



HBCU ACCESS
New York

PRESENTS

THE ULTIMATE HBCU RESOURCE GUIDE

FOR NYC STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Your comprehensive roadmap to Historically Black Colleges
and Universities—from application to graduation

2026 EDITION



DEAR FUTURE HBCU STUDENT,

A message from HBCU Access New York, Inc.

If you're holding this guide, you're already ahead of the game. Maybe you're a high school junior just starting to think about college. Maybe you're a senior trying to figure out if an HBCU is right for you. Maybe you're a parent who wants the best for your child but isn't sure where to start. HBCU Access New York, Inc. created this resource because we saw a gap. Every year, thousands of talented NYC students graduate without ever learning about the incredible opportunities at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. They don't know that HBCUs produce 20% of all Black college graduates despite being only 3% of all colleges [1].

What This Guide Will Do:

Break down exactly what HBCUs are • Walk you through preparation & application • Address real concerns about distance & cost • Connect you to scholarships

This is your roadmap. Let's get started.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CH' with a stylized flourish.

Christian Hill

Founder, HBCU Access New York, Inc.

What Is an HBCU?

More Than History—A Living Legacy

An HBCU (Historically Black College or University) is a college or university established before 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans^[3].

HBCUs were founded on the belief that education is a right, not a privilege. That mission continues today.

— Dr. Michael L. Lomax, President and CEO, UNCF^[7]

HBCUs by the Numbers (2024 Data)

101

HBCUs Nationwide ^[5]

287K

Students Enrolled ^[8]

\$16.5B

Economic Impact ^[9]

NYC Connection

Lincoln University in Pennsylvania—just a 3-hour drive from NYC—is the first degree-granting HBCU in the United States, founded in 1854 ^[13]. Delaware State University partnered with NYC to launch the city's first HBCU Early College Prep High School in Queens in 2025, enrolling 100+ HBCU bound freshman.

Why HBCUs Matter Today

The HBCU Advantage: By the Numbers

In an era where students have more college options than ever, why do HBCUs continue to thrive? Because they deliver results that other institutions struggle to match.

\$146 Billion

Total lifetime earnings for HBCU Class of 2021—57% more than they would earn without their degrees

Economic Impact

- HBCUs generate **\$16.5 billion** in direct economic impact annually [15]
- Average HBCU graduate earns **\$1.2 million more** over lifetime vs. high school diploma [17]
- HBCU tuition costs approximately **28% lower** than comparable non-HBCU institutions [18]

HBCUs enroll 56% Pell Grant recipients (compared to 32% nationally) [20]

Academic Success

When researchers compare students with similar SAT scores and family incomes, HBCUs outperform predominantly white institutions (PWIs):

37.8%

HBCU graduation rate for low-income Black students [19]

The Psychological Advantage

Research from Princeton University shows that Black students at HBCUs report higher racial cohesion, lower racism stress, and greater civic engagement than their peers at PWIs [21].

Famous HBCU Graduates You Know

Name	HBCU	Achievement
Kamala Harris	Howard University	Vice President of the United States
Martin Luther King Jr.	Morehouse College	Civil Rights Leader
Oprah Winfrey	Tennessee State University	Media Mogul
Thurgood Marshall	Lincoln University / Howard Law	First Black Supreme Court Justice
Alice Walker	Spelman College	Pulitzer Prize-winning Author
Common	Florida A&M University	Grammy-winning Artist
Rosalind Brewer	Spelman College	Former CEO, Walgreens
Raphael Warnock	Morehouse College	U.S. Senator

The Network Effect

HBCU alumni networks are legendary for their loyalty. The "HBCU network" isn't a secret society—it's a professional network where graduates actively hire, mentor, and support each other decades after graduation.

Is an HBCU Right for Me?

Finding Your Fit

Choosing a college is personal. There's no "right" answer for everyone, but there are right questions to ask yourself.

