facility paved way for marching band innovations that define the groups to date. It was the first band to break standard marching patterns and pictorial formations in 1907<sup>51</sup>. Inspired by a flock of bird's flying in V formation, the Purdue All-American Marching Band created the contemporary style synonymous with many school bands today<sup>52</sup>. In the same year, the University of Illinois performed during the first half-time show during a football game, giving rise to a culture that characterizes contemporary marching band performances. It led to the development of university fight songs that inspire morale and patriotism and thus making marching bands an integral component of learning facilities' culture and ideals. In addition, the bands perform at sporting events to encourage the spectators to cheer louder and therefore creating a fun-filled atmosphere and memorable experiences.

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<sup>50</sup> Inabinett Jr, "The Legendary Florida A&M University Marching Band," 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

Milburn uses organizational theory to provide insights into the role of HBCU marching bands in influencing the education outcomes of African American males<sup>53</sup>. It resonates with HBCUs' efficacy in serving the African American population despite the educational, legal, and economic restrictions<sup>54</sup>. It is a crucial pillar in the struggles of African Americans against White force structures that disadvantage these communities. According to Clark, HBCU marching bands play a central role in advancing the equality of African American populations by promoting the Black culture<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, in the face of increased operating costs, decreasing government funds, and waning alumni financial support, HBCUs are developing novel approaches to increasing financial independence. They are immersing themselves in practices traditionally associated with the business sector to increase revenue streams and foster financial stability, since it is crucial for advancing the core objectives of these institutions. Marketing has emerged as a crucial tool for advancing financial goals, as it increases the institutions' recognizability and appeal to potential learners. Marching bands play an integral role in this endeavor, as they build the commitment of the graduating class and expected contributors. They help spread the word regarding the HBCU institution, which translates to higher recruitment rates.

#### Research Related to Marching Bands and Student Learning Outcomes

Cumberledge investigates the purpose of making music in tertiary education

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<sup>53</sup> Milburn, "An Oral History of Marching Band Traditions," 14.

<sup>54</sup> Felix Kumah-Abiwu, "Philanthropic Funding and the Future of HBCUs." In *Emancipatory Change in US Higher Education*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022). 219-240.

<sup>55</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band." 5.

institutions. The article indicates that music is integral in developing institutional identity and promoting innovation<sup>56</sup>. It is also vital for building social bonds which promote improved education outcomes. In addition, music making positively affect learners' social, melodic, and individual abilities which augments life outcomes. Cumberledge notes that musical programs are favored when it comes to extracurricular activities that augment recruitment<sup>57</sup>. In addition, higher learning institutions that embrace music create a loyal student population which is vital for optimizing retention. Marching bands are especially effective in enhancing learners' creativity and capacity to continuously improve their well-being. HBCUs can, therefore, expand student enrollment and retention across colleges by using music programs. Music is also vital for promoting political activism, social equity, peacemaking, well-being, and prosperity. Therefore, with music, HBCUs benefit both the learning institutions and the local area.

As mentioned earlier, the advantages associated with marching bands in higher learning education institutions go beyond the learning facility. The student's learning outcomes are influenced by the music culture as it instills values and disciplines that are crucial for academic success. Sanchez mentions that marching band members have a higher graduation rate than other groups of college students. In addition, marching bands' role in improving school success augments education outcomes. It reduces dropout rates and increases completion rates which are vital for promoting black excellence in HBCUs<sup>58</sup>. Marching bands

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<sup>56</sup> Cumberledge, "From Competition to Exhibition," 28.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Landon Sanchez, "Student perceptions of college marching band participation on student development goals in higher education." (PhD diss, Boston University), 2022.

have significant physical benefits for participants. They involve rigorous exercise, including aerobic and cardio workouts during rehearsals and performances. Furthermore, band members undergo muscular development to facilitate synchronized marching styles and the carrying of musical instruments. Marching bands equip learners with multi-tasking skills which are vital for enhancing classroom productivity. In addition, they facilitate better time management and the ability to handle complex tasks<sup>59</sup>. The marching bands also build learners' innovation capacity by increasing cognitive flexibility and creativity. Furthermore, they instill a sense of responsibility and accountability. The discipline required during training sessions and accomplishing assigned duties develop a strong work ethic that fosters independence. Furthermore, it fosters student learning and aids in better academic performance and achievements.

Marching bands promotes teamwork since band members have to work in unison to deliver memorable performances. The synchronization that births seamless action, dance moves, and music requires cohesion. Therefore, band members must develop mutual respect, tolerance, empathy, and interpersonal communication skills<sup>60</sup>. A study conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities revealed that employers are interested in collaboration skills in new hires. It is a critical learning outcome taught outside classrooms but vital in the workplace. Marching bands' efficacy in promoting learning outcomes is also evident in enabling students to develop commitment and personal growth, and leadership skills. These attributes are vital for personal, and career development and, thus are more

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<sup>59</sup> Sanchez, "Student perceptions of college marching band participation on student development goals in higher education." 7.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

valuable than classroom lessons. Sanchez claims that HBCUs alumni claim that marching bands played a central role in helping them to become valuable members of society. The values and ideals instilled by participating in the marching bands have a life-long impact in their lifespan development. Sanchez indicates that marching bands enhance problem-solving and decision-making skills among learners<sup>61</sup>. Additionally, they augment self-awareness, competence, and independence. Therefore, they equip learners with knowledge and skills that resonate with the required qualities in workplaces. Marching bands are effective tools when it comes to optimizing education outcomes in higher learning institutions.

Marching bands are effective for improving the student retention rate and increasing college enrollment. Higher learning institutions' ability to utilize the marching band as an enrollment instrument influences their ability to attract student artists to their facilities. According to Cumberledge, students indicate that marching bands provide a solid foundation for their learning outcomes. Furthermore, improving the notoriety and quality of a particular scholarly division within the institution and their learning experience influenced their decision to obtain membership in HBCU marching bands. Cumberledge evaluates the association between school programs with curriculum efficacy, the accomplishment of test scores, and local area commitment. Extracurricular activities play an integral role in defining learning outcomes, and the prestige learning institutions bring to the local community<sup>62</sup>. HBCUs have a significant role in society, and thus, their rank compared to other tertiary institutions is a

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<sup>61</sup> Sanchez, "Student perceptions of college marching band participation on student development goals in higher education." 22.

<sup>62</sup> Jason Cumberledge, "The Benefits of College Marching Bands for Students and Universities: A Review of the Literature." *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 36, no. 1 (2017): 44-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123316682819>

critical consideration. To enjoy community support, higher learning facilities must excel in extracurricular activities and students' outcomes. Clark opines that when school-based organization groups assess their endeavors, they exhibit an earnestness of direction and commitment to achieve their future desired position<sup>63</sup>. These efforts prompt connections to families, which advances student accomplishment in school.

According to Stern, HBCU institutions endeavor to have adequate monetary capacity and become financially stable to support enrollment and improve retention. This expansion of financial capacity can increase the four-year graduation rates by enabling learners to understand that college success is anchored in completing the stipulated course. Johnson proposes that to increase student enrollment, focusing on students from low-income families and students of color is crucial. It is consistent across advanced education establishments and thus HBCUs should adopt this strategy. Open two-year colleges and public four-year foundations are vital for appealing to learners and increasing their commitment towards education. Extracurricular activities also provide the much-needed drive to inspire learners to achieve their educational goals. They are vital for enhancing retention since they prompt individuals to finish college and not drop out. High school students, indoor drumlines, drum corps, winter guard, and other members of the marching band agree that music and athletics play a central role in the learning process<sup>64</sup>. They indicate that they take pride in educating, entertaining, and inspiring students through music. In the process they please the music educators, parents, alumni, and fans and thus the marching bands give them a sense of

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<sup>63</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band." 7.

<sup>64</sup> Cumberledge, "The Perceived Influence of Social Media on High School Band Students," 43.

purpose. Those involved in marching bands at high school level seek HBCU bands that are visually appealing and have the capacity to advance their educational outcomes.

Cumberledge posits that the stories that define these bands' competitions and traditions play an integral role in influencing the learners' choice when joining college<sup>65</sup>. Narratives explaining musical and marching skills needed for membership in HBCU bands dictate the culture and values that guide the learning institution. Therefore, learners consider these stories, narratives, and images when deciding to the band to connect with. Completion of college indicates student success and consequent institutional success. These are crucial measurements for identifying student achievement since they determine the efficacy of the transition from freshman-to sophomore<sup>66</sup>. These elements influence the standard for dependability, first-year yearly return rate, and the associate graduation rate. The entertainment of marching bands at HBCUs halftime shows is a vital attraction for students and local communities and therefore contribute to students' retention.

According to Clark, marching bands take the lead when it comes to the most effective music programs for fostering optimal educational outcomes<sup>67</sup>. Marching bands also engage students in activities that foster social justice, political activism, and commitment to the local community. It, therefore, provides education beyond academic settings, which is crucial for molding learners into responsible citizens. Milburn assessed reasons students took part in marching bands and indicated that they are attracted by the ability to showcase talent and take

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<sup>65</sup> Cumberledge, "From Competition to Exhibition," 29.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson, "Pride or Prejudice?" 419.

<sup>67</sup> Clark, "A Narrative History of African American Marching Band." 6.

part in showcasing their institution's values and culture<sup>68</sup>. Furthermore, the marching band provides an opportunity to learn, create, develop long-life friendships, and navigate school life<sup>69</sup>. According to Burke, marching bands influence learning outcomes since they motivate learners to attend school and remain in high spirits<sup>70</sup>. Furthermore, the hard work students put in to make marching bands presentations a success provides life-long lessons they can apply to their personal and professional lives.

### Marching Bands and Finance in Historically Black Colleges and Universities

HBCU institutions face systematic disadvantages orchestrated by limitations put by education and social systems. Underfunding from the federal government has seen these institutions develop novel approaches to raising finances<sup>71</sup>. Top among these techniques is alumni funding which resonates with the progressing relationship between HBCUs, marching band alumni, and band musicians. This association benefits HBCUs academically and financially. HBCUS alumni contribute to the recruitment progress. Their role is vital for advancing the institution's agenda despite the underfunding issues. In addition, they act as role models to learners and inspire them to complete college to become useful citizens. On the other hand, HBCUs utilize marching bands as a recruitment instrument and, in the process, incorporate the alumni's input to enhance learning outcomes. The hypothetical structure of black student

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<sup>68</sup> Milburn, *An Oral History of Marching Band Traditions*,” 15.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> Adam Burke. "Student Retention Models in Higher Education: A Literature Review." *College and University* 94, no. 2 (2019): 12-21.  
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/3801c2272f50c82853ddee876e93347d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1059>

<sup>71</sup> Hardy, et al., "Below the Surface:" 469.



achievement is another critical element that resonates with funding HBCUs<sup>72</sup>. The core objective of these institutions is to provide quality education to marginalized groups. Therefore, financing the facilities requires results that point towards increased education outcomes among the target communities. To this end, black student achievement is a critical tool for showcasing the academic excellence associated with HBCUs and thus the need for financing<sup>73</sup>. The commitments HBCUs have made for black student achievement is a critical element when it comes to increased funding since it promotes a unique paradigm.

Mutakabbir and Christopher present a case study on the state execution funding policy and its effects on HBCUs. The local government funds HBCUs based on graduation rates and impact on the local community<sup>74</sup>. Other value estimates, like the ability to increase accomplishment rates among Black and non-Black students, also determine to finance in these facilities. The arrangements between HBCU member schools and the state ensure that funding is subject to merit, and thus the learning institutions must strive for excellence to achieve the set financing goals. The state funding policy is also effective in equipping students for professional fields of service since the learners' accomplishment is a critical element of the value measures. Therefore, HBCUs mission must resonate with their funding goals to ensure they meet the value

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<sup>72</sup> Yoruba T Mutakabbir and Parker Christopher, "Financial Issues for HBCUs in 2020 and Beyond." In *Reimagining Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, pp. 79-87. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> James Dean War, and William G. Tierney. "The Role of State Policy in Ensuring Access, Achievement, and Attainment in Education." *American Behavioral Scientist* 61, no. 14 (2017): 1731-1739. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217744820>

<sup>74</sup> Mutakabbir, "Financial Issues for HBCUs in 2020 and Beyond," 81.

measures instituted by the state funding policy<sup>75</sup>. Boland agrees that the state funding policy is instrumental in influencing the performance of HBCU organizations. It resonates with the relationship between public postsecondary organizations and Pay-for-performance which is a crucial state account policy in numerous regions across the United States<sup>76</sup>. As of 2020, 35 states fund HBCUs and approve appointments to colleges and universities boards depending on result measures<sup>77</sup>. The school's performance in terms of recruitment and graduation rates, augmenting black student's accomplishments, and benefits to the local community determine to fund in public 4-year HBCUs. Excellence in extracurricular activities is considered a critical component of education outcomes and thus plays an integral role in determining to finance.

According to Jackson, financial efficacy in higher learning institutions is the gateway to improved education outcomes. It enhances student commitment, scholastic accomplishment, educational responsibilities, and industriousness to graduation<sup>78</sup>. The association between the financing of HBCUs and learning outcomes makes funding these institutions a critical aspect of advancing state education funding policies. The availability of funds directly correlates to the state of infrastructure, resources availed for extracurricular activities, and the level of strain

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<sup>75</sup> Mutakabbir, "Financial Issues for HBCUs in 2020 and Beyond," 81.

<sup>76</sup> William Casey Boland, "Performance Funding and Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Assessment of Financial Incentives and Baccalaureate Degree Production." *Educational Policy* 34, no. 4 (2020): 644-673.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818802118>

<sup>77</sup> Boland, "Performance Funding and Historically Black Colleges and Universities," 645.

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Trumaine Jackson, "Investigating the Determinants of Student Low Enrollment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): The Case of One HBCU in the South." (2021). [https://doi.org/10.31390/gradschool\\_dissertations.5659](https://doi.org/10.31390/gradschool_dissertations.5659)

students undergo in attaining their degree<sup>79</sup>. Finances to meet tuition and other college-going expenses influences student's decision to attend college. Social capital also affects family pay in education choices about higher education the capacity to afford to learn in particular institutions. It illuminates the monetary imbalance in educational opportunities, which the core issue HBCUs look to address<sup>80</sup>. In addition, funding also affects to a great extent the choice of college made by that student and thus directly affects recruitment and retention in HBCUs. Higher education institutions that are considered less funded attract a lower number of students than universities and colleges that are highly funded<sup>81</sup>. The monetary guide impacts students' lives, since the monetary assets utilized by low-pay students affect their learning outcomes<sup>82</sup>. As such, the role of financial goals and accountability in HBCUs' recruitment and retention funding is critical since it resonates with the learning facilities' accomplishments and reputation<sup>83</sup>.

According to Ison funding of HBCUs has become a critical topic at the federal government and local levels<sup>84</sup>. It is a major campaign tool by politicians looking to capitalize on the issues affecting higher education. For example, over the past half a decade, free higher

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<sup>79</sup> Jackson, "Investigating the Determinants of Student Low Enrollment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)," 23.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>81</sup> Mutakabbir, "Financial Issues for HBCUs in 2020 and Beyond," 79.

