

SUCCESS STORY

The Historically Black Colleges/Universities Consortium


Program Overview

The Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU) Consortium is one of several organizations funded by the NIEHS Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP). Implemented by a collaboration between the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) and Texas Southern University, the HBCU Consortium aims to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged workers and communities. The consortium accomplishes this through education and training and by increasing career and employment opportunities in the fields of environmental cleanup, construction, hazardous waste removal, and emergency response.

The HBCU Consortium delivers comprehensive worker training in New Orleans, and through partners in Houston, Detroit, and Pensacola.

Training Strategy

To fulfill its mission, the HBCU Consortium utilizes the NIEHS ECWTP training strategy, which includes three components: life and job readiness skills training and introduction to hazardous materials; technical training with accreditations and certifications; and job placement. Life skills training is a hallmark of the NIEHS ECWTP and is fundamental to trainees' success. Trainees receive guidance on time management, conflict resolution, and other topics related to professional and personal development. After receiving life skills and job readiness training, and an introduction to hazardous materials, trainees then become eligible for technical training. Technical skills instructors provide trainees with the information necessary for placement in an environmental or construction career with key worker accreditations and certifications.



The HBCU Consortium's New Orleans
Graduating Class of 2021

Building Partnerships

When building partnerships, the HBCU Consortium embraces what they refer to as a “communiversity model”. This model includes collaboration between community-based

In partnership with communities, the DSCEJ has developed and implemented projects focused on assessing environmental conditions, preventing environmental harm, conducting environmental cleanup, managing disaster recovery and rebuilding, and conducting worker training programs.

organizations, academia, and community members. All training partners collaborate with communities and employers that are in disadvantaged areas and located in close proximity to dangerous polluting facilities.

The HBCU Consortium and its partners are [equipped to meet urgent community needs](#) in times of crisis.

Training partners have responded to several disasters and emergencies, including Hurricane Katrina, the Deepwater Horizon Gulf Oil spill, Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Ida, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning in 2022, the HBCU Consortium expanded recruitment and training into rural and more hard to reach areas in Louisiana, including the St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist Parishes. This expansion is a key aspect of ECWTP’s [participation in the Justice40 Initiative](#).

Detroit and Pensacola

In Detroit and Pensacola, the HBCU Consortium implements training in conjunction with Green Door Initiative, and Unity in the Family Ministry, respectively. Both nonprofits specialize in environmental education, workforce development, and training for green jobs, and connecting trainees with employers. For example, in Detroit, the Green Door Initiative recently began collaborating with Great Lakes Restoration, which leads efforts to protect and restore the water quality in the Great Lakes region. In Pensacola, Unity in the Family Ministry recently began working with Bio-One, a new company that offers decontamination and cleanup services in the area, to promote the hiring of ECWTP trainees.

Houston

In Houston, the HBCU Consortium works with organizations that enhance student learning and employers looking to hire ECWTP trainees. The 2020 class was the first to benefit from a new relationship with the City of Houston’s Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security. The City of Houston provided Community Emergency Response Training for disaster response skills such as team organization, disaster medical operations, fire safety, and light search and rescue. A group of HBCU Consortium trainees served as volunteers for a restoration team, assisting with the construction of a home that was damaged during Hurricane Harvey, while learning basic construction skills. This work is scheduled to continue for future disaster response and recovery efforts.

New Orleans

In New Orleans, DSCEJ has worked closely with small businesses and employers that are looking for trained and work-ready individuals to work as asbestos, lead, and mold remediation and HAZMAT workers. Many trainees have been placed in various positions in chemical plants, oil refineries, military facilities, and universities along the Gulf Coast. It has been noted that the combination of mold and asbestos abatement training qualifies trainees to conduct remediation work after major disasters such as hurricanes and flooding.



Damage to homes in New Orleans from Hurricane Ida trapped water inside houses, allowing mold colonies to form.

A partnership with the New Orleans nonprofit CARE resulted in an all-female class of trainees, all of whom were heavily impacted by Hurricane Ida, and successfully completed mold remediation training. This special partnership allowed HER Restoration Solutions, LLC, to employ the trainees for a remediation project at a church in New Orleans and a home in LaPlace, Louisiana, both of which were heavily damaged by the hurricane.

