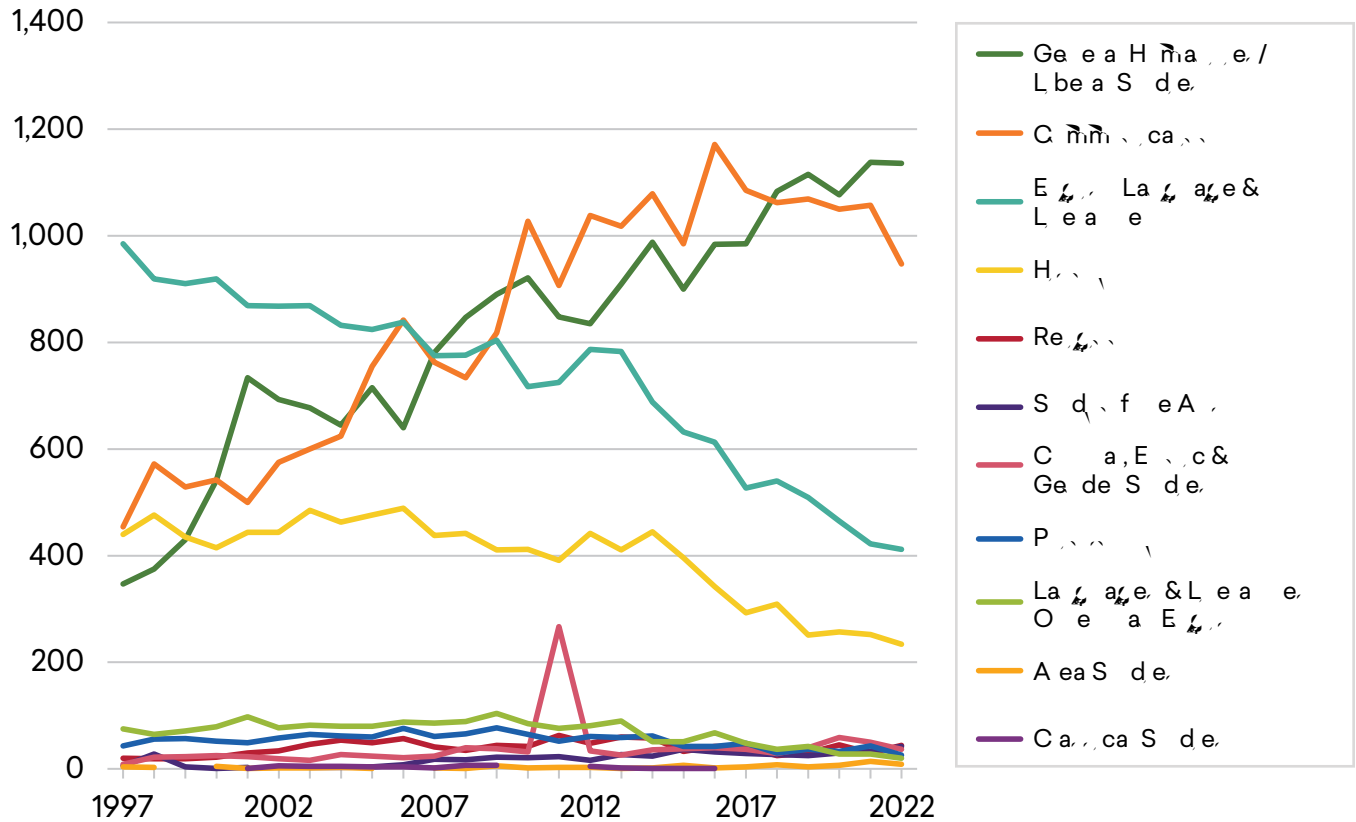




Dwayne Mack, chair of the program, reported that

**Figure 2: Humanities, Business, and Health Sciences Degrees Awarded by HBCUs, 1997-2022**



Conversely, HBCUs have seen a significant decline in the number of degrees completed in most of the other humanities disciplines. Bachelor's degrees in English language and literature had a particularly sharp decline, falling from 985 degrees in 1997 to 412 in 2022. (Their share of all humanities bachelor's degrees granted by HBCUs shrank from 41.3% to 14.2% over the same period.) Degrees in languages and literatures other than English fell by more than half (from 75 to 20 degrees). The number of history and philosophy degrees also fell substantially (from 440 to 234 for history and from 43 to 26 for philosophy).

