

Testimony of

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before the

Subcommittee on Science Technology and Space

**Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
United States Senate**

February 27, 2002

Testimony of Hon. William H. Gray, III before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space regarding S. 414, the NTIA Digital Network Technology Program Act, and the Digital Divide and Minority-serving Institutions.

February 25, 2002

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am William H. Gray, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). UNCF is America's oldest and most successful African American higher education assistance organization.

I am pleased to join my colleagues - representing the other minority higher education associations - to present UNCF's views and

recommendations for S. 414, "the NTIA Digital Network Program Act." I want to thank Chairman Hollings for allowing this hearing to take place, and for his strong support of S. 414. Chairman Hollings is very familiar with the needs and challenges faced by South Carolina's eight HBCUs, four of which are UNCF member institutions.

Let me also commend Chairman Wyden for calling this hearing so that we could have the chance to address one of the most critical issues affecting the education of minority students in America. I want to also thank our home Senator, Senator George Allen, who as Governor helped move Virginia into the high tech era, and who represents the state where UNCF's national headquarters is located.

Finally, I want to applaud the leadership that Senators Cleland and Stevens have given to this important issue. We at UNCF believe that providing public and private sector support for the acquisition of technology infrastructure, faculty development, training and the integration of technology into the curriculum are among the most important challenges facing private HBCUs. We are especially indebted to Senator Cleland for his willingness to listen to the concerns of UNCF's member institutions, including those in the Atlanta University Center (AUC).

While we have not yet conquered the chasm that separates the

college aspirations and opportunities for all of America's minority youth from their majority counterparts -- we are faced with a simultaneous and equally daunting challenge. The 'digital divide' threatens to deny minority students, our professors, and our institutions the competitive skills they need to overcome the remaining vestiges imposed by race and economic segregation in America.

The Department of Commerce's July 1999 report "Falling Through the Net - A Report on the Telecommunications and Information Technology Gap in America" first highlighted the economic and racial divide in the access of Americans to telephones, computers and the Internet. As then Secretary of Commerce Daley

pointed out "(E)nsuring access to the fundamental tools of the digital economy is one of the most significant investments our nation can make." As important as these tools are at home and in our elementary and secondary schools, America's colleges and universities represent the last bulwark of the nation's defense against technological illiteracy. We can ill-afford to produce college graduates who enter the workforce without mastering basic computer skills and understanding how information technology applies to their work or profession.

Let me describe the two areas that I hope the Members of this Committee, and the United States Senate as a whole, will consider as

they deliberate this legislation.

The Need for Enactment of S. 414

First, UNCF member institutions and other HBCUs enroll large numbers of poor students, whose parents are unable to help pay college costs. In fact, 50 percent of all UNCF students come from families with incomes less than \$35,000. Almost ninety percent of all UNCF students receive some form of federal financial assistance, and sixty percent of UNCF students are first-generation college students. It

is clear, then, that the confluence of these demographic factors make virtually certain that many UNCF students will have their first exposure to computers and to the Internet when they arrive on the college campus.

Second, for many institutions that enroll large numbers of minorities, making up the digital deficits at home and at school constitutes a real financial challenge. The inability of institutions to finance the acquisition of needed technology infrastructure creates another digital divide. Compared to other colleges, private black colleges have very small endowments and cannot fall back on sizeable numbers of wealthy alumni. The average endowment of UNCF schools

for the 1998-1999 academic year was \$22.229 million. Larger, well-financed institutions have greater access to the funding necessary to purchase technology, than do smaller, private colleges with fewer resources.

HBCUs, then, face a dual digital challenge – they enroll a large number of students who are admitted to college with the least pre-enrollment exposure and knowledge of technology and the Internet, and the institutions that admit them face certain financial challenges in overcoming these digital deficits.

UNCF schools illustrate the challenges we face as a nation. In

August 2000, UNCF's testimony to the Web-based Commission, which I submit for the record, called attention to the plight of our students and member colleges:

- Only 15 percent of the 55,000 students attending UNCF member colleges and universities own computers;**
- College students nationally were more than twice as likely to have access to a college-owned computer than their private, HBCU counterparts -- one computer for every 2.6 students in higher education institutions nationally compared to one for every 6**

students at UNCF colleges and universities;

- **Seventy-one percent of faculty nationwide owned computers as compared to less than one-half of UNCF faculty;**
- **The number of network servers at UNCF colleges per 1,000 students is approximately one-half that of all colleges and universities nationally;**
- **Seventy-five percent of these servers, hubs, routers, and printers were obsolete or nearly obsolete and in need of replacement; and**

- **The rural and relatively isolated areas, in which many of these institutions are located, place an additional Internet access burden on those institutions.**

Let me describe what UNCF has done to help meet this challenge.

UNCF is Addressing the Digital Challenge

In January 2000, UNCF announced a partnership with Microsoft, IBM, AT & T and other major corporations and launched an \$80 million Technology Enhancement Capital

Campaign (TECC). The campaign was designed to strengthen the technological capacity of each of the 39 member colleges and universities in three significant ways.

First, TECC strengthened the technology capacity through modernizing each institution's technology platform and gave every student and faculty member access to computers. As a result of this campaign, all UNCF colleges and universities meet certain minimum technology standards, including increased network capacity and uniform systems that enable electronic learning among institutions. Technical support was given so that all wiring, equipment installation, and data migration and configuration of hardware - including system

testing – has been properly accomplished. This created equity in opportunity by making the same technology available to students attending UNCF member colleges and universities as is now available to students at majority institutions.