<sup>82</sup> Jackson, "Investigating the Determinants of Student Low Enrollment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)," 27.

<sup>83</sup> Boland, "Performance Funding and Historically Black Colleges and Universities," 649.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew P Ison, "The Viability of Tuition-Free Community College." Educational Policy 36, no. 5 (2022): 1054-1077. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904820951119>

education has become a vital policy conversation<sup>85</sup>. It is frequently discussed along politically partisan lines with different groups looking to develop actionable approaches of promoting education equality through effective financing. Issues related to increasing expense of an advanced degree and its hindrance for underrepresented populaces expecting to obtain higher education are a critical consideration in these discussions<sup>86</sup>. It aligns with the need to balance black accomplishments with learners from privileged backgrounds<sup>87</sup>. Other groups point towards a broken financial aid system that leaves more individuals financing their education through student loans. The affordability of education among learners from marginalized communities is a critical topic, and thus the funding of HBCUs is considered vital. The massive national loan debt hinders education outcomes, given that as of 2020, it exceeded a trillion dollars<sup>88</sup>. The contentions for and against a free-educational cost program present a crucial funding problem among HBCUs. Unless the policy problems affecting the American higher education framework are addressed, financing higher education institutions will remain a critical issue affecting learning outcomes.

Execution funding in planning for public organizations is a vital subject in higher education policy in the United States. Performance funding is an effective approach of enhancing public institutions to work toward meeting state goals<sup>89</sup>. This technique entails aligning financing

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<sup>85</sup> Ison, "The Viability of Tuition-Free Community College," 1058.

<sup>86</sup> War, "The Role of State Policy in Ensuring Access, Achievement, and Attainment in Education." 1730.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 1060.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 1061.

<sup>89</sup> Jackson, "Investigating the Determinants of Student Low Enrollment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)," 37.

of higher learning institutions based on their capacity to achieve the set education objectives. In this case, HBCUs must achieve their set mandates while competing with privileged institutions to attain the required funding<sup>90</sup>. The level of financing tertiary institutions obtain from the local and federal government is subject to their ability to achieve the set learning outcomes. Therefore, the recruiting and retention issues experienced by HBCUs are directly influenced by their ability to achieve educational goals. Perna note that 4-year colleges and universities provide limited information regarding the costs of attendance<sup>91</sup>. It adversely affects the consistency with the flow and proposed government prerequisites which are vital determinants of funding decisions. The colleges and universities neglecting to consent to government orders disadvantage themselves when it comes to obtaining financial assistance from the government. The National Association of College Admission Counseling indicates that tertiary institutions have a moral obligation to provide total and accurate data concerning attendance costs promptly, as required by education authorities<sup>92</sup>. This information is vital for developing feasible funding decisions with budget estimates based on credible data.

Perna indicates that spatial econometrics is effective in assessing the degree to which diverse colleges and universities need to influence states' higher education spending. There are three classes, including allotments to state-funded colleges, need-based guide, and non-need-

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<sup>90</sup> War, "The Role of State Policy in Ensuring Access, Achievement, and Attainment in Education." 1726.

<sup>91</sup> Laura W Perna, Jeremy Wright-Kim, and Nathan Jiang. "Money matters: Understanding How Colleges and Universities Use Their Websites to Communicate Information About How to Pay College Costs." *Educational Policy* 35, no. 7 (2021): 1311-1348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904819867398>

<sup>92</sup> Ison, "The Viability of Tuition-Free Community College," 1069.

based guide spending<sup>93</sup>. The funding approach adopted by local governments is subject to population migration flows between states since the finances determine the number of learners the funds dispersed to tertiary institutions cater for<sup>94</sup>. Furthermore, common state membership in regional interstate higher education compacts defines the connectivity between states and thus influences the financing techniques adopted by the local government. It is accurate to argue that state policy's play a significant role in guaranteeing value in postsecondary education access, accomplishment, and achievement<sup>95</sup>. The level of funding the state programs initiate determines the higher learning facilities ability to achieve their set vision and mission. It directly correlates with recruitment and retention rates and the capacity to benefit the local community. It is vital to note that the US has a federalist education arrangement, therefore, the local governments play a central role in making decisions related to funding and running institutions of higher education<sup>96</sup>. The education approach in this nation gives states critical self-sufficiency in their administration of schools, colleges, and universities which is a critical consideration of financing HBCUs.

The absence of the federal government's input in funding HBCUs makes these facilities prone to regional and ethnic bias. This systematic disadvantage limits HBCUs efficacy in realizing the set goals and optimizing education outcomes<sup>97</sup>. The separation across state lines influences internal and external factors at play in policy advancement when it comes to funding

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<sup>93</sup> Mutakabbir, "Financial Issues for HBCUs in 2020 and Beyond," 86.

<sup>94</sup> Boland, "Performance Funding and Historically Black Colleges and Universities," 650.

<sup>95</sup> Perna, et al. "Money matters," 1322.

<sup>96</sup> Mutakabbir, "Financial Issues for HBCUs in 2020 and Beyond," *Ibid*, p. 84.

<sup>97</sup> Jackson, "Investigating the Determinants of Student Low Enrollment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)," 38.

and running universities and colleges. Furthermore, it states the freedoms to gain from each other and thus promotes education in some regions while leaving others behind. Gordon claims that HBCUs play a central role in black students' achievement. However, state funding policies fail to match the financing of HBCUs and graduation outcomes<sup>98</sup>. States use Pay-for-Performance policies to fund HBCUs which influence fluctuations in recruitment and enrollment in these institutions<sup>99</sup>. However, advancement toward free higher education will address the financial issues facing HBCUs. Students' loans availability, education grants, and private funding will improve HBCUs' financing and encourage higher enrollment rates.

The US department of education is at the forefront of promoting the financing of African American colleges. The Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU) Capital Financing Advisory Board plays an integral role in this endeavor<sup>100</sup>. It advises the US department of education concerning HBCU financing needs and reports to congress on the progress made in implementing education legislation and putting the availed finances into good use. In recent years HBCUs have gained the recognition they deserve since they have produced some of the greatest leaders in the United States. Vice President Kamala Harris is a suitable example of HBCU alumni who have risen to the top of the political class in the United States. Matthews indicates that there is a significant increase in enrollment, and HBCUs are attracting top athletes and employing qualified staff to handle extracurricular activities. For example, the learning

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<sup>98</sup> Gordon, et al., "The Paradox of HBCU Graduation Rates." 341.

<sup>99</sup> Kumah-Abiwu, "Philanthropic Funding and the Future of HBCUs." 8.

<sup>100</sup> Jason P Cumberledge, "Band together: How college marching band students perceived community during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 39, no. 3 (2021): 67-74.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/87551233211003839>

institutions hire former NFL players to coach football<sup>101</sup>. They are engines of upward mobility and job creation which are critical in improving social and economic equity. Therefore, there is a need for increased funding of these institutions, an endeavor that has taken a long time to come to fruition. Issues relating to racial and regional imbalance have been a critical hindrance to the equity required in financing higher learning institutions that serve minority communities.

Covid-19 had far-reaching effects on numerous industries, and the education sector was not an exception. The post-pandemic changes saw many HBCUs rethink their financing strategies to cope with paradigm shifts in social and economic spheres. A study by Cumberledge indicated that 41% of parents regard a college degree as vital for their child's wellbeing, down from 94% in 2012<sup>102</sup>. However, despite the reduced undergraduate enrollment in colleges, HBCUs saw a 2.5% increase. According to Cumberledge, the 4.2% enrollment decline for colleges and universities is bound to have negative education outcomes. HBCUs' success is subject to their capacity to capitalize on shared relief. The learning institutions covered lost wages and forgave student debts. These aspects increased HBCUs' reputation and thus attracted more students who saw an increase in enrollment rates. Another notable element is HBCUs' financial success despite the issue of systematic underfunding on the state and federal level since their founding. New support from HBCUs alumni and non-alumni is helping some institutions get out of the financial pit hole due to being overlooked. It is crucial to note that predominantly white institution counterparts receive a disproportionate share of government funds and an

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<sup>101</sup>Wendy K Matthews, "'Stand by me': A mixed methods study of a collegiate marching band members' intragroup beliefs throughout a performance season." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 65, no. 2 (2017): 179-202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429417694875>

<sup>102</sup> Cumberledge, "Band together," 7.



abundance of private and philanthropic donations<sup>103</sup>. Therefore, the increase in HBCUs funding is helping to counter the financial inequality orchestrated by systematic prejudice.

The realization that there was a need to step in and increase funding in HBCUs has seen a significant change in the financing of these institutions. After the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police in 2020, HBCUs faced a wave of financial support<sup>104</sup>. Many HBCUs witnessed historic fundraising and increases in corporate partnerships and philanthropic donations. For example, MacKenzie Scott, former spouse of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to HBCUs indicating that she was spending money where it was needed most<sup>105</sup>. The government has also adopted policies aimed at improving the financing of HBCUs. The Build Back Better plan provides insights into the expected progress in HBCUs and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)<sup>106</sup>. Upon passing the legislation that will prompt the investment of a trillion dollars in infrastructure, congress will consider legislation that will provide additional trillions in support for HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and MSIs. This investment will strengthen their academic, administrative, and fiscal capabilities, given that these institutions play a critical role in improving society. The finances will help expand educational programs in high-demand fields such as computer sciences, nursing, and

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<sup>103</sup> Matthews, "'Stand by me,'" 12.

<sup>104</sup> Stern, Jordan. "Marching on an Uneven Field." *Sociological Thinking in Music Education: International Intersections* (2022): 117.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197600962.003.0009>

<sup>105</sup> Cumberledge, "Band together," 17.

<sup>106</sup> Matthews, "'Stand by me,'" 9.

allied health (STEM)<sup>107</sup>. On the other hand, HBCUs will increase investments in marching bands since they are an integral component of their educational outcomes.

#### Research Related to Recruiting in Higher Education

According to Russell, college readiness is a critical consideration of education outcomes in the United States<sup>108</sup>. However, there is a knowledge gap concerning the school preparedness of minority communities. Systematic disadvantages present diverse variables with detrimental implications for recruitment in higher learning institutions. Ali claims that students enroll in universities or colleges while underequipped to accomplish collegiate-level tasks, negatively affecting their retention rates<sup>109</sup>. Therefore, evaluating the grade point average is crucial for predicting college success. This aspect goes beyond the readiness measure since students adapt to the prevailing learning environment and school culture. It is a vital indicator of an institution's efficacy in promoting optimal educational outcomes and benefiting the local community. Grade point average shows how well a learning institution performs and therefore augmenting recruitment based on academic excellence.

Remediation in higher education has become a critical consideration for determining the number of students served in learning institutions. Providing information on college readiness

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<sup>107</sup> Jordan Stern, "Marching on an Uneven Field." *Sociological Thinking in Music Education: International Intersections* (2022): 117.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197600962.003.0009>

<sup>108</sup> Jared A. Russell, "Enhancing Graduate Student Research, Recruitment, and Retention Via a Summer Research Experience." *Kinesiology Review* 9, no. 4 (2020): 343-348.  
<https://doi.org/10.1123/kr.2020-0037>

<sup>109</sup> Sunni Ali and Alberto Lopez, "A Qualitative Investigation: Black & Brown Men Retention and Recruitment in the Grow Your Own Program and Partners Colleges of Education and Universities." *Journal of Research Initiatives* 7, no. 1 (2022): 4.  
<https://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/jri/vol7/iss1/4>

before the senior year of high school is a feasible approach of identifying the number of students that require remediation. This information helps in expanding school admittance since learners have insights regarding the school that cater for their remediation needs<sup>110</sup>. Politically-sanctioned racial segregation and governmental policy regarding minorities in society are critical hinderances to high college recruitment. This race-based measures of determination influences government funding towards education and the learning outcomes in different regions. HBCUs are particularly affected by this model since marginalized communities often receive less funding. Murphy mentions the role of states' Pay-for-Performance funding for tertiary institutions in demeaning recruitment efforts within minority groups<sup>111</sup>. The limitations associated with financing have ripple implications on HBCUs' ability to enroll and retain students optimally. Minority-serving institutions face constant state funding changes, affecting their ability to attract potential learners.

The challenges faced by Afro-American researchers in historically white universities mirror the issues related to recruitment in higher learning institutions based on ethnicity. Complex issues concerning their job and capacity inside the institutions indicate that prejudice in colleges and universities is a critical problem. The clashing job assumptions between the Afro-American intelligent people in the académie and their employer affect the researchers' work and position. Similarly higher learning institutions face recruitment hinderances brought by racial

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<sup>110</sup> Megan Louise Pedler, Royce Willis, and Johanna Elizabeth Nieuwoudt. "A Sense of Belonging at University: Student Retention, Motivation and Enjoyment." *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 46, no. 3 (2022): 397-408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1955844>

<sup>111</sup> Mary C Murphy, et al., "A Customized Belonging Intervention Improves Retention of Socially Disadvantaged Students at a Broad-Access University." *Science Advances* 6, no. 29 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aba4677>

stereotypes and the culture adopted in these facilities<sup>112</sup>. Limited diversity and inclusion is a crucial issue with significant implications for HBCUs capacity to recruit learners. According to Russell, states provide a wide array of information about college readiness before senior year<sup>113</sup>. However, students fail to fully utilize these insights when preparing or applying for higher learning institutions. Therefore, providing information and increasing access to this data is not a feasible solution to increasing school admittance. Ali claims that the progressive decline in colleges and universities' recruitment rates requires actionable mitigation strategies<sup>114</sup>. A multi-sector approach is more effective than relying on government agencies to augment college readiness. Higher learning institutions must develop unique approaches to attracting learners to increase enrollment.<sup>115</sup>

#### Research Related to Retention in Higher Education

Colleges and universities focus on continually improving the quality of education they provide. However, these institutions must consider ways to create a conducive learning environment that motivates students to complete their undergraduate programs. Developing a lively environment is crucial for fostering high attendance rates and therefore retaining learners<sup>116</sup>. Understanding best practices for access and retention in higher education programs is vital in optimizing school admittance outcomes. Ali claims that identifying and supporting at-

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<sup>112</sup> Pedler, et al., "A Sense of Belonging at University," 402.

<sup>113</sup> Russell, "Enhancing Graduate Student Research," 344.

<sup>114</sup> Ali, "A Qualitative Investigation:" 4.

<sup>115</sup> Burke, "Student Retention Models," 15.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

risk students is crucial in this endeavor. It ensures that no learner is left behind in facilitating optimal educational outcomes<sup>117</sup>. Some high-risk students are ready to succeed despite the numerous issues they face in their quest for education. Therefore, flexibility among high-risk students fosters school achievements and thus directly influences graduation rates. Some learning facilities enlist and enroll students to improper courses during their first semester which helps increase recruitment rates<sup>118</sup>. It also fills in as support against high-hazard students' weaknesses and thus gives colleges and universities a leeway to develop loyalty through exemplary learning experiences. Expanding maintenance and persistence of collegiate-level learning ensures that the strong students are encouraged to finish their educational program while the weak ones have the support, they need to facilitate optimal educational outcomes.