DSCEJ worked with CARE and local faith-based organizations to train New Orleans residents in mold remediation during the aftermath of Hurricane Ida.



A major contributor to the success of the program is providing trainees with a combination of certifications in: HAZWOPER, asbestos and lead abatement, mold remediation, and 10-hour and/or 40-hour courses in weatherization and construction.

Looking Ahead to New Partnerships

To meet trainee needs, the HBCU Consortium will continue to expand partnerships with community leaders, employers, and non-profit organizations. These partnerships will enable the HBCU Consortium to deliver training that provides trainees with marketable employment skills and knowledge to ensure a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

In-person, virtual, or blended training, (a combination of in-person and virtual), will continue to be employed in the future. DSCEJ trainers will provide more hands-on activities to enhance the training experience, thereby offering more realistic and job-like scenarios in a classroom setting.

Building the Environmental Workforce

From 2017 to 2021, the HBCU Consortium trained a total of 551 individuals, with an average job placement rate of 85%. In 2022, the job placement rate rose to 100% across all four training sites. Trainees were placed in jobs that include asbestos abatement, construction, and environmental technician work. Examples of specific jobs trainees have been placed in are included in the table below.

Job Title	Pay
Asbestos Abatement Worker	\$30 per hour plus benefits
Assistant Construction Project Manager*	\$46 per hour plus benefits
Lead Abatement Worker	\$16 per hour plus benefits
HAZMAT Worker	\$18 per hour plus benefits

* Trainee hired as an assistant construction project manager managing multiple job sites in Michigan and Ohio.

Training participation steadily increased from 2016 to 2019 then decreased slightly due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, life skills training was delivered virtually. The technical skills training included a hybrid of virtual and in-person training. The highest job placement rate took place in 2019, at approximately 95%, before dipping down to 88% in 2020. Both trainee participation and the percentage of currently employed trainees are now beginning to rise back up to pre-pandemic numbers.

COVID-19 posed many barriers for trainees who have limited access to computers or Internet. However, the HBCU Consortium leveraged partnerships with community centers and churches to increase reach and deliver in-person training.

Feedback Shows Training is Effective

Results from surveys distributed to trainees in 2021 following life skills and technical training courses across all HBCU Consortium training sites highlight key accomplishments:

- 100% of the students stated they will receive a higher likelihood of employment, more hours, and greater hourly wages because of the training.
- 100% of trainees felt they would be receiving higher earnings than high school dropouts and even those with a high school diploma.
- 100% of the students felt the training provided information concerning environmental justice issues in their communities.

In New Orleans, a site-specific survey question revealed that 95% of trainees believed the program provided pre-employment job training, including literacy and life skills that helped them to change their mindset, prioritize and set new goals, and put their past behind them.

Through the HBCU Consortium's unique training approach, individuals who may have been systematically left behind are given the opportunity to join the workforce in a way that benefits the environment and their communities. They are given a chance to succeed and lead a healthy, productive lifestyle.

Trainee Success Stories

DSCEJ, New Orleans

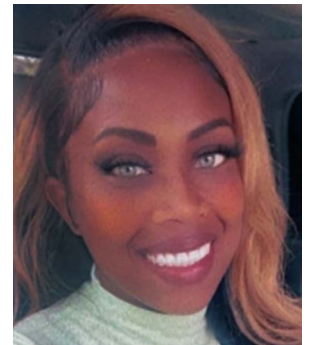
Kendra Graves, a single mother of seven kids, graduated from the DSCEJ ECWTP in 2020. She was named “Best All Around Student” for her excellent performance in all aspects of the training. After graduation, Graves went on to work for various contractors in the asbestos and mold remediation industries for two years.

Immediately following Hurricane Ida, Graves applied to become a Louisiana licensed mold remediation contractor. She is now the owner of HER Restoration Solutions, LLC. Graves started the company after her home was heavily damaged due to the hurricane and because many neighbors needed help restoring their homes after the storm.

Around the same time, Graves was asked to partner with DSCEJ and CARE to assist with a mold remediation initiative. She assisted with outreach and recruitment of an all-female class, helped mentor them, and then employed them to conduct mold remediation on a full-time basis.