Academic Fit

- Do I want smaller class sizes where professors know my name?
- Am I interested in majors where HBCUs excel (STEM, education, business)?
- Do I want undergraduate research opportunities?
- Am I looking for a graduate school pathway?

Cultural Fit

- Is being around people who share my cultural background important?
- Do I want to explore my identity in a supportive environment?
- Am I interested in Greek life with deep historical roots?

Financial Fit

- Is minimizing student debt a priority?
- Do I qualify for Pell Grants (family income under ~\$60,000)?
- Am I willing to apply for scholarships aggressively?

Geographic Fit

- Am I comfortable being 5-10 hours from NYC?
- Do I want to experience living in the South?
- Is climate a factor (do I hate humidity)?

Reality Check: Common Myths

Let's address the misconceptions that might be holding you back from considering an HBCU.

MYTH	FACT
"HBCUs are for students who couldn't get into 'better' schools."	Top HBCUs like Spelman, Howard, and Morehouse have acceptance rates between 23-40% and SAT averages comparable to selective PWIs [22].
"I'll only meet Black people at an HBCU."	While 72% of students are Black, HBCUs are increasingly diverse, with international students from 70+ countries [23].
"Employers don't respect HBCU degrees."	HBCUs produce 50% of Black lawyers, 80% of Black judges, and 40% of Black engineers [24].

Remember

HBCUs aren't the only choice—but they should be a choice. The best college for you is one where you'll thrive academically, socially, and financially.

Understanding the HBCU Landscape

Your Options, Explained

Feature	Public HBCUs (52 institutions)	Private HBCUs (49 institutions)
Funding	State-funded, generally larger	Tuition-driven, often smaller
Tuition	Lower in-state; high out-of-state for NYC students	Same regardless of state residence
Setting	Often larger campuses, more resources	Often more intimate, smaller classes
Examples	North Carolina A&T, Florida A&M, Morgan State	Spelman, Morehouse, Howard, Xavier

Building Your School List: The Tiers

Reach Schools (<30% acceptance)

GPA 3.5+, SAT 1150+

- Spelman College (23.5%) [25]
- Howard University (35%)
- Morehouse College (65% but selective)
- Hampton University (36%)

Target Schools (40-70%)

GPA 3.0-3.5, SAT 1000-1150

- Clark Atlanta University
- North Carolina Central University
- Morgan State University
- Tuskegee University

HBCUs Within Reach of NYC

Closest to Home

Lincoln University (PA) — 3 hours by car First degree-granting HBCU in the US (1854)

Cheyney University (PA) — 2.5 hours by car Oldest HBCU (founded 1837)

University of the District of Columbia — 4 hours by train/bus

Popular with NYC Students

- Howard University (D.C.)** — 4.5 hours by train, "The Mecca"
- Morgan State University (MD)** — 3.5 hours by train
- Delaware State University** — 3 hours by car
- Norfolk State University (VA)** — 6 hours by train

The Common Black College Application

Did you know? You can apply to 60+ HBCUs with one \$20 application! See the Application section for details.

Academic Preparation

Building Your Foundation (9th-12th Grade Roadmap)



FRESHMAN YEAR (9TH GRADE)

- Focus on GPA—this is the foundation everything else builds on
- Take honors classes if available; don't wait until junior year
- Join 2-3 clubs or activities (quality over quantity)
- Start exploring what HBCUs offer—follow them on social media
- Take the PSAT for practice (optional but recommended)



SOPHOMORE YEAR (10TH GRADE)

- Maintain strong grades in core subjects (English, Math, Science, History)
- Take the PSAT seriously—determines National Merit eligibility
- Start your HBCU list (aim for 8-10 schools)
- Attend HBCU college fairs
- Begin thinking about summer programs at HBCUs

The "Soft" Skills That Matter

HBCUs value leadership, community service, and resilience. Document your:

- Family responsibilities (caregiving, work)
- Community involvement
- Overcoming obstacles
- Cultural engagement

