



September 1, 2011

President Barak Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to you as the chief executive officers of the American Indian Higher Education Coalition (AIHEC), the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), which collaborate as *The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education* (The Alliance).¹ We take this opportunity to thank you for making job creation a top priority for the nation. With the overall U.S. unemployment rate at 9.2 percent and unemployment rates for our collective constituent bases even higher, with the black unemployment rate double the national rate at 18 percent; the American Indian rate at 15.2 percent, and Hispanic unemployment rate at 12 percent, we eagerly anticipate the roll out of your jobs creation proposal. We look forward to reviewing the content of the historic plan and working with you, your Administration, and Members of Congress for passage of a jobs creation bill that includes job training for the chronically unemployed. Our constituents are disproportionately un- and under-employed.

We are especially hopeful that your proposal will include a central role for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), that will better equip our institutions to continue to train and place persons who are chronically unemployed and hard to employ in gainful employment. As you know, many Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) have since their founding served as training grounds for persons traditionally underrepresented in the American labor force. Our technical and community colleges are certifying persons in health professions, in green and energy positions and for technology careers in as few as twelve months. They are also serving as the laboratories and training grounds for partnerships with industry and community-based organizations that operate training programs.

¹ The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education is a collaborative of AIHEC, HACU, and NAFEO. Launched in 1999, The Alliance represents the shared interests of Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Combined, these MSIs educate more than one-third of all students of color in the United States. MSIs disproportionately address the needs of low-income, minority students while contributing significantly to generating a highly skilled workforce, developing civic and community responsibility, and producing citizens who are exceptionally attuned to the increasingly diverse country in which we live.

Our four-year institutions are providing sustainable career pathways that lead to a brighter future for tens of thousands of youth and adults annually by preparing them for well-paying jobs especially in the sciences, technology engineering, and mathematics, and in the emerging green, energy, and security economies. Our diverse institutions are preparing disproportionate numbers of African American, Hispanic, and American Indian workers with cutting edge expertise that is critical to retooling and revitalizing the nation's infrastructure. Without intervention, which must include MSIs, the nation will experience extensive worker shortages at all technical and professional levels and the nation's ability to maintain its economic leadership will be jeopardized.

Congressman Raul Grijalva of Arizona introduced the Promoting Partnerships to Transform Opportunities Act of 2011, which we believe has tremendous promise for achieving your goal of training hard to employ workers. The bill would create a competitive grant program to support the development of job training programs through MSIs and community based organizations (CBOs). The Grijalva bill would create an opportunity for providing postsecondary education and training to an increasing number of underrepresented minority individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, limited English proficient, veterans, low-income, undereducated, require retraining, or have disabilities. We believe that integration of this initiative in your overall plan will accelerate your goal of putting more Americans to work, especially hard to employ workers.

Despite some progress in attaining higher education, disproportionate numbers of Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians lack higher education certificates or degrees. In 2010, only 19.8 percent of Blacks, 13.9 percent of Hispanics, and 11.5 percent of American Indians had a 2- or 4-year certificate or degree, as compared with 30.3 percent of Whites and 52.4 percent of Asians. Despite some progress in penetrating higher ranks in the labor market, disproportionate numbers of Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians who are in the labor market are at the low end of the employment spectrum and in "unskilled" positions. By 2018, 73 percent or twenty-two of the fastest growing jobs in America will require an academic degree or vocational certification.

HBCUs, HSIs, and TCUs have a long history and successful track record of partnering with community-based organizations to provide employment training opportunities for hard-to-employ individuals in new and emerging employment fields. Through Congressman Grijalva's bill, MSIs can enhance and expand these partnerships in breadth and scope. By working with community-based organizations, MSIs can create and expand employment and career options for persons seeking employment not only inside, but outside of the 4-year education network and those unable for a variety of reasons to access education training beyond the community college level.



We thank you for your favorable consideration of this request, and we again thank you for making jobs creation a national priority. We stand ready to assist in any manner of means.

Sincerely,



Lezli Baskerville, Esquire
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Carrie Billy, Esquire
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