HBCUs stand out from other colleges and universities for the relatively large number of vocational degrees they award (primarily in social work and

criminal justice). The number of degrees awarded in that category increased 39% from 1997 to 2022. Degree completions in health and medical sciences also increased substantially, rising 42% over the same period. But other vocationally oriented programs saw declines. Bachelor's degrees awarded in education declined 36% from 1997 to 2022, while business and management degree completions dropped 10%. All other fields awarded more bachelor's degrees in 2022 than they did in 1997, with the largest percentage increase occurring in the fine and performing arts (up 69.6%). For most fields, however, the more recent trend was downward, with only engineering and the natural sciences experiencing growth in degree completions over the past decade (rising by 54% and 18%, respectively, from 2012 to 2022).

The effect of these trends is apparent when one looks at the field's "market share" at HBCUs relative to other colleges and universities (see figure 3). The shares of bachelor's degrees being awarded in the humanities has converged at both types of institutions. In 1997, the humanities accounted for just 8.1% of the bachelor's degrees awarded at HBCUs but then increased to 10.6% of the degrees conferred in 2010. In comparison, at all other colleges and universities in 1997, the humanities accounted for 14.3% of the bachelor's degrees awarded, with that share growing to 14.9% in 2005. But while the share of humanities bachelor's degrees awarded at non-HBCUs shrank by more than a third after the mid-2000s, the decline that began at HBCUs five years later was more gradual. As a result, the two trends

converged in 2022, with the humanities accounting for 8.8% of the bachelor's degrees awarded at

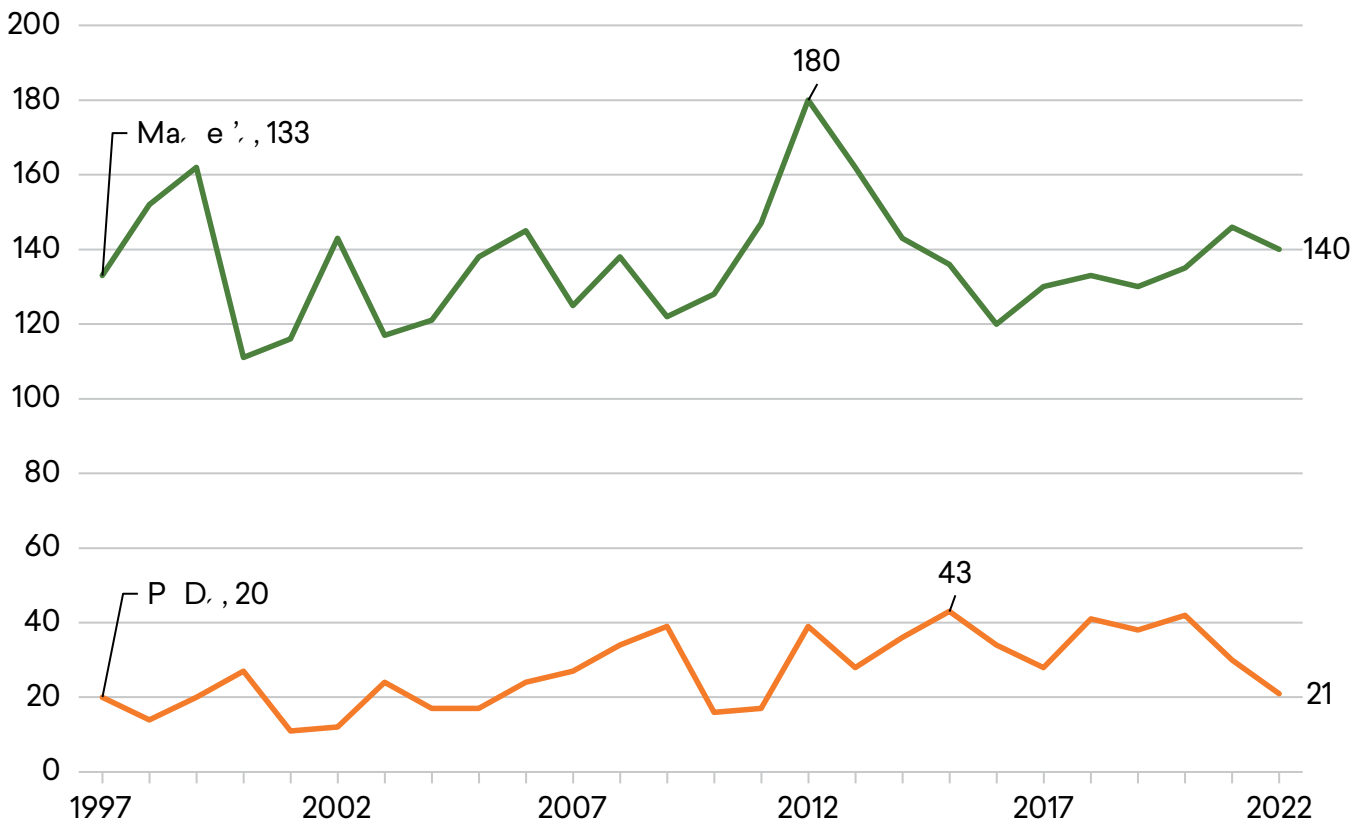
**Figure 4: Share of Humanities Degrees Awarded to Historically Minoritized Students at HBCUs and Non-HBCUs, 1997-2022**

