

**A SHARED VISION - HBCUs WHOLE COMMUNITY APPROACH:
*The Case for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training***

Job opportunities in the field of emergency management are expected to grow exponentially as the number and gravity of natural disasters increase.

The wildfires in California; devastating Hurricanes -Katrina Matthew, Irma, Maria, and now Dorian; are illustrative of what we can expect in the future, according to experts in the field.

Now, regardless of socioeconomic status, Communities of Color are most often impacted by natural disasters. Case in point! Many of our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are located in disaster prone areas and thus; suffer the brunt of associated catastrophes. And, for these communities, resilience is not just about survival and bouncing back! It is about being able to thrive in the long term.

Regrettably, members of these communities are woefully underrepresented in the emergency management field. This fact may be explained by the relative newness of the field.

The first emergency management degree was granted over two decades ago! However, today, the field is established, and is growing.

Still, fewer than 10% of all US institutions of higher learning offer training in emergency management. And only 12 of the 102 HBCUs do so. (most are certificate or stand-alone courses! There is only 1 with a MS degree in Emergency Management; and none with a PhD)

Furthermore, even within the existing ranks of the profession of emergency management; Communities of Color lag way behind.

Representation IN THIS FIELD is below the proportion of the group's percentage of the total population. This, arguably, limits the efficacy of the current services being provided to this group of individuals.

To be effective in addressing the persistent challenges of diversity, inclusion and equity, there must be an opportunity for students to become actively involved.

Howard University has partnered with national organizations to establish the **HBCU Emergency Management Workforce Consortium**.

This Consortium seeks to boost engagement by African Americans in the field of emergency management by supporting opportunities to provide Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) to students. Our goal is at least 10% of all students at HBCUs to be CERT trained, within the next 5 years.

The core HBCU Consortium represents individuals from the following organizations:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- ***HBCU Law Enforcement Executives and Administrators (HBCU-LEEA, Inc)***

In preparation for meeting our 10% goal in the next 5 years; we conducted a nationwide needs assessment of HBCUs. The results yielded the following:

a response rate of 26 institutions (27%).

Of that cohort, only 2 have CERT on their campuses.

Most are unaware of CERT and of those who do not know what CERT is

Comments given by Dr. Goulda Downer at [Emergency Management Region III Higher Education Academic Collaboration](#) event **Wednesday, September 4, 2019.**

We have since reached out to this cohort (NC Central, Fayetteville State, Shaw, St. Augustine and [Elizabeth City Universities](#)) to inform them about CERT. And have begun in earnest to actively engage campus leaders as well as local emergency managers, regional emergency managers, and Cooperative Extension Educators to implement this vision.

We view the benefit of CERT training as being two-fold for the HBCUs:

1. Workforce strengthening - it may serve as an entrée into a stable, viable profession;
and
2. Culturally competent safer communities – CERT training may concomitantly allow students to relate to People of Color in an emergency situation through a culturally appropriate lens, and in so doing, see themselves as future emergency managers.

Our ultimate **partnership** goal is to coordinate with HBCUs in all seven FEMA Regions where they are housed and encourage each to offer CERT. We also posit that a more culturally applicable CERT program would increase interest among HBCU students and boost the probability of completing the training and staying engaged afterwards. Our 10-year goal is to have at least 50% of all HBCU students trained.

We are convinced that our innovative young adults will bring new perspectives to addressing the issue of emergency management in this 21st century and beyond

And together we can help strengthen their capacity to play a greater role in this emerging field and in so doing safeguard their communities; our country and indeed our world.