Retention in higher learning institutions is subject to different aspects. Access to quality education is a critical issue since it cultivates attitudes, perception, and values that foster college completion. For example, rural first-generation undergraduates experience difficulties in school due to their background<sup>119</sup>. Their problems are influenced by trouble acclimating to new networks, the absence of school availability, and the shortfall of an encouraging group of people. It leads to negative attitudes towards education which affects their completion rates. In addition, the lack of parental help is a critical hindrance to school success. Caballero indicates that advanced retention of provincial first generations is determined by the values instituted when

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<sup>117</sup> Ali, "A Qualitative Investigation," 5.

<sup>118</sup> Jennifer L James, "Students As Stakeholders: Understanding Expectations can Increase Student Retention." *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 24, no. 1 (2022): 20-42.<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119898844>

<sup>119</sup> James, "Students As Stakeholders," 23.

such individuals were young. Learners attending minor, private college, where withdrawal rates are higher than that of proceeding generation students often adopt to the culture that defines a learning institution<sup>120</sup>. Therefore, equipping children with strong value systems is vital for increasing their retention rates. Hard work, accountability, responsibility, and discipline are vital values for those looking to complete college. Therefore, failure to instill such concepts in children leads to a misguided notion concerning graduation and thus falling victim to university and college dropouts if recruited into higher learning facilities with high withdrawal rates<sup>121</sup>.

The technological changes causing paradigm shifts in the way people live and do business have significant effects on education. The adoption of technology in recent years has changed how colleges and universities offer education<sup>122</sup>. In addition, it has caused shifts in ways learners obtain knowledge. Ifenthaler and Jane claim that adult students' determination in online projects is lower than in traditional school homerooms<sup>123</sup>. This notion resonates with the role of technology in reducing attention and causing distractions. It is crucial to note that more students are taking on online projects despite their negative learning outcomes. It is the basis of college

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<sup>120</sup> Barbara Flores Caballero, "Higher Education: Factors and Strategies for Student Retention." *HETS Online Journal* 10 (2020).  
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE7CA627281075&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=abs&userGroupName=anon~e1566ec6>

<sup>121</sup> James, "Students As Stakeholders," 24.

<sup>122</sup> Malcolm Tight, "Student Retention and Engagement in Higher Education." *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 44, no. 5 (2020): 689-704.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1576860>

<sup>123</sup> Dirk Ifenthaler, and Jane Yin-Kim Yau. "Higher Education Stakeholders' Views on Learning Analytics Policy Recommendations for Supporting Study Success." *International Journal of Learning Analytics and Artificial Intelligence for Education: iJAI* 1, no. 1 (2019): 28-42. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijai.v1i1.10978>

and universities recruitment and retention. Learning facilities that have adopted to technology are considered convenient and progressive and thus have higher graduation rates than late adopters<sup>124</sup>. Students' necessities and assumptions for their accomplishment in online courses requires more research to understand how to improve retention rates in the face of technology adoption in education. Pedlar claims that nontraditional students experience one-of-a-kind difficulties to academic improvement and accomplishments. Low-financial status, issues at home, and negligible off-grounds support has adverse psychological implications for these learners<sup>125</sup>. They hinder their capacity to complete school despite the conveniences of educational technology. Colleges and universities must develop novel approaches of retaining their online students to optimize educational outcomes.

Extracurricular activities play an integral role in higher learning institutions' ability to attract and retain learners. They are a crucial marketing tool and effective for retaining students until completion. James details the connection between school football's institutional help and retention at NCAA Division 1A and 1AA colleges and universities<sup>126</sup>. Estimated participation at home football match-ups indicate that most students look forward to the football matches. In addition, the players hold their ability to represent their learning institution in high regard. Marching bands at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) are needed within the higher education context<sup>127</sup>. James demonstrated how different components related to student

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<sup>124</sup> Ifenthaler, "Higher Education Stakeholders," 29.

<sup>125</sup> Pedler, et al., "A Sense of Belonging at University," 400.

<sup>126</sup> James, "Students As Stakeholders," 27.

<sup>127</sup> Ifenthaler, "Higher Education Stakeholders," Ibid, p. 32.

retention are influenced by participation at home football match-ups. Organization's retention rates also correlate with the transfer experience's intricacy among students and thus has ripple implications for their capacity to complete college. According James those who started their postsecondary education at a 2-year college are likely to graduate when they move to a substantial 4-year college<sup>128</sup>. Furthermore, the transfer displacement idea compares to school capital for student retention in many higher learning institutions.

Music bands provide a platform for diversity, entertainment, and educational opportunities for students that may not otherwise be able to afford college. HBCUs are known for their participation in football events and college marching bands. Marching bands provide exposure of HBCUs to students and the local communities. These activities are often a source of joy, pride, and identity and thus influence retention levels significantly<sup>129</sup>. Furthermore, extracurricular activities allow colleges and universities to showcase their talent and therefore appealing to potential learners<sup>130</sup>. Colleges that attract a high number of students have a high graduation rate. Therefore, their ability to retain learners to accomplish learning needs is notable. In most cases these institutions have a functional extracurricular activities department that is effective in putting the learning institution on the map.

Higher learning education institutions are keen on improving graduation rates. Therefore, the learning facilities with the objective of expanding student retention and improving learning structures have novel approaches of increasing school accomplishments. For example, the

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<sup>128</sup> James, "Students As Stakeholders," 26.

<sup>129</sup> Pedler, et al., "A Sense of Belonging at University," 401.

<sup>130</sup> Caballero, "Higher Education: Factors and Strategies for Student Retention," 13.



College of Business and Economics experiments with first-year recruit learning networks to instill values and attitudes that promote increased graduation rates<sup>131</sup>. Comparisons among the business cohorts and a brain research associate indicate that this construction expand scholastic execution or retention. students. Results from nonsignificant partners and a benchmark group indicate that introducing a robust relationship with learners from the onset creates a suitable environment for improved retention levels<sup>132</sup>. Other techniques include influencing the choice of subjects to ensure that students have a smooth learning experience. A study showed that learners who developed similar math, English, and financial aspects based on the information provided when they joined higher learning institutions<sup>133</sup>. These components are effective in influencing retention of students with handicaps and thus improve learning outcomes significantly. Priode arranges educational issues from optional to postsecondary education, and investigates the utility of the all-inclusive plan idea to the retention of students. According to Priode encouraging practices shared alongside suggestions for training help build rapport which ultimately influences learners' choice to complete college or not<sup>134</sup>.

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<sup>131</sup> Tight, "Student Retention and Engagement in Higher Education," 691.

<sup>132</sup> Sandra Edmonds Crewe, "Education with Intent—The HBCU Experience." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 27, no. 5 (2017): 360-366.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1318622>

<sup>133</sup> Ifenthaler, "Higher Education Stakeholders," 33.

<sup>134</sup> Kimberly Slone Priode, Robin B. Dail, and Melvin Swanson. "Nonacademic Factors that Influence Nontraditional Nursing Student Retention." *Nursing Education Perspectives* 41, no. 4 (2020): 246-248.  
[https://journals.lww.com/neponline/Abstract/2020/07000/Nonacademic\\_Factors\\_That\\_Influence\\_Nontraditional.10.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/neponline/Abstract/2020/07000/Nonacademic_Factors_That_Influence_Nontraditional.10.aspx)

Studies evaluating retention activity portray that baccalaureate and graduate degrees students have diverse viewpoints concerning college completion. Non-returning sophomores and students who had applied for readmission to the University after a break had different motivators. The zeal to compete college resonates with the learners' goals and objectives concerning their professional and personal growth<sup>135</sup>. Educators tap into these motivators to encourage students' enrollment for classes. In this way, they facilitate re-visitation of grounds which are crucial for making students return clients. The approach keeps learners focused on what the learning institution is offering and thus completing their education out of intrinsic motivation<sup>136</sup>. This methodology offers retention technique that depends on compelling students to remain in school until their graduation. Cross-divisional collaboration is essential to student retention. Since it keeps the students an established and enlisted. Consistent retention exertion starts before students are selected and it gets integrated into their educational framework. According to Ali undergraduates who experience difficulties in schools have the lowest attendance rates<sup>137</sup>. Parents have a pivotal role in motivating such students and therefore play a central role in augmenting retention. A study highlighted by Cooper shows that extracurricular activities are vital for increasing student retention<sup>138</sup>. It is the magnet that fosters student loyalty towards an institution and increases their attendance.

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<sup>135</sup> Pedler, et al., "A Sense of Belonging at University," 404.

<sup>136</sup> Caballero, "Higher Education," 13.

<sup>137</sup> Ali, "A Qualitative Investigation," 4.

<sup>138</sup> Cooper, "Black Female College Athletes," 72.

## Chapter 3: A Historical Overview of Jackson State University and its Marching Band

### Introduction

Jackson State University is the fourth largest university in Mississippi in terms of student enrollment. It is one of the oldest of the historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), in the US and the largest HBCU in the nation<sup>139</sup>. A public research university located in Jackson, Mississippi, the institution has a reputation for augmenting academic excellence and optimizing learning outcomes<sup>140</sup>. Jackson State University has undergone seven name changes since its inception indicating the shifts it has endured to cement its place among the top higher learning education institutions in the US. The facility has unique history and a rich tradition of educating young people for leadership<sup>141</sup>. The university's religious roots play an integral role in shaping the core values and ideals that drive its growth. Established in 1877 by the American Baptist Home mission Society under the leadership of H.P. Jacobs, Jackson State University became a crucial pillar for the black community<sup>142</sup>. It provided education to this marginalized group, ensuring that the free slaves became knowledgeable in fields that would secure them careers. The university also promoted the Christian faith among the colored people of Mississippi and beyond. It centered its programs on religious, moral, and intellectual growth of Christian leaders

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<sup>139</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University, July 13, 2022. <https://www.jsums.edu/>.

<sup>140</sup> James T. Minor, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs: Perspicacity from Mississippi." *The Journal of Negro Education* (2008): 323-335. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25608702>

<sup>141</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>142</sup> Ronald Roach, "The Journey for Jackson State." *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 23, no. 26 (2007): 22. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/51cdfbb002482a24e92c86600e8b3538/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=27805>

that served the African Americans. The core tenets that guided the seminary in the early years laid a crucial foundation for a faith-based approach that is present in the institution to date.

Jackson State University was originally known as Natchez Seminary, it was established in a hospital building to educate Mississippi's newly freed slaves<sup>143</sup>. Five years later the school was moved to Jackson, MS. In 1889, the school's curriculum advanced and its name changed from Natchez Seminary to Jackson College<sup>144</sup>. The university's student population has been predominantly African-American; however, it has developed strategies to augment diversity and inclusion. The university is keen on representing diverse people groups and cultures in the US and across the broad. It therefore, encourages applicants from all walks of life and welcomes international students to boost its cultural diversity<sup>145</sup>. It boasts the fourth largest enrollment in Mississippi and has a reputation for instilling moral attributes. In addition, Jackson State university fosters research and development to provide solutions within the community. It is a member of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, an indicator that it has a high ranking among higher learning institutions in the United States<sup>146</sup>. The institution is classified among R2:

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<sup>143</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 324.

<sup>144</sup> Preselfannie E. McDaniels, Whitfield, Kashelia J. Harrion, Rochelle Smith Glenn, and Gisele Nicole Gentry. "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community: A Jackson State University Example of 'Challenging Minds and Changing Lives.'" *Reflections* 10, no. 2 (2011). [https://reflectionsjournal.net/wpcontent/uploads/CopyrightUpdates/Vol10N2/V10.N2.McDaniels.Preselfannie.Harrison.Kashelia.Glenn\\_.Rochelle.Gentry.Gisele.pdf](https://reflectionsjournal.net/wpcontent/uploads/CopyrightUpdates/Vol10N2/V10.N2.McDaniels.Preselfannie.Harrison.Kashelia.Glenn_.Rochelle.Gentry.Gisele.pdf)

<sup>145</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 328.

<sup>146</sup> Preselfannie E. McDaniels, Whitfield, Sabrina S. Weston, Gabrielle N. Barrow, Brittany N. Long, Tesia R. Nagorka, Nubia C. Johnson, and David J. Young. "The Effectiveness of the Service-Learning Component in the English Capstone Course: Jackson State University Students Reflect on and Respond to Service Requirements." *Researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 26, no. 2 (2013). <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/abstract>

Doctoral Universities with high research activity indicating that the facility plays an integral role in solving local and national problems through innovation.

Jackson State University is grappling with a significant decline in enrollment rates causing ripple implications such as financial issues and inability to achieve the organizational goals. The university's focus on enhancing black excellence is hindered by the low enrolment rates and hence the need for an innovative recruiting and retention initiative. Jackson State University marching band was established in the 1940s and dubbed the Sonic Boom of the South in 1974<sup>147</sup>. The band's inception is credited to Dr. F.D hall, the director of orchestra, band, and chorus in the 1920s<sup>148</sup>. The marching band plays an integral role in augmenting the university's recognition, reputation, and culture. It is therefore an effective initiative for addressing the issue of declining enrollment since it has proved to be enormously successful for other institution. This chapter provides an overview of the recruitment and enrollment strategy fostered by Jackson State University marching band and the resulting organizational outcomes.

#### Brief History of Jackson State University

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked with a reduction in slavery and thus the need for educating African Americans increased significantly. The establishment of HBCUs was common during this period with Christian organizations developing schools to equip the freed slaves with knowledge and religious values. Jackson State University was founded October 23, 1877 due to the need for equipping the Christian leaders of the colored people of Mississippi and its

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<sup>147</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>148</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

surrounding regions with knowledge and expertise to spread the gospel<sup>149</sup>. Under the leadership of H.P. Jacobs, the university began as a seminary focusing on augmenting the moral, religious, and intellectual capacity of freed slaves<sup>150</sup>. The university was established in Natchez, Mississippi by the American Baptist Home mission Society and later advanced its curriculum to involve courses that did not align with its religious status. After moving to Jackson in 1882 and becoming Jackson College in 1889, the institution witnessed a sporadic transformation that cemented its leadership position among HBCUs<sup>151</sup>. It focused on black excellence and a set of values that ensured its alumni contributed to societal improvement and the national dialogue. Jackson College became a major player in Mississippi's social, economic, and political forums since it gave a voice to the black community and enhanced advocacy for civil rights.

Jackson College held that education of kids and adolescents was vital for the preservation of African American's freedoms. It anchored its core values on genuine religion terming it as the foundation of temperance to advance e blessings within the community and country. The university's model and philosophy resonated with the African American community and thus its popularity grew and enrollment increased over the years<sup>152</sup>. It became Mississippi's first college dedicated to servicing blacks' educational needs and the largest HBCU in the region. Throughout the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jackson College established itself as a premier

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<sup>149</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University,

<sup>150</sup>Jenkins, Campbell B. W., C. Addison, M. White, G. Wilson Sr, C. Woodberry, K. Herron, and M. Payton. "Addressing a Lack of African American Representation in Biomedical Research: Jackson State University Jackson Heart Study Graduate Training and Education Center." *Academia Letters* (2021): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-364420190000022012>

<sup>151</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>152</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 329.

educational institution and continued to expand its curriculum<sup>153</sup>. A notable change occurred in 1934 following the great depression which saw the Baptist Society withdraw its financial support for the institution. withdrew financial support. In 1940, the college became a public institution the state replaced the Baptist Society in providing the required financial support<sup>154</sup>. The facility was assigned the duty of training teachers and it became known as Mississippi Negro Training School. In 1944 the state changed the school's name to Jackson College for Negro Teachers to align with its specialty in training educators<sup>155</sup>. Further expansion of the curriculum and a notable building program saw the institution named Jackson State College in 1967. In 1974, the institution was awarded a university charter; therefore, it changed its name from Jackson State College to Jackson State University<sup>156</sup>. This event was preceded by a sporadic addition of graduate programs and expanded curriculum. Three years later Jackson State University was officially designated the Urban University of the State of Mississippi<sup>157</sup>. Today the university is a renowned public coeducational institution specializing in research and innovation and equipping of global leaders. It is therefore, supported by legislative frameworks to enjoy federal and private grants provide supplemented student fees.

