



XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Office of the President

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March 4, 2017

A Message from the President of Xavier University of Louisiana regarding the White House visit and the Congressional HBCU Fly-In

Dear Xavier University Community,

Last week, I along with nearly 90 other presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for and guide federal policy pertaining to our institutions. I was there to represent you, our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters, and to make clear that the success of HBCUs is essential to the progress of the United States.

With the UNCF, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, we arranged and participated in bipartisan meetings with congressional leadership, as well as meetings with several executive branch departments and Vice President Pence. Unexpectedly, we also were invited into the Oval Office to meet President Trump, who later issued an Executive Order on HBCUs.

As a result of these meetings, the nation heard from many voices, on both sides of the aisle, of the powerful contributions of HBCUs in the development of talent and leadership and the ongoing accomplishments of our students, faculty, and alumni.

As you well know, Xavier's impact on the country has been profound, and our mission remains as relevant today as ever. For it is rooted in the principle that, given the opportunity, the natural talent of young American students from all backgrounds will flourish. However, not all American youth have the same opportunity. Too many are not able to reach their full potential, and the country is deprived of their talent. Xavier, with other HBCUs plays a critical role in bridging this gap between ability and achievement. In fact, as you may have read recently in *The New York Times*, Xavier ranks 6th in the nation for social mobility, meaning the percentage of students from the bottom fifth of the income distribution rise to the top three-fifths after graduation. We are playing a critical role in expanding economic opportunity and surmounting generational barriers to success.

A Message from the President of Xavier University of Louisiana regarding the White House visit and the Congressional HBCU Fly-In, *continued*

Thus, I went to Washington to fight for our mission and to demand the resources we need to continue our important work.

Although political capital may accrue to the administration, my concern is tangible benefit to Xavier. I and my fellow HBCU presidents will hold the executive and legislative branches accountable for measurable results above and beyond the Executive Order signed last week that relocates the White House HBCU Initiative. We will continue to push for financial aid for our students and for greater support for research and facilities, among other priorities.

It is vital that HBCU presidents be present when decisions concerning our destiny are made. As the saying goes: "If you're not at the table, then you're on the menu." Furthermore, as institutions of higher education, it is essential to our mission that we engage all in conversation, whether individually we disagree or agree. *Let us not forget that we are stewards of inquiry and truth.*

We will continue our work with your support and prayers.

If you would like additional information on my meetings in Washington, please contact me at president@xula.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Reynold Verret". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

C. Reynold Verret
President