The Critical Years



JUNIOR YEAR (11TH GRADE) — THE CRITICAL YEAR

Fall: Take SAT/ACT; many HBCUs are test-optional but scores help with scholarships

Winter: Narrow list to 5-7 schools; schedule campus visits during spring break

Spring: Request recommendation letters; draft personal statement

All Year: Maintain grades—junior year grades matter most



SENIOR YEAR (12TH GRADE) — EXECUTION MODE

August-October: Complete Common Black College Application and/or Common App

November: Early decision deadlines for some schools

December-February: Submit FAFSA immediately after October 1st

March-April: Compare financial aid packages

May 1: National College Decision Day

Pro Tip: Many HBCUs offer "early action" deadlines in November. Applying early can increase your chances of admission and scholarship consideration!

The HBCU Application Process

Your Application Strategy

The Common Black College Application (CBCA)

The CBCA is a game-changer for HBCU applicants. For \$20, you can apply to over 60 HBCUs at once [26].

1. Complete one application at commonblackcollegeapp.com

2. Select your top 4 schools (application goes to ALL members)

3. Counselor uploads transcript to portal

4. Schools download & make decisions

What You Need for CBCA:

- Unofficial transcript (you upload)
- Official transcript (counselor uploads)
- SAT/ACT scores (optional at many schools)
- List of activities and awards
- Personal statement (varies by school)

The Common Application

Many top HBCUs (Howard, Spelman, Morehouse, Hampton) use the Common App.

This requires:

- Individual application fees (\$50-90 per school) OR fee waivers
- School-specific supplemental essays
- Detailed activity list
- Recommendation letters

Application Components Breakdown

Transcripts

Your GPA is recalculated by each school. They look at:

- Core academic courses (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language)
- Grade trends (improving grades matter!)
- Rigor (honors, AP, IB courses)

Personal Statement

Even if not required, submit one. Topics that resonate:

- Overcoming adversity
- Cultural identity exploration
- Why you specifically want an HBCU experience
- Your vision for community impact

Test Scores (SAT/ACT)

While many HBCUs are test-optional, strong scores can:

- Qualify you for merit scholarships
- Strengthen a borderline application
- Exempt you from remedial courses

Recommendations

Choose teachers who know you personally. Provide them with:

- Your resume/activity list
- Specific anecdotes they might reference
- Plenty of time (ask 4 weeks before deadline)

Application Timeline & Checklist

Summer Before Senior Year

- Create CBCA and Common App accounts
- Draft personal statement
- Request recommendation letters
- Research scholarship opportunities

September-October

- Submit CBCA (\$20 fee)
- Submit Early Action/Early Decision applications
- Complete FAFSA (opens October 1)
- Send test scores

November-December

- Submit Regular Decision applications
- Complete CSS Profile (for private schools)
- Follow up on missing materials

January-March

- Check application portals daily
- Submit mid-year grade reports if requested
- Prepare for alumni interviews

April

- Compare financial aid award letters
- Visit campuses for admitted student days
- Make final decision by May 1

Financial Aid & Scholarships

Making It Affordable

The #1 reason students don't apply to college is believing they can't afford it. Let's fix that.

The Real Cost of HBCUs (2023-2024)

\$27,610

Average total cost of attendance [28]

\$12,007

Average in-state public tuition

\$35,551

National average cost of college [29]

The Financial Aid Package

Most HBCU students don't pay sticker price. In 2021-2022:

- 85% of HBCU students received grant aid [30]
- Average grant aid: \$11,177
- 61% received Pell Grants (average \$5,470) [31]

FAFSA: Your Golden Ticket

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the gateway to:

- Pell Grants (free money, up to \$7,395/year)
- Federal student loans (lower interest)
- Work-study programs
- Many state and institutional grants

FAFSA & Scholarship Strategy

Critical FAFSA Facts

- Opens October 1 every year
- Uses tax information from two years prior
- NYC students may qualify for TAP (NY State Tuition Assistance)
- Some HBCUs require CSS Profile for institutional aid

Common Mistakes: Waiting too long (aid is first-come, first-served), not listing all schools (you can add up to 20), incorrect household size, forgetting to sign with FSA ID.