Second, on-campus training is being provided to a core group of campus officials who will then train others in the operation of all equipment. TECC also includes a faculty development component to assist faculty in integrating information technology into the curriculum and to assist faculty members in strengthening their research and

instructional techniques using technology.

Third, TECC is helping make technology more affordable for individual students and faculty. HBCU students, faculty, and staff can purchase computer hardware and software from major technology providers, such as Dell, IBM, Hewlett Packard and Microsoft, at discounted prices - as low as three hundred dollars - along with low-cost financing through UNCF's e-commerce web site, which was developed through a generous contribution of technical services from Electronic Data Services (EDS).

I am pleased to inform the Members of this Subcommittee that UNCF's TECC campaign is closing the digital divide on UNCF campuses. We have already exceeded our \$80 million TECC

campaign goal! Here are a few examples of the campus-based results of the TECC campaign:

- **In Florida, where we have three member colleges – Bethune-Cookman College, Edward Waters College, and Florida Memorial College – UNCF provided \$4,971,583 in technology funds. One example of the use of the funds is that Bethune-Cookman established a quality infrastructure for storage and distribution of applications and data.**
- **In North Carolina, there are six member colleges and universities – Johnson C. Smith University, Shaw University, St. Augustine’s College, Barber Scotia College, Bennett College**

and Livingstone College. Here we have invested \$10,858,475 in technology. With its portion of the funds, Johnson C. Smith University developed a print solution and a robust e-mail system

- **In Georgia, we have six UNCF colleges and universities – Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morris Brown College, Spelman College and Paine College. The total invested is \$15,155,069. At Clark Atlanta University, computer lab capability and access were enhanced, with improved security.**
- **In Virginia, there are two member institutions – St. Paul’s**

College and Virginia Union University, where UNCF funded \$1,983,539 in technology. As an example, Virginia Union University established a totally wireless campus and created mathematics computer labs for classroom teaching and accounting computer labs for teaching and student exercises.

- In Mississippi, there are two UNCF institutions – Tougaloo College and Rust College – that received a technology investment totaling \$2,782,911. Tougaloo College wired the campus buildings and upgraded desktops from outdated models for faculty, staff and computer labs.

- **In Texas, we have four member colleges – Paul Quinn College, Huston-Tillotson College, Jarvis Christian College and Wiley College. These institutions received from UNCF \$3,967,664. With their share of the technology funds, Paul Quinn College provided laptops to all full-time faculty and network drops for faculty to use in the classrooms.**

In addition, all 39 UNCF campuses have benefited from upgraded network infrastructures and increased access to technology for students, faculty and staff:

- **UNCF institutions have received hardware, including 2,000 desktop**

computers, almost 1,500 network printers and more than 1,200 network servers, as well as hundreds of hubs, switches and network routers, courtesy of Hewlett Packard, Cisco, Lexmark, and Dell;

- **The wiring of member institution campuses is completed - including over 3,800 network drops in learning centers and administrative and academic facilities and equipment installation and configuration; and**
- **Each UNCF member institution received 96,000 current versions of Microsoft software, including Windows 2000, Encarta Reference**

Suite 2000, Microsoft Office Suite 2000, and Encarta Africana 2000 courtesy of an `in-kind' gift from Microsoft.

For the record, Mr. Chairman, I am submitting the list of these contributors.

Our goal is to ensure that every student has a computer and knows how to use it and that every faculty member has a computer and has integrated technology into their curriculum. The results will be better prepared students ready for the technology age.

Notwithstanding this progress to date, there is a great deal more

to be done to eliminate the digital divide.

The Federal Role in Closing the Digital Divide

Technology is no longer the wave of the future - it is the way of the present. Every student who lacks access to current technology risks falling further behind. We believe S. 414, and its companion House bill, H.R. 1034, provide a crucial and necessary vehicle for directing federal resources to the solution of an urgent problem.

S. 414 provides direct grants to eligible institutions, or consortia of eligible institutions: (1) to acquire hardware and software; (2) to

build technology infrastructure, i.e. wiring, platforms and networks; and (3) to train institutional personnel to use both the software and hardware and to plan for the future use of technology. Based on UNCF's TECC campaign experience -- what our institutions need more than anything is the funding to purchase the instrumentation and to prepare students and institutional personnel for its usage. S. 414 will help provide those resources.

S. 414 encourages partnerships with the private sector, while avoiding the creation of a barrier to institutional progress. UNCF has experienced great success in securing private sector participation in

our TECC campaign. Major corporate donors have stepped up to the plate - contributing both cash and in-kind gifts. However, experience tells us the response has not been and will not be uniform. Therefore, we applaud S. 414's recognition of the need to waive the "matching" requirement for certain institutions. UNCF also recommends that the bill qualify private sector contributions made through organizations like UNCF to individual institutions as "matching" funds.

Finally, we urge the Committee to ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the equitable distribution of appropriated funds to the range of eligible institutions that will participate in the program.

UNCF is available to assist you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee as you proceed with consideration of the bill.

Again, I want to thank the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today, and to present the views of UNCF on this important legislation. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.