This decline is due primarily to recent growth in the share of humanities degrees awarded to traditionally minoritized students at non-HBCU institutions (see figure 4). From 1997 to 2022, the share of bachelor's degrees awarded by HBCUs that went to such students increased slightly, from 87% to 89%. In comparison, the share of humanities degrees awarded to historically minoritized students at non-HBCU institutions grew modestly from 1997 to 2009 (increasing from 17% to 21%), but then increased more rapidly over the next 12 years (to 36% of all humanities degrees conferred).

While most of the students receiving humanities degrees at HBCUs are Black/African American, a growing number are members of other minoritized racial or ethnic groups. In 2022, humanities degree

completers at HBCUs included 153 students from those populations, up from fewer than 50 prior to 2009 and accounting for 5% of the students receiving humanities bachelor's degrees at HBCUs.

**Figure 5: Humanities Graduate Degrees Awarded by HBCUs, 1997–2022**



fell to 120 degrees in 2016, followed by a partial recovery that brought the number up to 140 in 2022. Similarly, at the doctoral level, the number rose from a low of 11 humanities doctorates awarded in 2001 to a high of 43 in 2015, before a sharp decline after 2020 dropped PhDs awards to just 21 degrees. At both levels, the number of degree completions in 2022 was roughly the same as in 1997, but down substantially from the recent peak (a 22% decline in master’s degrees and a 51% decline in doctorates).

The humanities also accounted for a much smaller share of the graduate degrees being awarded at HBCUs (0.5% of all master’s and professional degrees awarded in 2022 and 0.6% of the doctoral degrees). Looking back to 1997 (the earliest data

point available), the shares of humanities degrees awarded in 2022 by HBCUs were slightly above the historical average for doctoral degrees and close to the average for master’s and professional degrees.

The number of HBCUs awarding graduate degrees has varied from year to year throughout the 25 years for which data are available. From 1997 to 2022, the number HBCUs awarding master’s and professional degrees in the humanities ranged from a low of 12 to a high of 19 (with 15 awarding such degrees in 2022). Only four HBCUs awarded doctoral degrees in the humanities during this time period (Clark Atlanta University, Howard University, Morgan State University, and Virginia University of Lynchburg), and the bulk of these degrees (60%) were awarded by Howard University.

## Endnotes

1. For more on the Humanities Departmental Survey, visit <https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/humanities-higher-education-surveys>. Findings from the most recent round of the survey will be available in April 2025.
2. For more on the history of HBCUs, see Roger L. Geiger, *The History of Higher Education: A Guide to the Field* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 467–78; and Jelani Favors, *See a Tree for the Forest: HBCUs, Black College Education, and Leadership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).
3. The Humanities Indicators uses the phrase “historically minoritized students” for students who are citizens or permanent residents and self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (non-Hispanic); Asian (non-Hispanic); Black or African American (non-Hispanic); Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic); and two or more races (non-Hispanic).

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**Statement:** *Historical Indicators, Release Brief: Tracking the Health of HBCUs* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, June 2024).

The Humanities Indicators is a nationally recognized source of nonpartisan information on the state of the humanities, providing researchers and policy-makers with better tools to answer basic questions about areas of concern in the field. Founded in 1780, the American Academy is both an honorary society that recognizes and celebrates the excellence of its members and an independent research center convening leaders from across disciplines, professions, and perspectives to address significant national and global challenges.

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