

NATIONAL SPONSORED PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATORS ALLIANCE

FROM SPONSORED RESEARCH TO WORKFORCE STRATEGY

REIMAGINING THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF WORK

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The U.S. Talent Pipeline is *Leaky, Broken, and Busted*



K-12



Higher
Education



Sponsored
Research



Workforce

Education & employers operating in separate silos — *research rarely reaches workforce application*

Federal funding is becoming more **competitive**, **politicized**, and *financially uncertain*

Students graduate without clear pathways; employers *can't find talent with the right skill mix*

The Stakes Have Changed



48%

of graduates feel
unprepared for
entry-level jobs



\$50B+

in federal research
funding—increasingly
competitive & volatile



6.5M

open U.S. jobs yet
7.5M Americans
unemployed

Sponsored programs offices are no longer just grant administrators.

They are workforce strategy hubs for the 21st -century economy.

Federal Funding

The Federal Funding Risk Is Real



Flat or Declining Budgets

Federal R&D appropriations have not kept pace with the growing number of competing institutions and principal investigators.



Political Volatility

Funding priorities shift with each administration. Research agendas tied exclusively to federal dollars are vulnerable to sudden redirection or cancellation.



Indirect Cost Pressure

F&A rate negotiations are increasingly contentious, squeezing the operational margin that sustains institutional research infrastructure.



Compliance Complexity

Regulatory burdens continue to expand, diverting sponsored programs capacity from strategic partnership development to administrative overhead.

Interdisciplinary Education as Workforce Preparation

Integrated Intelligence

Foster graduates who integrate technical expertise with contextual understanding



Integrated Excellence

Reward integration of disciplines—not just deep specialization in one

Context Driven Learning

Blend history, business, policy, and STEM to develop critical thinking and adaptability



Adaptive Expertise

Engineers who understand ethics. Scientists who communicate. Data analysts who grasp human behavior.

"The future workforce belongs to people who can connect disciplines -- not just master one."

—Emily M. Dickens

The Skills Gap



Technical Skills

- Hard skills taught in classrooms
- STEM, data, engineering, science
- Research methodology & analysis
- Technical writing & communication

Power Skills

- Emotional Intelligence
- Creativity & Innovation
- Adaptability
- Communication
- Collaboration & Teamwork
- Critical Thinking
- Self-Management / Resourcefulness

Employers need more than degrees—they need a well-rounded mix of skills.



A New Model: Deep Industry Engagement



Traditional Model	Industry-Connected Model
Advisory boards for optics	Industry co-designs research agendas
One-time donations & naming rights	Multi-year research partnerships with deliverables
Occasional guest speakers	Professionals embedded in labs and studios
Faculty consult industry sometimes	Faculty rotate into employer environments
Grants fund basic research	Grants + contracts + commercialization
Students hope to be hired	Students are pipeline talent from day one

Move beyond advisory boards. Build living, working partnerships that generate research outcomes **AND** talent.

You Are More Than Grant Managers

Sponsored programs professionals sit at the intersection of funding, innovation, partnerships, and institutional strategy.

Ecosystem Architects

Design the infrastructure that connects research, talent, and industry into a sustainable innovation network.



Funding Diversifiers

Move beyond sole federal reliance —build portfolios of federal, foundation, venture, and industry contracts.



Workforce Translators

Bridge the gap between research outputs and the labor market skills employers actually need.



Partnership Brokers

Identify, negotiate, and sustain relationships with industry partners who co-invest in talent and research.



Commercialization Catalysts

Connect research discoveries with pathways to startups, licensing, and regional economic development.



Strategic Advisors

Reframe compliance expertise as strategic counsel—helping leadership ask bigger questions about research impact.



The HBCU Opportunity:

Built -In Strengths



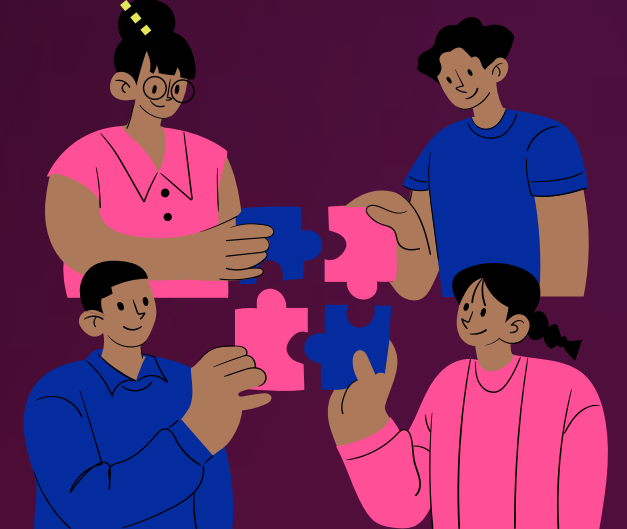
Community-centered innovation rooted in mission



Long history of doing more with less—and excelling



Proven engines of economic mobility and talent development



Leadership pipelines that navigate complexity and change

Faculty Engagement with Employers: Teaching Hard Skills and Power Skills

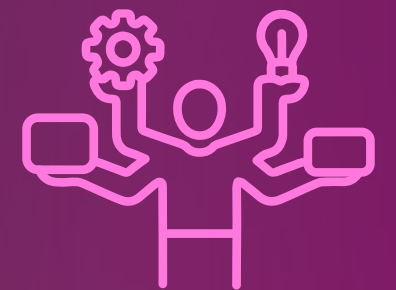
Embed Faculty in Workplaces

Allow faculty to spend sustained time inside industry environments—understanding operational realities firsthand.