Jackson State University has a reputation for the development of responsible members of

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<sup>153</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community," 6.

<sup>154</sup> Ronald, "The Journey for Jackson State." 22.

<sup>155</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "The Effectiveness of the Service-Learning Component in the English Capstone Course," 23.

<sup>156</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>157</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 331.

the society. Its ability to equip learners with the skills required to navigate the market and orchestrate positive social change is unmatched. For example, following the mid-1960s passage of the civil rights bill, many Jackson State University students and alumni became active members of civil rights movement<sup>158</sup>. They worked to gain integrated practice and social justice by promoting black excellence and calling for the abolishment of segregation. Furthermore, the institution has produced notable national leaders, athletes, musicians, and professionals. Peterson's Guide to Top Colleges for Science distinguished Jackson State University as one of two hundred colleges and universities in the United States to offer an outstanding undergraduate program in science and mathematics<sup>159</sup>. The Carnegie Foundation chose and recognized Jackson State University as distinguished institution of higher education from nearly fifteen hundred four-year colleges and universities<sup>160</sup>. In addition, the university has a reputation for research and innovation. It is also considered one of the most military friendly institutions in the United States. Jackson State University has the highest number and percentage of doctorate graduates in Mississippi. The university has a significant number of baccalaureate alumni who advanced their knowledge and understanding in basic sciences, engineering, administration, and mathematics<sup>161</sup>. In addition, the institution boasts the highest percentage of baccalaureate alumni who were awarded National Science Foundation Fellowships in technical disciplines and mathematics in

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<sup>158</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community," 11.

<sup>159</sup> Jenkins, et al., "Addressing a Lack of African American Representation in Biomedical Research," 2.

<sup>160</sup> Ronald, "The Journey for Jackson State." 22.

<sup>161</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 326.



the US<sup>162</sup>. These achievements cement the university's leadership position among HBCUs and thus a trendsetter when it comes to student enrollment and retention.

Jackson State University takes pride the effective training of leaders an objective that has been part of the university's continuing mission since inception. To understand this aspect, it is crucial to highlight Jackson State University's Mission, Vision, and Core Values:

#### Mission Statement

Jackson State University prides itself in enabling its students and faculty engage in research and development and to create a state-of-the-art technologically-infused institution<sup>163</sup>. It will encourage participation in organizational collaborative learning teams and interdisciplinary programs that serve the global community. It promotes a challenging yet nurturing culture that facilitates the creation of an intellectual community<sup>164</sup>. The learning facility endeavors to optimize academic excellence, moral values, community service and professional development vital for enabling its graduates to thrive in the global community.

#### Vision Statement

Jackson State University aspires to develop global leaders who can address societal problems and compete effectively in the ever-changing labor market. It aims to be a center of academic excellence in liberal arts higher education; thus, preparing students not only for

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<sup>162</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "The Effectiveness of the Service-Learning Component in the English Capstone Course," 23.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>164</sup> Clifton, Addison, Brenda W. Campbell Jenkins, Monique White, Darcel Thigpen-Odom, Marty Fortenberry, Gregory Wilson, Pamela McCoy et al. "Twenty Years of Leading the Way among Cohort Studies in Community-Driven Outreach and Engagement: Jackson State University/Jackson Heart Study." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 2 (2021): 696. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18020696>

graduate studies but also for the global community<sup>165</sup>. As a HBCU and comprehensive urban research university, the institution looks to promote technologically-advanced, ethical, critical thinkers who can serve diverse populations<sup>166</sup>. Jackson State University also aims to provide quality education to those interested in research and baccalaureate, masters, specialist, and doctoral programs. It is also keen on advancing black excellence, diversity, and inclusion to ensure it produces global leaders.

### Core Values

Jackson State University promotes a philosophy of:

- ☐ Innovative Research: Second to none in research and development to solve global issues<sup>167</sup>.
- ☐ Integrity: Foster honesty by acting in a candid, fair, and ethical manner.
- ☐ Mutual Respect: Creating a culture of trust in the institution's activities and decision-making.
- ☐ Diversity: Expose students to diversity cultures, beliefs, and religions and foster tolerance.
- ☐ Empowerment: Enabling students to thrive and achieve their goals.

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<sup>165</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community," 9.

<sup>166</sup> Jenkins, et al., "Addressing a Lack of African American Representation in Biomedical Research," 2.

<sup>167</sup> Ronald, "The Journey for Jackson State." 22.

- Commitment to excellence: Teach high-quality educational programs and produce all-round graduates<sup>168</sup>.
- Caring and compassionate spirit: Develop empathy, emotional intelligence, and cultural competence among learners.
- Students First: The main stakeholders are students<sup>169</sup>.
- Accountability: Promote a culture of responsibility and transparency that builds on benchmarks for measuring progress

Jackson State University provides a rigorous learning environment that augments exemplary student outcomes. It enables learners to flourish intellectually and develop skills required to thrive in the global market. It is committed to educating and empowering learners to excel in leadership capacities on every front<sup>170</sup>. Jackson State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to provide diverse higher education programs. The university also boasts an outstanding, fully credentialed international faculty that enables the institution to award baccalaureate, masters, educational specialists, and doctorate degrees. The university's College of Business is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), a sign of distinction among higher learning education facilities<sup>171</sup>. Only

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<sup>168</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 331.

<sup>169</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community," 6.

<sup>170</sup> Alice, Ginsberg, Marybeth Gasman, and Andrés Castro Samayoa. "A Learning Process Versus a Moment": Engaging Black Male Teacher Education Candidates in Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy at Jackson State University." *The Teacher Educator* 56, no. 2 (2020): 171-193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2020.1846830>

<sup>171</sup> Nisaa, Kirtman, Cary Smith, Teresa Demeritte, Mehri Fadavi, and Vida Amouzandeh. "Targeted, Sustainable, Adept: Transforming Jackson State University STEM PD Delivery for

five percent of Business Schools worldwide are accredited by AACSB and thus Jackson State University has an advantage over other institutions in the US. Central to the Jackson State University mission is the preparation of students to become humane, literate, and global leaders, knowledgeable in different disciplines, and competitive in the market-place<sup>172</sup>. Equally important is the goal for Jackson State University's graduates to demonstrate an openness to research and innovation, arts and humanities, leadership and culture, and a strong sense of faith<sup>173</sup>. The university is keen on instilling values consistent with proficiencies that enable its graduates to integrate with diverse people groups and societies and thrive in the process.

Jackson State University 's academic programs follow the traditional religious discipline and research. It offers 44 bachelor degree programs and more than 50 graduate degree programs. The university has five colleges and campuses<sup>174</sup>. The university's satellite campuses include Mississippi E-Center, Universities Center (Ridgewood Road), Madison campus, Holmes campus, and Downtown (100 Capitol Street)<sup>175</sup>. The colleges handle business, education and human development, liberal arts, public service, and science, engineering, and technology. In addition, there is a school of public health which equips learners with clinical knowledge and pharmacology expertise. Jackson State University also has a general education program which

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Mississippi 6-12th Grade Teachers During COVID-19." *Journal of STEM Outreach* 4, no. 4 (2021): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15695/jstem/v4i4.04>

<sup>172</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 329.

<sup>173</sup> Clifton, et al., "Twenty Years of Leading the Way among Cohort Studies in Community-Driven Outreach and Engagement," 696.

<sup>174</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

provides students with communications, humanities, social sciences, mathematics, brain research, and reasoning knowledge and proficiencies<sup>176</sup>. These programs serve as the introductory courses to majors disciplines gives the basis to all academic pursuits at Jackson State University.

The following table details the programs offered at Jackson State University<sup>177</sup>.

<b>College</b>	<b>Undergraduate Degree Programs</b>	<b>Graduate Degree Programs</b>
<b>College Of Business</b>		
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting	Master of Business Administration (MBA)
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Administration	Master of Professional Accountancy
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Entrepreneurship	Ph.D. Program in Business
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Economics	
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance	
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Management	
	Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing	
<b>College Of Education and Human Development</b>		
	Bachelor of Science in Social Science	Masters in Educational Administration and Supervision
	Bachelor of Science in Ethnic Studies	Specialist in Educational Administration and Supervision
	Bachelor of Science in Educational Technology	Doctorate degree in Educational Administration and Supervision
	Bachelor of Science in Child Care and Family Education	Executive Philosophy of Doctorate in Urban Higher Education

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<sup>176</sup> Jenkins, et al., "Addressing a Lack of African American Representation in Biomedical Research," 2.

<sup>177</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

	Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education Pre-Kindergarten -K (Licensure Track)	Specialist and Master's in Social Science Education
	Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education K-3	Master of Science in Early Childhood Education
	Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, K-6	Master of Science in Elementary Education
	Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education (concentrations in Physical and Health Education)	Master of Arts in Teaching
	Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education (concentration in Therapeutic	Doctorate Degree In Early Childhood Education
	Recreation and Recreation Administration)	Master of Science in Education: School Counseling
	Special Education Teaching (B.S.)	Master of Science: Clinical Mental Health Counseling
	Special Education: Disabilities Studies (Non-Teaching, B.S.)	Specialist in Education: School Counseling
	Bachelor of Science in Professional Interdisciplinary Studies	Specialist in Education: Psychometry
		Master of Science Rehabilitation Counseling
		Special Education Teaching (M.S.Ed)
		Special Education Teaching (Ed. S.)
<b>College Of Liberal Arts</b>		
	Bachelor of Music Education (BME)	Master of Music Education (MME)
	Bachelor of Music (BM) degrees	Master of Art (MA) – History
	Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in History	Master of Art (MA) – Political Science
	Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in History	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) – Psychology
	Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Political Science	Master of Arts (MA) – Sociology
	Bachelor of Science – Psychology	Master of Arts – English
	Bachelor of Science (BS) – Criminal Justice	Master of Arts – Teaching
	Bachelor of Arts (BA) – Sociology	Master of Science –Integrated Marketing
	Bachelor of Arts – English	Master of Science — Multimedia Journalism
	Bachelor of Arts – Foreign Language	
	Bachelor of Arts (BA) – Speech	
	Bachelor of Arts (BA) – Theatre	
	Bachelor of Science — Integrated Marketing	
	Bachelor of Science –Multimedia Journalism	

	Bachelor of Science –Media Production	
<b>College Of Public Service</b>		
	Bachelor of Social Work	Master of Social Work
	Bachelor of Science in Communicative Disorders	Master of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA)
	Urban Studies – Undergraduate (BA)	Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (Ph.D.)
		Master of Arts, Urban and Regional Planning (MA)
		Doctor of Philosophy in Urban and Regional Planning (Ph.D.)
<b>College of Science, Engineering &amp; Technology</b>		
	Bachelor of Science – Civil Engineering	Master of Science in Engineering
	Bachelor of Science – Environmental Engineering	Master of Science – Computer Science
	Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering	Master of Science – Biology
	Bachelor of Science in Telecommunications Engineering	Master of Science – Chemistry
	Bachelor of Science – Computer Science	Master of Science – Environmental Science
	Bachelor of Science – Concentrations in Biomedical Science, Environmental Science, or Forensic Science	Master of Science – Pure and Applied Mathematics
	Bachelor of Science – Pre-medicine, pre-dentistry, pre-pharmacy, or pre-chemical engineering	Master of Science – Education
	Bachelor of Science – Biology	Master of Science – Hazardous Materials Management
	Bachelor of Science – Pre-optometry, pre-veterinary medicine, pre-pharmacy, pre-physical therapy, environmental science and marine science	Doctor of Philosophy – Environmental Science
	Bachelor of Science – Pre-clinical laboratory science, pre-health information management, pre-dental hygiene, pre-occupational therapy, and pre-nursing	Doctor of Philosophy – Chemistry
	Bachelor of Science (B.S.) – Mathematics	

	Bachelor of Science – Education (B.S. Ed)	
	Bachelor of Science – Physics	
	Bachelor of Science – Meteorology	
	Bachelor of Science – Industrial Technology with concentrations: Electronics Systems Technology, Technology Management, Manufacturing Design, and Computer Technology	
<b>School of Public Health</b>		
	Bachelor of Science — Healthcare Administration	Master of Science — Communicative Disorders
	Bachelor of Science — Communicative Disorders	Master of Science — Public Health
		Doctor of Public Health

### Brief History of the Sonic Boom of the South Marching Band

Of the numerous extracurricular activities that are popular among Mississippi colleges and universities, football takes center stage. However, Jackson State University's marching band, the Sonic Boom of the South, steals the show in most cases due to its electric performances. Since its inception in the 1940s, Jackson State University's marching band has gained prominence as a crucial attraction to football games, state and national events, and international performances<sup>178</sup>. The band was formed by Frederick D. Hall when Jackson State University was a college. Hall had directed a band at Jackson State College as early as the 1920s, comprising college students and learners from Lanier High School<sup>179</sup>. The band thrived under the leadership of different band directors who increased its size and developed diverse musical styles and showmanship. For example, director Harold J. Haughton Sr. is credited for the band's growth and

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<sup>178</sup> “Homepage.” Jackson State University.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.



its adoption of the name the Sonic Boom of the South in 1971<sup>180</sup>. Previously the band was guided by William W. Davis and Charles Saulsburg, who were band directors between 1947 and 1971. Haughton served as the band director for 12 years; he is credited for increasing the band size from 88 to 160<sup>181</sup>. He also introduced “Get Ready” as the band's theme and changed the band's uniform color from royal blue to light navy blue.

The Sonic Boom of the South is famous for its J-Settes dance line, a unique performance style derived from African dance movements. Dowell Taylor took over from Haughton, leading an eight-year revolution that saw the band increase in size and become a household name in Mississippi<sup>182</sup>. Taylor oversaw the band's incorporation into Jackson University's football team, the Tigers' games. In addition, the Sonic Boom of the South started performing for NFL teams during halftime shows<sup>183</sup>. The Sonic Boom of the South became a crucial attraction during Jackson State Tigers' games. When Lewis Liddell took over the band's leadership in 1992, he oversaw an overhaul in its performances, leading to its enshrinement into the NCAA Hall of Champions in 2003. Between 2016 and 2017, the band undertook an extensive recruitment drive in high schools and thus cementing its position as Jackson State University's primary attraction.