HBCU-Specific Scholarships

UNCF Scholarships: Minimum 2.5 GPA, financial need, attending UNCF-member HBCU. Awards: \$2,500-\$5,000+ [32]

Thurgood Marshall College Fund: For public HBCU students. Minimum 3.0 GPA, full-time enrollment. Awards up to full tuition [33]

Institutional Scholarships

- **Howard:** Capstone Scholarship (up to \$20,000/year)
- **Spelman:** Presidential Scholarship (full ride)
- **Morehouse:** Oprah Winfrey Scholars Program
- **Xavier:** Full tuition for top academic performers

The Scholarship Search Strategy

Apply to 10 small scholarships (\$500-\$1,000) rather than only chasing full rides.
Small awards add up and have less competition.

NYC Student Realities

From the City to Campus: What NYC Students Need to Know

Distance & Travel

The closest HBCUs to NYC are **2.5-4 hours away**. This means:

- You won't come home every weekend (and that's good for independence)
- Budget for Thanksgiving, winter break, spring break, and summer travel
- Consider schools with nearby airports (Norfolk, VA; Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD)

Getting There

Method	Details
Train	Amtrak to D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia (\$75-200)
Bus	Greyhound/Megabus (\$30-75 one-way)
Plane	Budget airlines to Atlanta, Charlotte (\$150-300 round-trip)
Car	Factor in parking costs (\$200-500/semester)

Cultural Adjustment: City Kid Goes South

NYC students often experience culture shock at Southern HBCUs:

- Pace of life:** Slower, more relationship-focused
- Food:** Less diversity in restaurants, different seasoning styles
- Transportation:** You will need a car or rely on campus shuttles
- Weather:** Humid summers, mild winters (but ice storms can cancel classes)

The NYC Advantage You Didn't Know You Had

• **Public speaking confidence:** NYC schools emphasize presentation skills

• **Independence:** Navigating subways prepares you for campus life

• **Diversity exposure:** You're comfortable with different cultures

• **Resilience:** If you survived NYC public schools, you can handle college rigor

Campus Life at an HBCU

More Than a Classroom

The HBCU Culture

- Homecoming:** A week-long celebration bigger than prom, graduation, and Christmas combined
- Battle of the Bands:** Marching band competitions that are essentially sporting events
- Greek Life:** Historically Black fraternities and sororities (Divine Nine) with deep community service traditions
- Fashion:** "Sunday Best" is real—students dress up for class
- Call-and-response:** Classroom participation is energetic and interactive

Residential Life

- First-year housing:** Usually required, often traditional dorms
- Living-Learning Communities:** Group students by major or interest
- Upperclassmen options:** Suites, apartments, off-campus housing
- The Roommate Factor:** Many HBCUs use compatibility surveys

Dining

- Meal plans required for freshmen living on campus
- Soul food is common but not universal
- HBCUs are improving vegan, gluten-free, and halal options

Support Systems & Student Success

You're Not Alone

HBCUs excel at support systems—it's why they graduate students other schools might overlook.

First-Year Experience Programs

- Summer bridge programs:** 2-6 weeks before freshman year to build academic skills
- Freshman seminar courses:** Learn study skills, time management, campus resources
- Peer mentoring:** Upperclassmen matched with freshmen
- Learning communities:** Cohort models where you take classes with the same group

TRIO Programs

Federal TRIO programs at many HBCUs provide:

- Academic tutoring & financial literacy
- Graduate school preparation
- Cultural enrichment activities
- Priority registration

Academic Support

- Writing centers:** Help with papers at every stage
- Math labs:** Drop-in tutoring for quantitative courses
- Supplemental Instruction:** Peer-led study sessions
- Office hours:** Professors are generally accessible