Bring Industry Into the Classroom

Invite professionals to teach, present, and co-design curriculum on specific real-world challenges.



Reimagine Career Services

Invite HR leaders to transform career offices into mentorship, sponsorship, and hiring pipeline hubs.



Time Is the Currency

Don't only ask industry for money. Their time embedded in your institution is exponentially more valuable.



Co-Design Research Agendas

HR and employer leaders help universities understand the evolving skills landscape—then fund research around it.



SHRM + NSBA Model

National employer-driven work underscores the power of aligning classroom learning with workplace expectations.



Embedding an Entrepreneurial Mindset Across Disciplines

Entrepreneurship is no longer limited to starting a business —it's a mindset rooted in curiosity, resilience, innovation, and ownership.



Founders

Launch ventures from research discoveries



Intrapreneurs

Drive innovation within organizations



Researchers

Commercialize findings into workforce solutions



Community Leaders

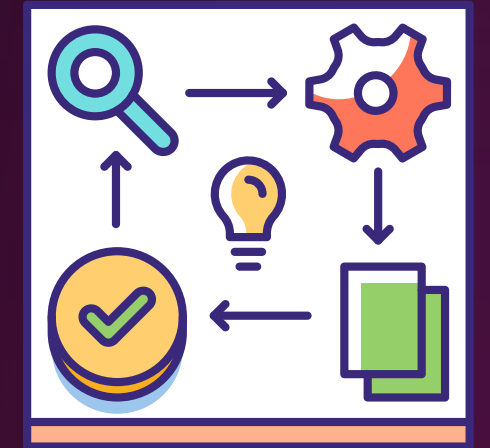
Address local economic challenges with research

Positions HBCUs and minority-serving institutions as *engines of regional economic growth and entrepreneurial talent.*

The HBCU Opportunity: *The Opportunity Ahead*



Build research
commercialization pipelines
from existing discoveries



Connect entrepreneurship
centers with workforce
strategy offices



Align sponsored research
with regional economic
development priorities



Diversify funding well
beyond sole reliance on
federal appropriations

Ask a Different Question.



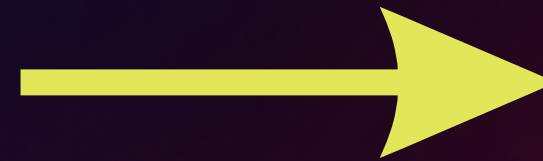
Old: What grants can we pursue?



New: *What workforce challenges can we help solve?*



Old: How do we secure federal dollars?



New: *How do we build sustainable industry partnerships?*



Old: How do we fund research?



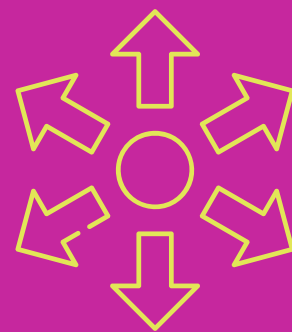
New: *How does research translate to talent and economic mobility?*

That is not mission drift. That is mission evolution.

SHRM is here *to help*

SHRM E² INITIATIVE

Connect learning to workforce readiness through employer-driven pathways. Build talent pipelines grounded in skills, adaptability, and opportunity.



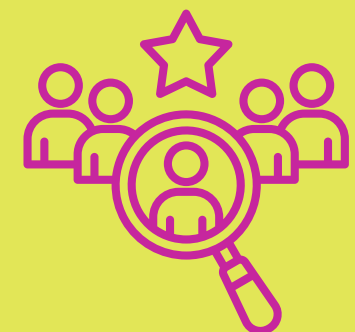
SKILLS FIRST SPECIALTY CREDENTIAL

Help organizations hire for capability, readiness, and potential.

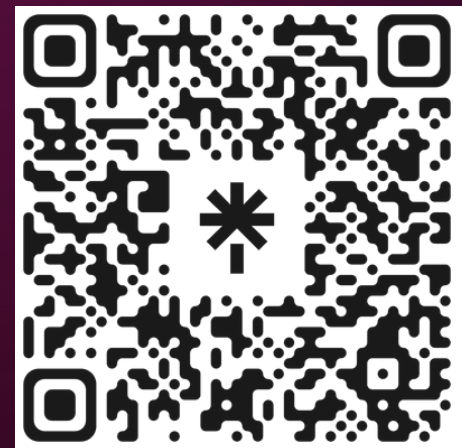


TALENT ACQUISITION SPECIALTY CREDENTIAL

Modern recruiting strategies for a tighter labor market.



The organizations that win the future of work will not fish in a smaller pond. *They will build a bigger one.*

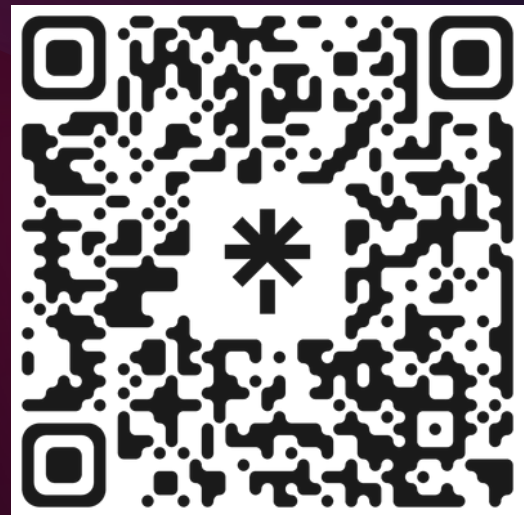


THANK YOU

Contact Information

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Scan to connect and learn more about
SHRM's E² Initiative



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