Graves reported that she grossed almost \$150k doing mold remediation and water restoration just a few months following the hurricane and receiving her license. She was recently featured on the Work Green, Earn Green podcast episode, Keeping Louisiana’s Head Above Water. During that podcast she stated the following:

“The program, to me, was a life changer and the best thing I could [have] ever done. I would recommend it to anyone because it’s not just a program to just get you a job but it actually teaches you a different way of living and it did that for me.”

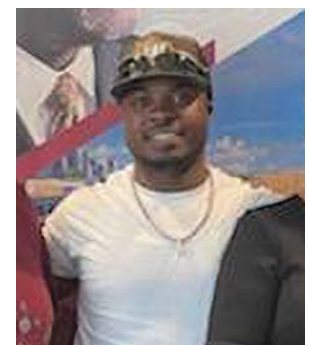


“The program, to me was a life changer and the best thing I could [have] ever done.”

Texas Southern University, Houston

Brandyn Duff is a 2021 graduate of the Texas Southern University ECWTP who has excelled since his graduation. Prior to graduation from the program in April 2021, he had already secured employment with Clean Harbors Environmental and Industrial Services. Since then, Duff has traveled to and worked in six different states and a with variety of environmental companies, including, but not limited to, Koch, the U.S. Department of Defense, Renewable Energy Group, and Lockheed Martin. Several of his job functions have included Munitions Decon Technician, Crew Leader, Team member for site planning, Atmospheric Monitoring Technician, and Hazardous Material Handler. Duff’s most recent position took him to Europe, where he worked in Poland on a contract with the U.S. Department of Defense.

“I learned professionalism, goal setting, foundational principals in each discipline and sound assistance on my career path. The staff was knowledgeable and very supportive. The information I gained has helped me in life and on job situations. I have become a go to for insight into process, procedures, safety planning, and advisement. As a result, I am making plans to open a consulting firm in the near future. I would like to say thank you to each instructor and most certainly to Ms. Lynch, Ms. Carter, and Dr. Bullard.”



“The training program is unmatched with the information that I received.”

Unity in the Family Ministry, Pensacola

Brian McCreary came to the ECWTP in Pensacola five days after being discharged from the U.S. Navy. He heard about the program from his grandmother who attended a church service where someone was promoting the program. McCreary contacted Unity in the Family Ministry about his plans to enroll and participated in a phone interview. Arriving in Pensacola in January 2019, he showed determination and an eagerness to be at the top of the class. During his time in the program, McCreary became a new father, and took a job with Dunkin Donuts to support his new family. He completed the training program, received the title “Student of the Year,” and was hired by Cross Environmental Services in Crystal Springs, Florida. His initial work assignment was for three months, working on average 10-hour days, six days per week, at a pay rate of \$14.00 per hour. In 2020, UIFM recommended him for a fire sprinkler installation position with Living Water Fire Protection Company. After two years of employment, he is now a supervisor earning \$28.00 per hour.



HBCU Consortium training direction and activities are jointly managed by Texas Southern University in Houston and the DSCEJ in New Orleans. Co-directors Robert Bullard, Ph.D. and Beverly Wright, Ph.D., work with Consortium members to build partnerships that will enhance the Consortium’s reach and training outcomes.

Related Links

[NIEHS Environmental Career Worker Training Program](#)

[Historically Black Colleges and Universities Climate Change Consortium](#)

[Deep South Center for Environmental Justice](#)

[Texas Southern University](#)

Program Contact Information

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Inc.

9801 Lake Forest Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70127

Phone: (504) 272-0956 • Fax: (504) 372-3473

Green Door Initiative

7650 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48202

Phone: (313) 922-8055 • Email: info@greendoorinitiative.org

Unity In The Family Ministry, Inc.

615 N. W Street, Pensacola, FL 32534

Dr. Calvin Avant, Pastor—Phone: (850) 433-9377 • Fax: (850) 434-9277

Texas Southern University ECWTP

3100 Cleburne St., E.O. Bell Building B15, Houston, TX 77004

Bertina Carter—Phone: (713) 313-1406 • Email: bertina.carter@tsu.edu

Paulette Lynch—Phone: (713) 313-7348 • Email: paulette.lynch@tsu.edu