

## **CERT-HBCU White Paper:** January 2019

Job opportunities in the field of emergency management are expected to grow exponentially as the number and gravity of natural disasters increase, with the recent wildfires in California and Hurricanes Matthew and Irma as illustrative examples. Another factor is the rapid change is the retirement of the baby boomer generation which opens up adds more positions for the students with emergency management degrees. Entry level workers in the emergency management field who possess a bachelor's degree command a median annual salary of \$70,000 and this figure grows with experience and training. In many cases, communities of color are most impacted by natural disasters. And for these communities, resilience is not just about survival and bouncing back; 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, with the first emergency management degree being granted roughly two decades ago. However, today the field is established and growing but there are currently fewer than 5% of all US institutions of higher learning offer training in emergency management, and only 12 of the 104 HBCUs do so. Furthermore, even within the ranks of emergency management professionals Communities of Color lag way behind in being representative of the general U.S. population; arguably limiting the efficacy of the current services being provided.

Howard University, the nation's premier HBCU seeks to boost engagement of persons of color in the field of emergency management by proposing the delivery of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training to students at all HBCUs. CERT training provides education on disaster preparedness and equips trainees to address hazards in their communities and deploy basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations as needed. The training which is two and half hours in duration is available free of charge and students who complete it are certified to serve as volunteers and assist with local emergencies in their communities. The benefit of the training is two-fold. It serves as a valuable entrée to what could potentially be a stable, viable profession while concomitantly allowing students to relate to the field of emergency management through a culturally appropriate lens. Essentially having the ability to relate to and pursue the emergency manager career path (seeing themselves as emergency managers) through the lens of people of color serving as emergency managers.

Merely talking about the field is inadequate! To be effective and address the persistent challenges of diversity, inclusion and equity, there must be an opportunity for students to become actively involved and a commitment to supporting needed actions. Furthermore, our young adults bring new perspectives to addressing the issue of emergency management and can help strengthen their capacity to play a greater role in this emerging field. Doing so however, requires taking a leadership role and revitalizing the dynamics of the EM profession. Howard University proposes to coordinate with each of the ten (10) FEMA Regions and the White House Initiative on HBCUs to offer the training to students Nationwide.