Career Services

- Resume workshops & mock interviews
- On-campus recruiting (Fortune 500 companies recruit heavily at HBCUs)
- Alumni networking events
- Internship placement assistance

The Role of Parents & Caregivers

A Guide for the People Who Made This Possible

Understanding the HBCU Value

You may have questions: "Is my child limiting themselves?" "Is this just about race?" "Will they get a job?" The data says yes to all concerns:

- HBCU graduates report **higher levels of Black identity and psychological well-being** [34]
- **40% of HBCU students report feeling financially secure** during college vs. 29% at non-HBCUs [35]
- HBCU alumni give back more to their communities

How to Support Without Hovering

- Let them lead:** This is their application process. Ask how you can help, don't take over.
- Visit together:** Campus visits are bonding opportunities.
- Talk about money early:** Be honest about what you can contribute.
- Respect their choice:** Even if you wanted them to stay closer.

The Financial Conversation

What You'll Need for FAFSA

- Social Security numbers
- 2022 tax returns (for 2024-25 school year)
- Current bank statements
- Investment records
- Untaxed income records

Understanding Award Letters

- **COA:** Total estimated cost
- **EFC:** Expected Family Contribution
- **Gap:** COA minus grants/scholarships = what you'll need to cover

The Role of Counselors & Community Organizations

Tools for the People Guiding the Way

Why HBCUs Should Be in Your Portfolio

If you're advising NYC students, HBCUs offer:

- High acceptance rates** for qualified students who might be borderline at selective PWIs
- Strong retention** for first-generation and low-income students
- Full-ride opportunities** through merit scholarships
- Diverse environments** that validate students' cultural identities

Common Barriers to Address

"I don't want to go down South":

Help students distinguish between urban Atlanta and rural Mississippi. Not all "South" is the same.

"It's too expensive": Show them net price calculators. Many HBCUs cost less than CUNY after aid.

"I never heard of it": Exposure is your job. Bring HBCU reps to your school.

Action Steps for Counselors



SEPTEMBER

Register for the Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair (November in NYC)



OCTOBER

Host a FAFSA completion workshop



NOVEMBER

Encourage seniors to complete CBCA



MARCH

Celebrate acceptances publicly to normalize HBCU attendance

From Acceptance to Enrollment

You Got In—Now What?

Comparing Award Letters

Create a spreadsheet tracking:

- Tuition & fees
- Room & board
- Grants & scholarships (free money)
- Work-study (earned money)
- Loans (money to pay back)
- YOUR BOTTOM LINE: Out-of-pocket cost**

The Visit Factor

If you haven't visited your top 3 choices, do so before deciding:

- Overnight visits:** Many HBCUs host admitted student weekends
- Class visits:** Sit in on a freshman lecture
- Dining hall test:** Eat the food
- Dorm stay:** Sleep in the residence halls if possible

Making the Decision

The Deposit

May 1 is National College Decision Day. Deposits range from \$200-\$500 (non-refundable). You can only deposit at one school.

After You Commit

Submit housing application immediately. Register for orientation (June/July). Send final transcript after graduation.

If You're Waitlisted

Send a letter of continued interest. Update the school on new achievements. Have a backup plan.

Preparing for Your First Year

The Summer Before

Academic Prep

- Take any required placement tests
- Complete summer reading assignments
- Brush up on math if you struggled with SAT/ACT
- Learn to type properly (you'll write a lot of papers)

Life Skills

- Learn to do laundry
- Practice budgeting with a checking account
- Learn basic cooking
- Understand health insurance and prescriptions

What to Pack

- Clothes:** Business casual for presentations and events
- Documents:** Birth certificate, SS card, insurance card, vaccination records
- Technology:** Laptop (essential), printer (optional), extension cords
- Room supplies:** Coordinate with roommate on fridge, microwave, TV

Mental Preparation

- Follow your HBCU's social media accounts
- Join admitted student Facebook groups/GroupMe chats
- Read about imposter syndrome and how to combat it
- Set personal goals for your first semester

The "Freshman 15" is Real, But So Is the "Freshman A"

Academic rigor at HBCUs is serious. Go to class. Do the reading. Ask for help. Your future self will thank you.