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<sup>180</sup> Jason P. Cumberledge, "The Time Usage of College Music Majors, Non-Music Majors, and Marching Band Participants." *Sage Open* 7, no. 2 (2017).  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244017705246>

<sup>181</sup> “Homepage.” Jackson State University.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Clifford K. Madsen, "Marching Band as a Recuriting Organization for the University: A Case Study." *Journal of Band Research* 43, no. 1 (2007): 54-62.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/216234867>

It became a critical pillar for increasing enrollment<sup>184</sup>. Budget cuts in 2017 reduced the band's size from 350 to 210 performers<sup>185</sup>. In 2018, the Sonic Boom of the South was featured by a Great Big Story and became the only collegiate marching band to ever appear in a CNN documentary.

Over the past two years, the Jackson State University band has performed in notable occasions, indicating that it is a powerhouse among college and university bands in the United States. The band's 50 years celebration under the Sonic Boom of the South brand included 300 performers. The band performed in front of 54,000 attendees, the largest crowd the University has pulled to date at a home football game. The band has also featured in NFL games halftime performances for teams such as the Cincinnati Bengals, Detroit Lions, Atlanta Falcons, and New Orleans Saints. The Sonic Boom of the South also performed in a television special for Motown 30th Anniversary 1988. The band was also a crucial attraction during the 34th National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Image Awards, where it performed alongside Cedric the Entertainer<sup>186</sup>. Other notable performances in recent times include the 2021 Presidential Inauguration Parade and a Pepsi commercial.

#### Jackson State University's Students

One of the guiding philosophies at Jackson State University is students first. The institution creates an environment that fosters the learners' intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical growth and development. The university encourages students to actively participate in

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<sup>184</sup> Gasman, et al., "Historically Black colleges and universities," 68.

<sup>185</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>186</sup> Cumberledge, "The Time Usage of College Music Majors, Non-Music Majors, and Marching Band Participants," 12.

personal development and to take advantage of the total educational experience offered by the institution<sup>187</sup>. These aspects are guided by university's founding principles, ideals, and core values that define its cooperative culture. Jackson State University is keen to develop global leaders from all walks of life and hence strives to provide quality education<sup>188</sup>. Furthermore, the institution endeavors to optimize the learning experience and ensure students benefit from life-long professional relationships. One of the most notable advantages of attending Jackson State University is that it has a faith-based foundation that instills moral values and qualities that enable learners to thrive in the market place<sup>189</sup>. Students share a space with instructors who actively profess their faith and thus influencing them positively<sup>190</sup>. In addition, there is a culture of collaboration, active listening, and empathy that ensures that the students' feedback is considered and learners are involved in the decision-making process.

Jackson State University is keen on advancing inclusion and diversity and hence promotes cultural competence and emotional intelligence among stakeholders. It employs professors with varied and mixed backgrounds to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to navigate different societal practices and beliefs. The institution also helps learners to acquire direct insight from individuals who have experienced college and discovered a balance in their professions while keeping up their faith. The university alumni mentorship program is instrumental in enabling learners to gain knowledge from real-life situations. It also

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<sup>187</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>188</sup> Clifton, et al., "Twenty Years of Leading the Way among Cohort Studies in Community-Driven Outreach and Engagement," 696.

<sup>189</sup> Nisaa, et al., "Targeted, Sustainable, Adept: Transforming Jackson State University," 8.

<sup>190</sup> Alice, et al., "A Learning Process Versus a Moment," 178.

facilitates students' learning experiences that develop all-round individuals capable of solving societal problems and benefiting the community. Jackson State University band is unique given that its academic and extracurricular activities are guided by the tenets of the Christian faith. For example, the university band focuses on developing students' minds, souls, and wellness while providing memorable performances to increase the school's recognizability<sup>191</sup>. Therefore, learners gain Christian teachings irrespective of whether they are participating in class or outside class school activities. For example, the instructors incorporate religion while teaching the academics while the band director integrates faith-based concepts during marching band performances.

Jackson State University is proud of its heritage and focus on black excellence. It is keen to maintain its HBCU status, an aspect that ensures that it improves the education outcomes of learners from marginalized communities<sup>192</sup>. The university represents individuals from diverse backgrounds willing to learn and gain proficiencies that augment global experiences. Jackson State University is filled with passion for research and pushes students beyond their possibility to nurtures their capacity to solve problems and innovate. The learners provide positive feedback concerning the university's ability to meet their expectations and enable them to achieve their set objectives.

#### Retention of University Students at Jackson State University

Jackson State University has been facing unusual financial challenges orchestrated by a declining enrollment and retention. While this is not a peculiar trend, there is a need for urgent

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<sup>191</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>192</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 328.

mitigation measures. There has been a notable reduction in HBCU enrollment rates due to lack of resources, infrastructure, and a decline in education among the black community. The Board of Trustees must appoint a leader who will be tasked with the responsibility of rebuilding the student body enrollment and creating a culture of success and growth at the university. A student retention and growth initiative will create a meaningful process for student engagement and retention. This innovative and ground-breaking project will entail establishing the marching band as part of the department of student affairs to ensure the Sonic Boom of the South helps raise the bar for extracurricular activities at the institution and increase the facility's visibility. The marching band's sole purpose will entail the strategic role of recruitment, enrollment, and retention. It will develop a competitive sports program at Jackson State University.

Marching band initiatives thrive at institutions with strong and aggressive football programs and hence the marching band will play a central role in improving football. It will help create a desirable culture among potential learners and therefore increasing the university's appeal and a capacity to enroll more students. The marching band will also augment increased retention due to the atmosphere it creates within the institution. The marching band is a band representing the university as a performance team that operated outside of the confines of any one college university or athletic organization. Student enrollment and retention has always been an important aspect of the overall mission and focus of HBCUs and Jackson State University is not an exception<sup>193</sup>. Retention is at the heart of any successful growth strategy and thus issues relating to student attrition and enrollment decline should be dealt with conclusively. In most cases these challenges brought by a decline in university enrolment and retention involve

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<sup>193</sup> James, "A Contemporary Perspective on the Role of Public HBCUs," 330.

financial challenge, family crisis, personal emergency, or health problem. Knowing how to discern individual need and then to design a strong strategy seems to be the primary issue fueling Jackson State University's struggles. The renovation of its marching band and strategically tasking it with the responsibility of recruiting students will provide in-coming freshmen an opportunity to identify with a caring, loving, and prestigious community.

Over the years, Jackson State University recruitment and enrollment personnel have worked to maintain a balance between two student retention norms: "Normal Movement" and "Student Remission." "Normal Movement" refers to the student that is enrolled in the college on a sustaining basis. Sometimes referred to as "retained students," are those that elect to "stay enrolled" in the college every semester until graduation, which is usually in about four years. "Student Remission" refers to that for one reason or another dropout of college or choose to withdraw from their classes for an indefinite period, usually leaving before graduating. Transfer students are also crucial since despite beginning their education in one institution, they later transfer into Jackson State University's academic program. Jackson State University will emerge as a financially surviving, healthy institution due to the aggressive recruitment and admission actions of the Sonic Boom of the South. Furthermore, collaboration between the marching band students and leadership, department of student affairs leadership, department of admissions partnerships, strategic college personnel and the strong support of the university president will optimize the desired outcome.

Institutional leaders play an integral role in developing the university's vision and enabling the facility to overcome hurdles. Jackson State University's president has the role of chief executive officer of the university and is tasked with the responsibility of rebuilding the student body. Therefore, he/she has to develop strategies that enhance enrollment and create a

culture of success and growth at the learning facility. One of the core competencies of university leaders is understanding how to use an institution's resources and capabilities to mitigate possible threats and overcome weaknesses. In this case, the university leader must devise ways of utilizing Jackson State University's strengths to address the declining retention and financial woes. Organizing a student retention and growth initiative is an effective approach toward addressing the issues facing the university. It will entail using the Sonic Boom of the South which is one of Jackson State University's core strengths and a vital resource. It will create meaningful platform for student engagement and retention given that the university marching band is well known and has a positive reputation.

The marching band presents a feasible approach for appealing to students to join Jackson State University. A notable innovative and ground-breaking initiative that can be implemented by the university president is establishing the university marching band as part of the Department of Student Affairs. This approach will ensure that the Sonic Boom of the South is at the center of students' learning experience a critical factor influencing the learners' perceptions regarding the institution. It is bold and courageous move capable of enabling the university president to turn around Jackson State University's fortunes is a short while. Integrating the marching band as a student organization of the Department of Music and Student Affairs department will also ensure that the band uses approaches that resonate with the organizational vision. The president will develop frameworks in conjunction with the band staff that ensure the band fosters black excellence, a critical component of HBCUs. In addition, it will put extracurricular activities at the center of student affairs given that marching bands thrive where there are strong athletic and football teams. Therefore, investing in the university marching band will result in an automatic improvement of extracurricular activities which are crucial in promoting student recruitment and

retention.

A well developed, competitive college sports programs at Jackson State University will align with the facility's marching band initiatives and organizational goals. It will be the band enabling the development of strong and aggressive football programs, vital for appealing to learners and increasing university programs' completion rates. The university marching band will represent the college as a performance music ensemble, operated outside of the confines of academic, sports or athletic organizations. This approach guarantees immediate success since it will approach the problem of declining recruitment and retention from diverse angles. The university's vision should facilitate the creation of marching band initiatives that increase the student enrollment. The developed strategies should ensure that the band showcases the university's values and fosters a positive reputation. In addition, the frameworks should make the marching the center of attraction and critical appeal factor for those looking for higher education facilities. It should also be a source of pride to entice students to complete their degree programs and become active members of the university's alumni association. Therefore, the development of a successful marching band within the campus, will immediately provide a platform for the numerical growth for the institution.

Jackson State University's board of trustees must vote to establish the Sonic Boom of the South as the primary success factor of the recruitment and retention initiative. Adopting an effective leadership approach and team will play an integral role in increasing marching band enrollment and consequent increase in the number of students at the university. It is crucial to note that across US Colleges and Universities, over 12% of the total student population is engaged in the marching band program. In addition, the bands employ an average of 4 full-time employees that support the daily operations, which are also faculty members in the Department



of Music. Additionally, staff is needed as well which are full-time staff members. They include the band directors, dance coaches, and administrative assistant, and media director. The Sonic Boom of the South performs in diverse events, including: halftime performances in high school, college and professional NFL football games, the New Orleans Mardi Gras, the Queen City battle of the bands, and the Honda battle of the bands. In addition, the band has performed at notable events such as global musical concerts, presidential inauguration parades, and TV shows. Therefore, the band helps market Jackson State University in diverse platforms, a vital resource that the university president must capitalize on. The university marching band's recognizability and reputation will help increase its presence on different platforms and therefore reaching potential learners.

The strategic plan adopted by Jackson State University will serve as a guide for college student body and band enrolment growth. While focusing on building a marching band that fosters music education is crucial, emphasis on entertainment and marketing is pivotal. The band will help the students' undertaking courses in music, sciences, mathematics, and performance and liberal arts to thrive<sup>194</sup>. Its success will therefore attract learners looking to excel in programs involving music and dance. Furthermore, the band will appeal to students looking to get associated with a strong and reputable brand, given that some learners choose institutions based on bragging rights.

There are several campus-wide benefits that will be noted by admissions and retention personnel due to the efficacy of the marching band:

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<sup>194</sup> Nisaa, et al., "Targeted, Sustainable, Adept: Transforming Jackson State University," 7.

- An immediate increase in student enrollment rates due to the marching band's capacity to market Jackson State University and appeal to potential learners.
- Applications from students graduating from private schools increase dramatically since the Sonic Boom of the South will influence their perception of Jackson State University's culture and core values.
- Jackson State University will see an increase in the number of students seeking to pursue music, dance, and performance related courses at the institution.
- The growth trend will continue making enrollment within the university sustainable.
- The facility will attract more learners due to the growth of strong football, athletics, and cheer leading teams following the investment into the university marching band.
- Jackson State University will increase retention rates since learners will aspire to complete their courses and enjoy the environment created by the university marching band.
- Students entering the various Jackson State University programs demonstrate high SAT and ACT scores. The university marching band augments the learning experience causing an increase in the learners' performance.
- Application for admission into the various university programs will grow significantly, an indicator of the increase in enrollment rates and Jackson State University's ability to appeal to potential learners.

#### Demographics of the Band

The Sonic Boom of the South is an organization of students from Jackson State University with a passion for marching bands. The band is representative of all college academic programs with a majority being music majors. The student-membership represents the face of the university whereby inclusion and diversity is held in high regard. A notable trait among the band

members is their loyalty towards Jackson State University since they consider themselves ambassador for the institution<sup>195</sup>. The marching band represents various ethnic, geographical, and cultural backgrounds giving it an ideal mix of personalities that amplify performances. The band leadership is keen on aligning the marching band with the university's vision and mission. Therefore, it encourages the building of interpersonal relationships to foster trust and mutual respect which are the core values of Jackson State University. The marching band also grows and develops the members' musical skill-set, teamwork and collaboration, and discipline. The intense training often provides a platform for student engagement with other disciplines which gives rise to an all-round graduate, capable of thriving in the market place<sup>196</sup>. The band's emphasis on equity, enhanced education outcome, and the university's brand image makes it a critical success factor for Jackson State University. It is not only a source of pride for the students, but also a critical platform for enhancing proficiencies and appealing to new learners.

#### Recruitment of Band Members

Jackson State University has definitive stages of recruiting members into the university marching band. The steps are unique and crucial for ensuring that the marching band achieves its set targets. Furthermore, they ensure that those recruited into the band have a passion for music and performance and have the discipline and resilience required to thrive as a band member. In addition, the recruitment process facilitates the development of strategies to ensure the marching band enables the university to achieve its vision. Given that Jackson State University is a HBCU black excellence is crucial and thus the recruitment stages should align with this goal.

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<sup>195</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community," 19.

<sup>196</sup> Clifton, et al., "Twenty Years of Leading the Way among Cohort Studies in Community-Driven Outreach and Engagement," 696.

## Band Prospect Stage

Jackson State University is popular in Mississippi and hence its focus is on the Mississippi population where the local community are proud of associating with the facility. The learning institution also has a national outreach that targets Americans from different states. In addition, an elaborate global prospect is targeted with the university looking to appeal to learners from different parts of the globe. The band prospect stage is crucial for building brand awareness, increasing recognition, and showcasing the university's ideal image. It also entails advertising, harvesting potential recruitment leads, and developing strategies to appeal to prospective students. Furthermore, this phase involves making initial student contact to turn potential university learners into Jackson State University students. The band reaches potential learners through the following approaches:

- High School Band Student Search: Jackson State University Marching Band staff are keen to enroll high school students with a passion for music, performance, and dance. They therefore, engage, high school learners participating in marching bands to offer them an opportunity to continue their passion at in the University. Jackson State University Marching band recruitment team complete a nationwide search for high school junior and senior-level student musicians qualifying for membership in the Sonic Boom of the South.
- Recruitment Journey: The university capitalizes on the efficacy of recognizability within the local community by appealing to the local community. Jackson State University Marching band staff attend college fairs and visit high schools within a ten-hour driving radius. They provide information concerning the university marching band and the reasons it is better than those in other institutions of higher learning. They pitch to the

high school students and capture the attention of prospective university students. This approach is crucial since it influences the efficacy of the other recruitment stages.

