

Issues and Opportunities

Background:

An HBCU, established through a historically Black land-grant, is navigating severe underfunding from the state legislature, leading to deteriorating campus conditions and diminished resources. Compounding the situation, the state governor has enacted anti-DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) laws that target the university's efforts to promote inclusivity. Additionally, some faculty members are undocumented, making them particularly vulnerable in this hostile environment. The university's faculty union, which has been advocating for better working conditions and protecting faculty rights, recently lost its recognition by the university administration. The administration cited a religious exemption to justify its decision, a move seen by many as a direct attack on labor rights. Despite this setback, there is an active union-supported aspiring educator chapter on campus, where students passionate about education and unionism are organizing and advocating for their future careers. However, the number of students enrolling in education majors has been steadily declining over the past three years, raising concerns about the program's sustainability. Despite these challenges, members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and the Alumni Association remain deeply engaged with the university, providing vital support to students and faculty.

Vignettes:

1. Dr. Evelyn Moore, University President:

Dr. Evelyn Moore, a respected academic and a proud member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., has been the university president for the past five years. While Dr. Moore is deeply committed to the legacy and mission of the HBCU, she holds a strong anti-union stance, believing that unions can interfere with the university's ability to operate efficiently. She supported the administration's decision to revoke the faculty union's recognition, citing the religious exemption as a necessary measure to maintain the institution's values and autonomy. Dr. Moore is also a staunch supporter of the governor's anti-DEI laws, seeing them as aligned with her vision of a more streamlined and politically neutral university. However, she is concerned about the declining enrollment in the education program and recognizes the need to address this issue to sustain the university's academic offerings.

2. Jasmine Carter, Aspiring Educator Chapter President:

Jasmine Carter is a senior education major and the president of the aspiring educator chapter on campus. She is deeply committed to teaching and believes in the power of unionism to protect the rights of educators and ensure quality education for all. Jasmine has been a vocal critic of the university administration's decision to revoke union recognition, seeing it as an attack on the faculty's rights and a betrayal of the university's mission to serve its community. She is also concerned about the declining interest in the education program, which she attributes to the hostile political

environment and the lack of support from the administration. Jasmine is determined to rally her fellow students, faculty, and community allies to fight for the reinstatement of the faculty union and to push back against the anti-DEI laws that she believes are harming the university's inclusive mission.

3. Dr. Marcus Thompson, History Professor and Faculty Union President:

Dr. Marcus Thompson, a tenured history professor specializing in African American history, has been the faculty union president for three years. He has dedicated his career to teaching students about the struggles and triumphs of the Black community, and he sees the faculty union as an extension of that legacy. Dr. Thompson was deeply disheartened by the university administration's decision to revoke the union's recognition, especially under the pretext of a religious exemption. He views this as a direct attack on the rights of faculty members, particularly those who are undocumented and now face even greater insecurity. Dr. Thompson is determined to regain union recognition and is working to mobilize support from both the campus community and external allies. He also sees the decline in education majors as a symptom of the broader political attacks on the university and is committed to reversing this trend by advocating for stronger union support and more inclusive policies.

4. Robert "Bobby" Anderson, Alumni Association President:

Robert "Bobby" Anderson, the president of the university's Alumni Association, is a successful entrepreneur and a proud graduate of the HBCU. Bobby has always been a passionate advocate for the university, using his position to raise funds, support student scholarships, host a tent at homecoming each year, and lobby for better state funding. He is deeply concerned about the recent political developments and the administration's decision to revoke union recognition. Although he respects Dr. Moore's leadership, he is unsure if the recent revoke of faculty union recognition maintains the university's integrity and mission. Bobby is committed to leveraging the resources and influence of the Alumni Association to support the faculty, students, and the broader university community. He is limited in his knowledge of unionism but is eternally grateful to the faculty, many of whom still work there, who supported him through his time at the university.

Issues and Opportunities Activity

What problem(s) exists within this worksite?

The problem(s) in this worksite is...

What is the issue you will organize around?

Our issue is...

Who is the target? Remember the target has a name and face.

Our target is...

What would it look like if you achieved positive change on this issue? It is a concrete goal that will directly address the issue and make a significant, visible change in the lives of your people.

Our demand is...

Who are the People?

Constituency-People who care about this issue and may take action to work towards the win

Support- Individuals and organizations who support the win but may not be a part of the actions

Opposition - Individuals and organizations who are against the win you are seeking to achieve

Competition - Individuals and organizations who are working towards similar wins but in their own way; competing for people, resources, time, space, or a process to achieve that win

May not know yet

What would be your immediate next step? Why?