Tools, Worksheets & Checklists

HBCU Application Checklist

FALL SEMESTER (Senior Year)

- Create CBCA account at commonblackcollegeapp.com
- Send SAT/ACT scores (if required)
- Ask 2 teachers for recommendations
- Submit CBCA application (\$20 fee)
- Request official transcript from guidance counselor
- Complete personal statement draft
- Attend HBCU college fair
- Submit Common App for non-CBCA schools

SPRING SEMESTER

- Submit FAFSA (fafsa.gov)
- Check application portals weekly
- Compare financial aid award letters
- Submit enrollment deposit by May 1
- Submit CSS Profile (if required)
- Submit mid-year grades if requested
- Visit top 3 choices

Worksheets (continued)

FAFSA Checklist

Before You Start:

- Create FSAID for student and parent
- Gather 2 years tax returns
- Collect bank statements
- List of colleges (up to 20)

After Submitting:

- Review StudentAid Report (SAR)
- Watch for verification requests
- Submit additional documents if selected

College Comparison

College	College A	College B	College C
Location			
Total Cost			
Scholarships			
MY RATING (1-10)			

Grade-by-Grade Timeline

Grade	Action Items
9TH GRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on grades and extracurriculars<input type="checkbox"/> Take PSAT for practice<input type="checkbox"/> Attend one college fair
10TH GRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Take PSAT seriously<input type="checkbox"/> Start HBCU research list<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain strong GPA
11TH GRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Take SAT/ACT<input type="checkbox"/> Narrow list to 8-10 schools<input type="checkbox"/> Visit campuses during spring break<input type="checkbox"/> Request recommendation letters
12TH GRADE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Submit applications (Aug-Oct)<input type="checkbox"/> Complete FAFSA (Oct 1)<input type="checkbox"/> Compare aid packages (March-April)<input type="checkbox"/> Make decision (May 1)

Resource Directory

HBCU Directories & Search Tools

Official Directories

White House Initiative on HBCUs:
sites.ed.gov/whhbcu

UNCF Member Institutions: uncf.org

Thurgood Marshall College Fund: tmcf.org

Common Black College Application:
commonblackcollegeapp.com

NYC-Specific Resources

HBCU Access New York, Inc. hbcuaccessnyc.org

Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair: malcolmbernard.org (annual November fair)

New York Urban League: nyul.org

Scholarship Resources

UNCF Scholarships: uncf.org/scholarships

TMCF Scholarships: tmcf.org/scholars

Fastweb: fastweb.com

Posse Foundation: possefoundation.org

Your Journey Starts Now

If you've read this far, you have what it takes. The students who succeed at HBCUs aren't necessarily the ones with the highest test scores or the most AP classes. They're the ones who:

◆
Ask for help when they need it

◆
Build relationships with professors and peers

◆
Take advantage of every opportunity

◆
Remember where they came from while growing

An HBCU education isn't just about getting a degree. It's about joining a legacy of excellence that stretches back nearly 200 years. It's about walking the same halls as Thurgood Marshall, Oprah Winfrey, and Kamala Harris.

Your Next Steps

1. This Week: Create your CBCA account and start your college list

2. This Month: Attend an HBCU fair or virtual information session

3. This Year: Submit your applications with confidence

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YOUR HBCU JOURNEY STARTS HERE

HBCU Access New York, Inc.
Empowering NYC students to access, afford, and thrive
at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Christian Hill
hbcuaccessnyc.org
christian.hill@hbcuaccessnyc.org
@hbcuaccessnyc

"A mind is a terrible thing to waste, but a wonderful thing to invest in."

— UNCF Motto

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