### Band Inquiry Stage

Once Jackson State University Marching Band staff has established rapport in the band prospect stage, they engage in marketing to convert the prospective target populations into band members. Recruitment using social media and printed materials takes center stage during this stage. In addition, engaging with students that express interest in attending the university takes center stage. Additionally, Jackson State University marching band staff respond to inquiries from the prospective learners with the recruitment department and marching band personnel working hand in hand convert as many prospective students as possible. This phase also involves messaging the learners through email, US mail, phone, printed materials, social media, and text. The band staff responds with an enrollment package that includes an assortment of communications that encourage interested learners to gain more information about the university and its marching band, The band enrollment staff prompts the potential students with inquiries to:

- ☐ Join online chats
- ☐ Visit the university website
- ☐ Visit the university and band social media pages
- ☐ Inquire about the programs offered in the institution
- ☐ Apply for admission at Jackson State University
- ☐ Visit the campus
- ☐ Take a virtual tour
- ☐ Meet admissions counselors visiting their high schools

### Band Applicant Stage

Jackson State University marching band staff reviews the applicants to shortlist those that align with the marching band requirements. This stage provides an opportunity to profile the prospective marching band student membership, assess their prior skill-set and talent and evaluate their potential as an active contributor the musical ensemble. The marching band staff evaluates the applicants High School Marching Band participation and performances. The results are cross-referenced with their application and transcripts records to support the admission application.

Jackson State University's band office considers approximately 5,000 student applications every year. The band application stage facilitates a smooth integration into the various academic and extra-curricular programs. The university uses several approaches to augment this process:

- Enrollment Research: Jackson State University uses an advanced data harvesting tool capable of equipping enrollment managers with relevant knowledge and skills. It helps develop and implement strategies that resonate with the desired future outcomes.
- Record Imaging: Jackson State University digitizes the student applications, high school transcripts and credentials into an imaging framework. This approach enhances the enrollment audit process.
- Self-Service Tool: Applicants utilize Jackson State University's self-administration entry to augment convenience and simplify the application<sup>197</sup>. The portal ensures successful inventory of required student documentation and helps the applicants to check their individual application status.

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<sup>197</sup> Preselfannie, et al., "African American Students Learn by Serving the African American Community,"<sup>14</sup>.

- Proactive Outreach: Jackson State University band office has an elaborate communication platform and network, crucial for passing information to applicants. It facilitates communication between the recruitment staff and potential marching band students through individual telephone conversations, on-campus visits, social media, web-site engagement.

### Band Admit Stage

This is the final stage in the student's band enrollment and acceptance process. It entails integrating the chosen applicants into the university's environment and ensuring they develop the proficiencies required to thrive in the university marching band. Jackson State University's music department, assigns classes and marching band activities to the accepted band participants. As the academic agency tasked with the university's engagement the band office organizes a combination of projects to help integrate the student into the university's ensemble community. These activities include:

- Band Admitted Student Days: These are all-day occasions that offer opportunities for the preferred applicants to interact with Jackson State University's workforce and visit grounds offices.
- A Day With the Boom: Admitted students and their families go to gatherings in different states and countries. It helps increase buy-in from guardians which is crucial in supporting students throughout the learning process.
- Visit-a-Class Program: The selected students get a chance to demonstrate in a class in a select region of study. It helps them showcase their capabilities and potential for enabling the marching band achieve its set goals.
- Monetary Support: Jackson State University rewards successful students with band

scholarships. It offers a need-base guide to the individuals who qualify as for scholarship based on their musicianship and academic prowess's.

- Online Engagement: Jackson State University's private informal organizations, extracurricular activities, online visits, online courses, and other social devices help incorporate students into our community.

### Band Enrolled Stage

This phase involves programs that help the chosen applicants to integrate into the university. It is a crucial stage involving cross-curriculum activities that enable new learners to get comfortable in a learning environment. The enrolled student is included in an active headcount of ensemble members by Jackson State University's directors. The college's student success office work in tandem to ensure new and returning marching band students have met all enrollment requirements. The office of admissions, registrar, financial aid, housing and undergraduate colleges staff play an integral role in enabling the accepted learners to meet the enrollment requirements before the beginning of each semester. The pertinent staff ensure the students fulfil the transcript evaluation, the student orientation, and the credit and housing expectations. This phase devotes a considerable amount of time to assisting newly arriving students as they make dormitory decisions, move personal items into their rooms, and adjust to Jackson State University as a community. Additionally, marching band students get engaged through seminar workshops, student assessment, and individual counseling to encourage success and facilitate smooth transition<sup>198</sup>. This stage is vital for enabling the chosen applicants to enjoy their stay at the university and optimize their performance potential in the university band.

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<sup>198</sup> Alice, et al., "A Learning Process Versus a Moment," 180.



### Community and Culture of the Band

Jackson State University's mission is to empower students from diverse backgrounds to become global leaders. Therefore, the institution equips its graduates with the skills and proficiencies required to thrive in the global community. The university is keen on producing technologically-advanced, ethical, and innovative professionals capable of critical thinking and addressing societal problems by providing evidence-based solutions. Jackson State University capitalizes on its HBCU status to inspire and exemplify positive societal change. The institution is committed to benefiting the community through music and performances. It serves as an expression of cultural democracy, with Jackson State University focusing on creating musical opportunities for diverse cultural groups. Additionally, the Sonic Boom of the South implements strategies to ensure that the university marching band becomes a popular attraction and a topic of conversation during events. Moreover, the band is a source of pride and identity within Jackson and its surrounding regions. This dedication to community development is evident in the marching band's leadership, where collaboration and teamwork are highly encouraged. The band functions as a cohesive unit, with staff members assisting students in developing interactions that foster lifelong bonds. Furthermore, the band provides mentoring opportunities to pass down the culture of the Sonic Boom of the South from one generation to another.

The community is a dynamic structure shaped by a range of ideas, practices, struggles, hopes, and dreams. It poses questions that challenge assumptions, principles, and ways of existing. Therefore, the Sonic Boom of the South employs strategies that promote community development. Jackson State University has an inherent model for community advancement that guides the band and ensures members from diverse backgrounds work together as teams. This model serves as the foundation of the band's culture, defining its core values and ideals, and

shaping how band members interact and collaborate to achieve common goals. Retaining band members is also crucial to the marching band's success and reputation. The on-campus marketing of the band within the Jackson State University community includes fostering music-related relationships and facilitating learning exchanges. The Sonic Boom of the South presents itself as a pillar of the university's entertainment and culture, encouraging potential members to take pride in participating in its activities.

Another significant concept is the extrinsic community engagement of Jackson State University, which encompasses music and multicultural initiatives, as well as marketing the band to the wider community. The university utilizes this approach to engage with the music community and enable the band to participate in events that enhance the institution's competitive advantages. Jackson State University also emphasizes the development of partnerships with the local community, families, churches, and other higher learning institutions. The involvement of the local church ministry is particularly important in strengthening the university's faith-based foundation. Furthermore, Jackson State University seeks independent partnerships with organizations that coordinate or sponsor music charitable events, commercials, or national events, providing opportunities to showcase their electrifying performances.

#### Jackson State University Intrinsic Community Advancement: Retention of Band Members

The university recognizes the significance of fostering interpersonal relationships, cohesion, mutual respect, and team spirit. Therefore, it has implemented an intrinsic community band advancement model that encompasses both internal band dynamics and relationships campus-wide. These interactions extend beyond academic, intramural, and social aspects, as the university considers itself a close-knit family that ensures the success of each student. The marching band leadership plays a key role in guiding students towards achievement, irrespective

of their involvement in the band. The band sees itself as a core element in fostering a community mindset within the institution, serving as a unifying force and representing Jackson State University's pride and culture. As an intramural organization, the university places emphasis on cultivating team spirit, collaboration, partnership, involvement, and alignment with the shared vision. Moreover, the university promotes healthy student-to-student interactions, emphasizing emotional and social intelligence, cultural competence, active listening, and other interpersonal skills valued within the institution. The university band focuses on three areas to enhance social development within the campus:

- ☐ Intellectual development
- ☐ Fitness
- ☐ Spiritual wellness

This process provides opportunities for collaboration between the band leadership and staff members. The leadership of the Sonic Boom of the South cultivates a compassionate environment that encourages student-centered learning. The development of the marching band primarily concentrates on nurturing students' minds and souls, aiming for their overall well-being and good health<sup>199</sup>. Furthermore, the university's focus on producing global leaders is evident, as the band provides students with opportunities to serve their neighbors, community, and the world they inhabit. The Sonic Boom of the South employs various approaches to achieve its community advancement goals.

- ☐ Creating Community: Jackson State University fosters a family environment where each student feels valued and recognizes their significant contributions to the institution. The university encourages participation in on-campus activities, particularly events involving

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<sup>199</sup> Marybeth, et al., "Historically Black colleges and universities,"69.

the marching band.

- Assessment and Evaluation: The band leadership conducts assessments of students once per semester to measure their personal progress in areas such as team participation, leadership development, satisfaction with the band organization, and academic standing. This process helps evaluate students' strengths and weaknesses and enables the development of action plans for student improvement<sup>200</sup>. It supports continuous development, which is crucial for educational and personal advancement.
- Special Academic Concerns: The band's leadership offers students opportunities to understand and develop time management skills, improve academically, and become aware of social challenges during their first and second years. Progress in these areas relates to the retention of marching band students.

The university marching band provides students with additional resources to succeed in developing several values, ideals, and attributes:

- Positive Self-concept – It provides data for the staff to assess a student's ability to handle new situations and thrive despite challenges.
- Realistic Self-appraisal - It enhances prospective students' understanding of their individual gifts, personality strengths, and areas for personal development. For returning or career-advancing students, this appraisal offers an opportunity to understand their own strengths and weaknesses within the context of a large and growing ensemble community.
- Long range goals – Students develop planning skills in academic and non-academic areas

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<sup>200</sup> Antron D. Mahoney, "Reclaiming the Beat." *Southern Cultures* 27, no. 4 (2021): 78-97. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27112383>

due to the creation of an environment that fosters the development of short-term, immediate, and long-term career goals.

- Seek strong support for success – The university instills students with problem-solving abilities, principles of conflict resolution, and time management skills.
- Demonstrated knowledge of marching band – This involves equipping students with a comprehensive understanding of the role that marching band plays in personal and peer group development<sup>201</sup>.

#### External Influences: The Jackson State University Marching Marketing Engagement with the Local Community

Jackson State University is located in Jackson, the capital city of Mississippi, which holds a rich cultural and historical heritage, including the Old Capitol Museum. The university's community and the culture it embraces position it at the heart of the region's education and entertainment scene. The Sonic Boom of the South serves as a positive marketing and recruiting tool for the university, given its regional, national, and international presence<sup>202</sup>. The marching band consistently reinforces the notion that Jackson State University is a significant part of a growing and diverse community. Consequently, most marketing strategies include the Sonic Boom of the South. The marching band directors not only train and equip future leaders for regional, national, and international service but also promote and raise awareness of the ensemble's ability to deliver performances during public holidays, festivities on campus, in Jackson, and the surrounding communities. The Sonic Boom of the South is frequently involved

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<sup>201</sup> Clifford, "Marching Band as a Recruiting Organization for the University," 57.

<sup>202</sup> Antron, "Reclaiming the Beat." 80.

in major sports activities, African American-themed events, select NFL halftime events, and various political rallies. The marching band takes pride in its participation in President Joe Biden's virtual inaugural ceremony in 2021. The Mississippi State Legislature has invited the Sonic Boom of the South to participate in public rallies and events on numerous occasions, providing increased public exposure and community contribution opportunities.

#### External Influences of the Marching Band on Music and Multicultural Events

As an academic unit of Jackson State University, the Marching Band maintains a longstanding relationship with the university's Department of Music. Many students in the Sonic Boom of the South major in music<sup>203</sup>. Band directors range from (3) assistant professors, and (2) instructor of music apart of the music department faculty. The band actively encourages music majors, even those not part of the marching band, to attend and observe regular and special rehearsals<sup>204</sup>. Special rehearsal sessions (Wind Ensemble, Symphonic Band and Concert Band) are open to the entire university family and the Mississippi community at designated times each semester. The recruitment process prioritizes diversity and inclusion, resulting in a broad, all-inclusive, multicultural, and multi-racial band membership<sup>205</sup>. The Jackson State University marching band comprises individuals from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities. The Sonic Boom of the South fosters a cross-cultural environment that embraces people from various

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<sup>203</sup> Marybeth, et al., "Historically Black colleges and universities,"68.

<sup>204</sup> Virginia S. Cowen, "The Contribution of Marching Band Participation to Overall Physical Activity for A Sample of University Students." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 103, no. 2 (2006): 457-460. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2466/pms.103.2.457-460?journalCode=pmsb>

<sup>205</sup> Jason M., Silveira, and Michael W. Hudson. "Hazing In the College Marching Band." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 63, no. 1 (2015): 5-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429415569064>

walks of life, including Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Black African, and Indian members.

#### Jackson State University Marching Band as a Learning Community

Marching bands are heavily influenced by external factors and, therefore, must continuously adapt their practices to align with cultural, social, and economic shifts. Music plays an important extrinsic role at Jackson State University as it helps foster individual relationships and community bonds. It provides an opportunity to exchange and apply learning concepts through healthy relationships between the band director, band members, music majors, music instructors, sports coaches, and the local community<sup>206</sup>. The band director plays a crucial role in building learning communities and establishing significant relationships. The band leadership views each band activity as a learning opportunity, making the Sonic Boom of the South a true learning community.

#### Jackson State University Band as a Small Learning Community

Jackson State University thrives on the interactions within small learning communities within the marching band. These small learning communities engage in various activities aimed at fostering success and utilize different techniques to achieve their goals. Several structures outline the small learning communities within Jackson State University's marching band:

- Academies: These are subgroups inside schools, coordinated around specific themes.

Professional academies consolidate the performer's critical standards to profession development. They also coordinate scholastic and professional guidance and give

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<sup>206</sup> George L. Rogers, "Attitudes of High School Band Directors and Principals Toward Marching Band Contests." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 33, no. 4 (1985): 259-267. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3345252>

execution-based learning freedoms to students<sup>207</sup>. Academies get students ready for business with the customized learning climate of a small student-centered learning environment.

- House plans: The band is further divided into small learning communities, forming bands within the band. For instance, when the Sonic Boom of the South is given a new musical selection, the director divides the upper brass, lower brass, woodwind, and percussion sections into different learning groups to facilitate the learning process. Depending on the complexity of the music, these units may be further subdivided into smaller sections. The marching band consists of piccolo, clarinet, saxophone (alto and tenor), mellophone, trumpet, trombone, baritone (T.C. and B.C), percussion, sousaphone sections, working together as groups and as a cohesive unit to achieve the overall performance objectives<sup>208</sup>.
- Band Inside the Band: This approach enables band members to collaborate and work effectively, ensuring they are more engaged musically compared to a conventional big band setting. The small learning community provides expanded opportunities for student leaders to take on learning initiatives. Each small learning community develops its own assessment plan, collects, and analyzes data for research projects.
- Life skills: Band members collaborate to develop life skills, including studying, practicing performances, and socializing<sup>209</sup>. These skills may not be required of every

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<sup>207</sup> Clifford, "Marching Band as a Recruiting Organization for the University,"59.

