UNCF Celebrates 75 Years of Investing in Better Futures at National DC Gala

Raising $3.4 million for historically black colleges and universities and deserving students

WASHINGTON (PRWEB) March 13, 2019 -- During an historic night—in more ways than one—UNCF (United Negro College Fund) celebrated its 75th anniversary at its national UNCF “A Mind is…” Gala in Washington, DC, March 7. The event helped the storied organization reach new fundraising heights, raising more than it ever has during a single event—$3.4 million—for UNCF’s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The event, whose title echoes the group’s iconic motto, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste,”® celebrated the founding of the organization by Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) president Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson with backing from corporate leaders led by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Coca Cola President Robert W. Woodruff.

“There are millions of Americans who, over 75 years, have invested in UNCF and better futures for our students, and through that success, for all of us,” said Dr. Michael L. Lomax, president and CEO of UNCF. “Tonight, we raise the resources our HBCUs need to do their invaluable work. Tonight, we fund scholarships that narrow the gap between college costs and family resources. And together, we change the narrative of our HBCUs, who help strengthen and elevate a new generation of young, black and gifted students.”

The impressive evening’s success was largely due to the overwhelming support from the gala attendees, including UNCF President’s Award recipient Robert F. Smith, who announced a challenge match for funds raised on-site, and a special check presentation from UNCF’s long-time advocate, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

The 2019 national honorees are notable UNCF donors and supporters from across the country who came together to celebrate this UNCF milestone and further advance the organization’s mission to get students to and through college. The UNCF President’s Award recipients included Smith, founding director and president of the Fund II Foundation, and The Ray Charles Foundation. Senior executives at Coca Cola, Exxon Mobil, and JPMorgan Chase, companies that have backed UNCF continuously since its founding, were honored with the UNCF Keepers of the Flame Award. And Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chair U.S. Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA) accepted the UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Award on behalf of the CBC for its long and effective support of African American education.

Since its founding, UNCF has raised more than $4.8 billion and has helped nearly half a million students earn degrees at UNCF-member HBCUs. “There’s another message in UNCF’s 75th anniversary celebration,” Lomax added. “In a country whose population is rapidly trending majority-minority, and at a time when a college education is more important—and more expensive—than ever, UNCF’s biggest challenges are ahead.” UNCF annually awards more than 10,000 scholarships, Lomax noted, but for every scholarship it awards, it must turn away nine potential leaders for lack of funding. “We owe—and our country owes—those nine the support they need to go to and through college,” Lomax said. “As we celebrate our 75th anniversary, we commit to fulfilling that obligation.”

More than 1,100 people attended the celebration, including UNCF’s 37 member institution presidents; the Honorable Muriel E. Bowser, mayor, Washington, DC; Vernon E. Jordan, Esq., civil rights activist and former executive director of UNCF; Adrian Fenty, former mayor of Washington, DC; and Johnathan Holifield, executive director, White House Initiative on HBCUs.
Also attending were members of the U.S. House of Representatives, including many from the Congressional Black Caucus. Members attending were:

- U.S. Rep. David Trone (D-MD)
- U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) (chairman, House Committee on Education and Labor)
- U.S. Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC)
- U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-OH)
- U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA)
- U.S. Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD)
- U.S. Rep. Val Butler Demings (D-FL)
- U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-NC)
- U.S. Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL)
- U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT)
- U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)
- U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL)
- U.S. Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI)
- U.S. Rep. Al Lawson (D-FL)
- U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA)
- U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore (WI)
- U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)
- U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA)

To view images from this event, visit UNCF.org/75th. Follow UNCF on social media @UNCF #UNCF75 #UNCF.

About UNCF
UNCF (United Negro College Fund) is the nation’s largest and most effective minority education organization. To serve youth, the community and the nation, UNCF supports students’ education and development through scholarships and other programs, strengthens its 37 member colleges and universities, and advocates for the importance of minority education and college readiness. UNCF institutions and other historically black colleges and universities are highly effective, awarding nearly 20 percent of African American baccalaureate degrees. UNCF awards more than $100 million in scholarships annually and administers more than 400 programs, including scholarship, internship and fellowship, mentoring, summer enrichment, and curriculum and faculty development programs. Today, UNCF supports more than 60,000 students at more than 1,100 colleges and universities across the country. Its logo features the UNCF torch of leadership in education and its widely recognized motto, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.”® Learn more at UNCF.org, or for continuous updates and news, follow UNCF on Twitter at @UNCF.
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