<sup>208</sup> Antron, "Reclaiming the Beat." 79.

<sup>209</sup> Jason, et al., "Hazing in the College Marching Band," 7.



band member, but they are beneficial in a variety of roles and occupations.

### Summary

Jackson State University is a close-knit, student-centered institution ranked among the best universities in Mississippi and a center for research and innovation in the United State. It is the largest HBCUs in the nation and has a reputation for academic excellence and producing global leaders. The university is widely applauded for its research capabilities, military students' integration, championship-winning athletic teams, acclaimed marching band and renowned choir. Jackson State University is the first private historically black education and sciences college, and the home of the renowned Tigers. The university is in a historic district of the city of Jackson Mississippi. Its main campus sits on a 220 acres property that houses more than 10,000 students. The university has an aggressive tradition of bringing the world to Jackson via workshops, gatherings, lectures introduced by acclaimed artists, scientists, political, business, and city leaders. The institution emphasizes on the push for academic excellence in four dynamic areas. The university is renowned for its well-rounded education, public health, science and technology, and faith and leadership programs. Jackson State University has grown tremendously since 2010. However, the enrollment is set to immediately increase by 56% once its leadership adopt the proposed marching band imitative. By the 2023-2024 academic year, the college resident campus enrollment will increase twofold while the students participating in the school Marching band will increase by over 45%. The growth of enrollment at Jackson State University will open several doors of achievement for the students. Students will benefit from the institution's capacity to expand academic programs. Jackson State University learners will have an opportunity to attend graduate programs in the medical, engineering, humanities, liberal arts, and law schools. The students will also receive job opportunity in various places. The

student body of Jackson State University will benefit tremendously from the enrollment growth. They will witness social, academic, and professional growth which are crucial for optimizing learning outcomes.

### Conclusion

Jackson State University's marching band is a tightly-knit and dynamic community of student musicians led by a professional team and supported by the university. The Sonic Boom of the South plays a strategic role in fulfilling Jackson State University's mission. The use of practice and strategy in marching bands provides the university with an opportunity to achieve its goals and address potential challenges. The university marching band serves as a learning community, with its members thriving in delivering electrifying performances and experiencing personal growth. The band comprises students from diverse ethnic backgrounds with various career aspirations, all dedicated to each other as a close-knit community. Furthermore, these learners are committed to presenting the highest quality music performances and entertainment, thereby enhancing the university's visibility and reputation. The band members are a perfect fit for recruitment and retention initiatives, as they are dedicated ambassadors for their educational institution.

## Chapter 4: The Marching Band Recruitment Model at Jackson State University

### Introduction

Chapter three provided valuable insights into the strategic initiatives deployed by Jackson State University's band leadership and administrative team to enhance optimal learning outcomes and the institution's reputation. These aspects contribute to the effectiveness of the Sonic Boom of the South in fostering student recruitment and retention at the university. The chapter also introduced a five-point process that serves as a paradigm for building recruitment in HBCUs. This chapter establishes the need for a model that HBCUs can use to develop a marching band that drives recruitment and retention in higher learning institutions. It provides insights into how HBCUs can utilize marching bands to promote institutional enrollment initiatives and marketing programs. The chapter also discusses the implementation of band development stages organized according to the strategic problems faced by many HBCU student enrollment endeavors. Additionally, the chapter provides answers to marketing, cultural, organizational, and financial questions surrounding marching band initiatives, addressing the following queries:

- What critical items should one consider when establishing awareness of a marching band?
- Why is the creation of a multicultural marching band environment important?
- What are some essential guidelines for establishing a learning community within the marching band family?
- How do HBCU institutions address the financial issues generally associated with creating a marching band, even when the end goal is student recruitment?

#### Problem 1: Establish Awareness of Marching Band

Jackson State University has a well-established marching band program that has been in

existence for the past eight decades. In 2021, the university celebrated the 50th anniversary of the band's brand, known as the Sonic Boom of the South. Despite the university's overall growth in curriculum, program offerings, and infrastructure, student enrollment in all academic programs has declined by 28% over the past three years. While this decline in recruitment and retention is common among most HBCUs, it poses significant implications for Jackson State University's ability to optimize learning outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial for the university to create awareness of the marching band's role in enhancing campus life and the local community. Creating brand recognition for the Sonic Boom of the South will generate interest in the university's programs and foster recruitment<sup>210</sup>. Jackson State University's public relations office should contribute to telling the story of the marching band and establish a sense of community ownership. The marching band experience at an HBCU is a unique cultural phenomenon, both for the ensemble members and spectators<sup>211</sup>. The band director plays a critical role in setting the direction, defining core values, and implementing growth strategies for the performing band. It is essential for the entire campus community to embrace the idea that the band belongs to Jackson State University and actively contribute to positively market the Sonic Boom of the South. Once the campus community takes ownership of the marching band as a vital part of Jackson University's branding, efforts should be made to establish a similar identity in the surrounding community, city, county, state, and region. Jackson State University benefits from a supportive

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<sup>210</sup> Jason, et al., "Hazing in the College Marching Band." 10.

<sup>211</sup> Tilden J. LeMelle, "The HBCU: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow." *Education* 123, no. 1 (2002).  
<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA94265120&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=00131172&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon~fe85c1ff&aty=open+web+entry>

state legislature and enjoys recognition at the local, national, and international levels<sup>212</sup>. The university's participation in band day events for high school students, student recruitment activities, and special university gatherings further elevate its status compared to other HBCU marching bands. Additionally, the Sonic Boom of the South performs during holidays, on-campus festivities, and various city, state, or regional events.

The marching band leadership at Jackson University should ensure that their branding, promotion, and publicity initiatives are supported by visual resources. This may include incorporating videos of marching band performances, photos of the dance line, or recordings to be aired during prime-time promotions<sup>213</sup>. By leveraging adequate publicity resources, the marching band leadership can present the Sonic Boom of the South as a critical HBCU program that is well-established and an integral part of the institution's culture.

#### Problem 2: Establishing a Multicultural Marching Band Community

The main goal of Jackson State University's leadership in establishing the Marching Band is to build a community based on collaboration and extension of resources in education, music, leadership development, and capacity building<sup>214</sup>. The university leadership looks to build a band community that helps the institution's marching band members and students achieve their potential. Two strategic initiatives can be implemented to achieve this goal:

- Establish a multicultural, multi-ethnic community.
- Establish the band membership as a loving, nurturing, inclusive community.

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<sup>212</sup> Marybeth, et al., "Historically Black colleges and universities,"67.

<sup>213</sup> Tilden, "The HBCU," 1.

<sup>214</sup> Marybeth, et al., "Historically Black colleges and universities,"68.

Jackson State University leadership must take a clear position that recruitment of band membership is to be strictly multicultural and multi-racial. The institution's focus on developing global leaders is subject to the promotion of cultural competence. It resonates with the theme of black excellence and the target to benefit the community, which are the core tenets of Jackson State University. To achieve this goal, the marching band's leadership must adopt a marketing approach that encourages students from diverse cultural backgrounds to join the ensemble. It must align this approach with the need to augment the learners' self-expression, educational enrichment, and cultural engagement. It is essential for students to feel a sense of belonging to a musical group and become deeply dedicated to actively performing and showcasing the university's culture and ideals. Jackson State University's administration must ensure that membership in the marching band is a representation of Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Asian and Black Africans, and other mixed racial groups. This will ensure that the organization is fully recognized as a loving, affirming community thoroughly committed to accepting people of all ethnicities. This endeavor will optimize outcomes if established as a student-led effort that focuses on strengthening the minority communications capacity between various ethnic groups. It will give each group a voice within the marching band community and thus ensuring that the Sonic Boom of the South is an ensemble of diverse cultural beauty, dance, and performances. This initiative will prove to be naturally organic in structure, providing unique opportunities for Latino, African, Asian, White, and other minority students can successfully enjoy an educational and show-style marching band experience at Jackson State University while thriving academically<sup>215</sup>. It will ensure that other cultures thrive in an environment with a predominately

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<sup>215</sup> J. T., Snipes, and Carl Darnell. "Non-Black Student Recruitment at Historical Black Colleges and Universities." In *Black colleges across the diaspora: Global perspectives on race*

African American population and at an HBCU institution.

This approach will prompt the community to reach out and embrace people of different ethnicities and cultural heritage. Once this goal of building community is achieved, along with strong branding, the marching band will establish itself as a crucial driver for recruitment and retention. Furthermore, it will augment the band's marketing with photographs and videos demonstrating a broad ethnic identity<sup>216</sup>. In addition, it will portray Jackson State University in a positive light since it will showcase that the university recruits students representing diverse ethnic. The approach will also make it easy to establish a new norm for HBCUs since the technique adopted by Jackson State University will be successful. Students coming from non-black environments and band experiences will be quickly assimilated into the community by fellow learners. The band members will focus on making great music and delivering stunning performances; thus, ensuring this becomes the unifying goal is crucial. With a reputation as a loving, nurturing, and inclusive community, the Sonic Boom of the South marching band will officially be part of the student affairs department. It will ensure that the band is not governed or controlled by the music department, thus increasing the band's influence within the institution.

Although official partnerships and collaboration initiatives with the music department will remain, the Sonic Boom of the South will have the capacity to provide a broader campus student-wide interaction and social communication. The marching band will primarily comprise music

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*and stratification in postsecondary education*, vol. 14, pp. 49-67. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-358X20160000014003>

<sup>216</sup> Yulanda Essoka, "Beyond the Fifth Quarter: The Influence of HBCU Marching Bands." *Opportunities and Challenges at Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (2014): 129-138. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137480415\\_9](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137480415_9)

students; however, its leadership will influence the entire campus population through the student affairs department. This approach will allow the band members to participate in numerous campus organizations that help instill character, personal integrity, spiritual fortitude, emotional stability, and academic accountability. The band will have several groups, including individual section names of the band, state organizations of the band, the Prancing J-Settes, the band leadership team, internal and external ambassadors, and J5 drum majors<sup>217</sup>. The outlined strategies will augment the retention rate among the Sonic Boom of the South's membership and ensure the marching band is consistently ranked among the highest of any extracurricular or officially sanctioned academic organization on campus.

### Problem 3: Establishing Marching Band as a Learning Community

The Sonic Boom of the South was developed to showcase Jackson University's talent and entertain spectators. To optimize its efficacy as the institution's primary recruitment and retention agent, the band must become a learning community. It should develop initiatives for actively engaging in events that promote recognition. This approach will include on-campus events, touring on the road, performing in front of presidents, playing to thousands of fans, meeting football celebrities, or performing with entertainers. It must provide a meaningful learning platform for students and establish the marching band as an academic learning community. This concept of community is based upon the idea that students need to thoroughly understand that the music experience, at its very foundational organization, has intrinsic and extrinsic factors<sup>218</sup>. These aspects assist individuals in building personal and group relationships,

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<sup>217</sup> Snipes, and Carl, "Non-Black Student Recruitment at Historical Black Colleges and Universities,"<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>218</sup> Yulanda "Beyond the Fifth Quarter," 129.



hence playing a critical role in promoting the institution's cultural construct. A long-range planning committee on recruitment and retention will ensure that the student affairs department leadership and marching band personnel build a community that fosters continuing education. Additionally, and in accordance with this general philosophy, Jackson State University will provide opportunities for students to receive additional help to become successful in their academics through the student success center: The student success center will assist Jackson State University in implementing its quality enhancement plan, a critical component of continuous quality improvement. It will also foster online assessment, instruction, and testing vital for developing a learning community.

Jackson State University's capacity to provide quality education is evident in the caliber of leaders it produces. In addition, the institution has one of the highest graduation rates in the region and among HBCUs. The Sonic Boom of the South boosts the top 1% of all HBCU marching band graduates nationally<sup>219</sup>. Enrollment statistics for the marching band continue to show measured improvement despite the declining recruitment within the facility. Budget constraints influence the reduction in band membership, which is likely to affect the band's efficacy significantly. By the 2017-2018 band enrollment topped 350 with a 96.5% retention rate and 111 students successfully graduating<sup>220</sup>. During the next year, band enrollment topped 337 with a 95% retention rate and 108 graduates.<sup>130</sup> The 2019-2020 enrollment continued to show improvement, with a total number of students participating topping 340 with a 90.7% retention

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<sup>219</sup> Snipes, and Carl, "Non-Black Student Recruitment at Historical Black Colleges and Universities,"<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>220</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

rate and 82 graduates<sup>221</sup>. By the 2020- 2021 school year, and during a pandemic, band enrollment reduced to 303 with a 98.1% retention rate and 70 graduates<sup>222</sup>. The reduction in band enrollment and graduation rates is synonymous with HBCUs. This aspect retaliates the need to use the Sonic Boom of the South as the primary recruitment and retention agent.

#### Problem 4: Overcoming Financial Issues of Creating a Marching Band

Typically, institutions with successful marching bands do not realize the critical benefit of using the band for recruiting and retaining learners. In most cases, they consider the bands a vital extracurricular activity, crucial for the music department and entertaining learners and the local community. Additionally, smaller Institutions with low enrollment typically have financial strains and issues that often prohibit the administration from embracing the idea of funding a large, multi-ethnic marching band. Jackson State University's past financial status and challenges cannot support a marching band of 300 plus "walking" members<sup>223</sup>. However, the key to the success of their band program is the idea that since the university cannot sustain the ongoing expense of the ensemble, the organization must raise its own funds. The Sonic Boom of the South has been successful in this aspect, given that it features well-paying events, documentaries, and television commercials. Thus, Jackson State University has a marching band that generates revenue for the institution. It is an indicator that the Sonic Boom of the South will play an integral role in fostering enrollment growth, student retention, and multi-level corporate sponsorships. The enrollment initiative will thrive once growth trends are established since the marching band will take center stage in the institution's affairs.

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<sup>221</sup> "Homepage." Jackson State University.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Jackson State University band was established in the 1940s to showcase the institution's culture and ideals while augmenting a thriving musical department. The university needs help with financial issues and is challenged by low enrollment trends. Transforming the marching band from a performance music ensemble to a recruitment and retention agent will see Jackson State University enrollment begin to demonstrate tremendously diverse growth. The marching band will influence the students to market their institution while improving brand recognition within the local community. It will also enhance learning outcomes and thus help in increasing the learner's completion rates. This chapter dealt with four problems Jackson State University will overcome to succeed in this critical area of institutional survival. Addressing these four problems can potentially provide a platform for establishing the Sonic Boom of the South as a model for increasing enrollment in higher learning institutions. It provides a new paradigm for HBCUS to use in tailoring musical ensembles to become an effective tool for meeting institutional recruiting and retention goals.

## Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the research findings and inferences developed from this study. The study summary holds that the declining recruitment and retention rates in Jackson State University and other HBCUs present a critical problem that requires actionable mitigation measures. The marching band presents a crucial opportunity for higher learning institutions to market their facilities and appeal to potential learners. It also facilitates student retention due to the positive culture and environment it promotes. Marching bands optimize the learning experience and hence influence learning outcomes positively. Therefore, Jackson State University should incorporate the Sonic Boom of the South into the students' affairs department to capitalize on its capacity to increase enrollment and retention in the institution. Future research should investigate the efficacy of marching bands in fostering recruitment and enrolment through quantitative studies. Comparative and descriptive analysis is also vital to identify the correlation between marching bands and university recruitment and enrollment. The chapter concludes that Jackson State University's success in using the Sonic Boom of the South to increase enrollment and student completion rates can serve as a model for other HBCUs in the future.

### Summary of Research

This thesis investigated marching bands' history and organizational application as a primary recruiting and retention tool at Jackson State University. The report provides a feasible approach to solving the recruitment and retention challenges facing Jackson State University. In addition, it highlights the efficacy of the Sonic Boom of the South in driving recruitment at Jackson State University and how the institution can capitalize on the marching band to optimize appeal and student retention. Nationwide, student enrollment and retention at Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) continue to demonstrate an alarming rate of decline. This presents the need for an innovative recruiting and retention initiative organized and equipped to address the declining enrollment rate. The research suggests that the Sonic Boom of the South is a reputable marching band and, thus, will effectively play a pivotal role in marketing Jackson State University and increasing recruitment and retention in the institution. The study bases its inferences on literature indicating that marching bands influence learning outcomes and promote collegiate student completion rates. The study's significance is anchored on the fact that this research addresses a critical issue facing the education sector in the US. The study discoveries establish a paradigm for HBCU institutions' capacity to capitalize on marching bands as a primary agent for student recruitment and retention.

Four research questions helped in guiding this research:

RQ1. This question sought to understand if there are historical precedents for using the marching band as a recruiting tool in HBCU institutions.

RQ2. This query investigated ways the marching band has been used to advance secondary and college-age music students' broad musical and cultural experiences.

RQ3. This question assessed the essential pedagogical techniques that equip a marching band with the capacity to assume the various recruiting roles at an HBCU institution.

RQ4. The last research question evaluated how the marching band experience contributes to the overall life-equipping process of a student.

The research established five hypotheses with a focus on HBCUs recruitment needs as the parameters for the study:

H1: Historical precedents indicate that marching bands are effective recruiting and retention tools in HBCU institutions.

H2: Marching bands allow students to express themselves and optimize their musical and cultural experiences.

H3: There is a need to develop standards for using marching bands as the primary recruitment and retention tool in HBCU institutions.

H4: Evidence shows that marching bands broaden students' social, cultural, and peer relationships, which impacts their lives positively.

A Historical and descriptive research design was used in this investigation, with a literature review forming the foundation for data collection. This study focused on the historical precedent and trends of student recruitment at Jackson State University and the role of the university marching band in enhancing student enrollment and retention. The study findings indicate that the Sonic Boom of the South may establish a new, practical paradigm for addressing the declining recruitment and retention rate at Jackson State University. Furthermore, it suggested that the marching band-led recruitment initiative provides a feasible approach for HBCUs to consider in improving enrollment and recruitment. Apart from providing solutions for Jackson State University's recruitment issues, the research lays a foundation for future research. Investigating the quantitative implications of using the marching band to improve retention and the bands' efficacy in non-HBCU institutions is crucial.

### Structure and Organization

Chapter one provided the introduction to the thesis. It included the background of the topic, the research problem, the purpose, and the significance of the study. This chapter also highlights the statement of research, methodology, limitation, research questions, and key terms. Chapter two provided entailed the literature review, which provided details regarding related research. This section was divided into six sections that illuminate the core aspects defining

HBCUs, enrollment, and retention in higher learning institutions, and the role of marching bands in augmenting college and universities' capacity to attract and retain learners. This chapter outlines:

- Research-related historically black colleges and universities
- Research related to marching bands in higher education
- Research related to marching bands and student learning outcomes
- Research related to finance in historically black colleges and universities
- Research related to recruiting in higher education
- Research related to retention in higher education.

Chapter three investigated the historical precedent of Jackson State University's marching band, the Sonic Boom of the South. This chapter includes a historical overview of Jackson State University's vision and mission statements, accreditation, assessment and curriculum review, student demographic, and retention processes. Also, described and expanded upon the strategy for marching bands at Jackson State University. Inclusive a background study of the marching band at Jackson State University, demographics, and recruitment of the marching band. The chapter also provided insights into the community culture of the Sonic Boom of the South, intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the students, the band's organization, and an overview of the marching band as a learning community.

Chapter four investigated the possibility of using the Sonic Boom of the South marching band as a recruitment paradigm for Jackson State University and other HBCUs. The chapter discusses four problems that the marching band deals with comprehensively. These issues include:

- Establishing awareness of a marching band

- Establishing a multicultural environment
- Establishing a marching band learning community
- Overcoming financial issues

Chapter five outlines the thesis summary and conclusion outlining the research findings and inferences This chapter is grouped into several strategic sections:

- Summary of the study
- Purposes for each chapter
- Research findings and discoveries
- Significant conclusions regarding the marching band's role as a collegiate-level recruitment and retention agent
- Recommendations for future research in the area of marching band and recruitment and retention in HBCUs.

#### Discoveries and Research Findings

The literature review was effective in providing an understanding of ways Jackson State University can use its marching band to improve recruitment and retention. According to Dickinson marching bands play an integral role in promoting higher learning institutions<sup>224</sup>. They are effective marketing tools and a source of pride and identity among students. Furthermore, marching bands are cultural ambassadors and thus are held in high regard by the local community. Johnson indicates that many of the HBCUs' alumni claim that marching bands played a central role in influencing their choice of college or university<sup>225</sup>. In addition, the bands

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<sup>224</sup> Kesicia A Dickinson, Jasmine C. Jackson, and Princess H. Williams. "Jackson State University: Challenging Minds and Cultivating the Political Science Pipeline." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 53, no. 1 (2020): 148-150. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096519001148>

<sup>225</sup> Jennifer M Johnson, "Choosing HBCUs: Why African Americans Choose HBCUS in The Twenty-First Century." In *Black colleges across the Diaspora: Global perspectives on race*



had significant influence in their learning experience and thus the alumni remain fans long after they leave the higher education facilities. Marching bands showcase their talent at televised football events such as the super bowl<sup>226</sup>. Additionally, they participate in marches during presidential inauguration and thus getting global attention. Their presence in these events increases the colleges and universities' recognizability which is crucial for enhancing recruitment rates. Marching bands also embody the school-spirit and ideals and thus showcase the cultures of the colleges and universities they represent during shows. The bands are therefore effective in marketing higher learning educations and thus vital recruitment tools.

McRoy notes that marching bands are vital in enhancing learning experiences in tertiary institutions<sup>227</sup>. They optimize learning outcomes by fostering increased school completion and graduation rates. Williams, and Robert claim that marching bands efficacy in increasing retention rates is evident in their role of developing students' traits and skills<sup>228</sup>. Participating in marching bands require commitment, discipline, responsibility, and creativity, skills that play an integral role in lifespan development<sup>229</sup>. In addition, the bands foster time management and problem-

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*and stratification in postsecondary education*. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-358X20160000014008>

<sup>226</sup> Crewe, "Education with Intent—The HBCU Experience," 361.

<sup>227</sup> Deirdre McRoy, "An Exploratory Study of the Retention, Progression and Grade Point Averages of Marching Band Students Classified as Profile Assessors at a Southern University." (PhD diss., Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, 2019).

<sup>228</sup> Janelle L Williams, and Robert T. Palmer. "A Response to Racism: How HBCU Enrollment Grew in The Face of Hatred." (2019). <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/98987>

<sup>229</sup> Misty Luminais, and Rhonda Y. Williams. "Marching Toward Justice: Lessons Learned from the Shaw High School Mighty Cardinals Marching Band in East Cleveland." *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 11, no. 3 (2016): 231-244.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197916653554>

solving skills which are crucial for improving learning outcomes. The pride associated with marching band membership is another aspect that retains learners in colleges and universities. Vest indicates that marching bands are vital in fostering a sense of loyalty towards learning institutions and thus improving school success<sup>230</sup>. Furthermore, they advance black excellence in HBCUs which is crucial for increasing graduation rates. Daniel details the bands' role in increasing financing of HBCUs. Systematic disadvantages cause significant inequalities in funding of higher education facilities<sup>231</sup>. HBCU alumni have taken center stage in providing donations and advocating for increasing government funding in HBCUs. Finances are integral in facilitating increased recruitment and retention since they influence the quality of education and investment in extracurricular activities.

The research findings in the preceding sections resonate with the study results from chapter two, an indicator that this investigation correlates with existing literature. One of the discoveries during this investigation was that Jackson State University was among the first Historically Black Colleges in Mississippi and the largest in the USA. It has a reputation for research and development, faith-based programs, and producing global leaders. Another finding is that Jackson State University is experiencing a declining enrollment and retention rate, an aspect that is common in HBCUs. It presents critical issues likely to affect the higher learning institutions' finances and education outcomes. The third most notable discovery is that there is a need for a recruiting initiative that involves the marching band as the primary public relations

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<sup>230</sup> Christopher Vest, "The Decline of Retention at Jacksonville State University." *Digital Commons*. (2023). [https://digitalcommons.jsu.edu/ce\\_jsustudentsymp\\_2023/49/](https://digitalcommons.jsu.edu/ce_jsustudentsymp_2023/49/)

<sup>231</sup> James Rushing Daniel, "Crisis at the HBCU." *Composition Studies* 44, no. 2 (2016): 158-161. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24859535>

entity for these institutions. The research findings indicated that the Sonic Boom of the South is well known throughout the United States and, thus, a star attraction for Jackson State University. Therefore, the marching band can attract new learners and create an environment that retains university students. Integrating the marching band into the students' affairs department will ensure that the band takes center stage in the institution's events and thus becomes an effective marketing tool.

The research found that Jackson State University significantly emphasizes academic excellence in education, technology, faith, and leadership. Chapter three indicates that enrollment growth at Jackson State University is subject to its visibility through participation in regional and national workshops, gatherings, lectures, and events. Furthermore, producing acclaimed artists, scientists, political, business, and city leaders augments the university's reputation, which is critical for fostering recruitment. In addition, the university's academic programs allow students to engage in well-established graduate programs in business, education, human development, liberal arts, public service, and science, engineering, and technology colleges. Also, it documents a crucial finding relating to the close-knit, warm, dynamic, and loving community of the Sonic Boom of the South. It notes that the marching band comprises student musicians and capable music leadership professionals.

Most importantly, the university marching band is a strategic tool for achieving Jackson State University's mission. Discovery findings in this section also indicate that Jackson State University's marching band membership includes students of multiple ethnicities that work as a close-knit community guided by mutual respect and cohesion. In addition, the Sonic Boom of the South is a large and impressive musical ensemble dedicated to presenting the highest quality music performance and entertainment.

Chapter four highlights four problems that Jackson State University overcame to succeed. It also provides insights into aspects that guarantee the university's capacity to increase recruitment and retention, thus navigating its current predicament. Addressing these issues will provide a new paradigm for HBCUs to augment recruiting and retention goals. The chapter concluded that Jackson state university must increase awareness of its marching band's role in student recruitment and create a multicultural environment. In addition, the university should ensure that the Sonic Boom of the South operates like a learning community and becomes a platform for overcoming financial and student recruitment issues. These discoveries provide an actionable pathway for the university's ability to capitalize on its marching band's efficacy in attracting and retaining learners. Chapter five summarizes the research findings indicating that Jackson State University's ability to increase enrollment and retention using its marching band should be replicated by other HBCUs.

#### Future Study Initiatives

- The research discoveries in this project provide a foundation for future investigative analysis to enhance student enrollment and retention in HBCUs. In addition, the study conclusion presents the need for a more in-depth investigation into the efficacy of marching bands in increasing recruitment and student completion rates. Based on the research design and study findings, the following study initiatives are recommended:
- A quantitative study on the efficacy of marching bands in fostering recruitment and retention at the collegiate level. This study should include select HBCUs to quantify the increase or decline in student enrollment when the marching band is used as the institution's marketing and recruitment agent.

- A qualitative study measuring the levels of success in using marching bands as recruiting and retention agents in HBCUs. This study should adopt a comparative approach and include HBCU institutions with and without marching bands to understand the influence of the bands on the institutions' capacity to attract and retain learners.
- A qualitative study investigating how marching bands enrich students spiritually, intellectually, and physically. The investigation should focus on the bands' capacity to augment improved learning experiences and outcomes. In addition, it should evaluate how marching bands influence student university programs' completion rates.
- A quantitative study on the efficacy of marching bands in the community should be completed in the top five HBCU institutions with successful marching bands. The study should quantify how the marching bands influence the local community's perception of higher learning institutions.
- Another feasible research initiative is a comparative study to evaluate if the marching band model recommended in this paper will produce the same recruitment and retention results in non-HBCU institutions. This investigation should assess if the marching bands will increase enrollment and retention in universities and colleges that are not historically black.
- A descriptive study of recruitment practices by marching bands in HBCU institutions will provide insights into successful initiatives for enhancing marching band activities and enabling them to drive enrollment and retention.
- A quantitative study on how bands contribute to the financial stability of HBCU institutions will provide a framework for establishing marching bands in HBCUs. It will

also provide an actionable approach to developing practical budget expectations for marching bands.

### Conclusion

The declining recruitment and retention rates in HBCUs require urgent and effective mitigation measures. Jackson State University must capitalize on its strengths and resources to increase the university's capacity to attract and new learners and improve graduation rates. The institutions' role in promoting black excellence put it at the fore front of fostering school completion and optimal educational outcomes. To achieve these goals, Jackson State University must overcome funding problems created by systematic prejudice. Finances are crucial for increasing recruitment since they will improve infrastructure, improve the quality of education, and enhance investment in extracurricular activities such as athletics and marching bands. The efficacy of marching bands in promoting recruitment and retention in colleges and universities make the Sonic Boom of the South a vital asset for Jackson State University. The institution must capitalize on the popularity of its marching band to attract more learners into the institution. Study results indicate that most learners consider the efficacy of a marching band before enrolling in a higher learning facility. Therefore, Jackson State University must align its marching band with the changing students' needs and preferences to ensure it attracts potential learners into the institution.

Jackson State University's ability to recruit more learners is subject to the facility's efforts in promoting recognition and a positive reputation. The Sonic Boom of the South is a crucial asset in this endeavor since apart from providing entertainment it is an effective brand ambassador. Jackson State University must increase investment in its marching band to promote excellence during performances. It will increase the marching band's fan base due to constant

performances during half-time shows and appearance in televised events. Furthermore, the university should look partnership with huge brands and entertainment firms such as Netflix which are working with marching bands to create content. These aspects will increase the Sonic Boom of the South's recognition and visibility which are essential in enhancing recruitment and retention at the learning facility. Jackson State University should embed its values, and ideals into the marching band to ensure that the band promotes the institution's cultures during performances. Using the Sonic Boom of the South as a marketing tool will enable the institution to recruit more learners and retain them until they complete their courses. The facility will also create a loyal fan base and good relations with the local community which are crucial for fostering a positive reputation. In addition, the university will benefit from an alumni base that holds the learning institution in high regard and thus promoting funding in the future. It is therefore accurate to argue that by capitalizing on the Sonic Boom of the South, Jackson State University will improve its recruitment and retention rates and facilitate financing which is vital for improving learning outcomes.

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