

COMMON CAUSE HBCU STUDENT ACTION ALLIANCE



REPORT

2022 – 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Program Overview
- 3 Spring 2022
- 4 Fall 2022
- 5 Spring 2023
- 6 Fellows highlights
- 7 Op-eds
- 8 Looking Ahead
- 9 Appreciations



INTRODUCTION

The **Common Cause North Carolina - HBCU Action Alliance** aims to strengthen North Carolina's democracy by activating, training, supporting, and uniting the next generation of civic leaders at our state's Historically Black Colleges and Universities as they work to hold power accountable at every level.

Program Pillars:

- Holding Power Accountable
- Organizational Development
- Political and civic education
- Skill-based leadership development

Campuses:

- Bennett College
- Elizabeth City State University
- Fayetteville State University
- Johnson C. Smith University
- Livingstone College
- NC A&T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- Saint Augustine's University
- Shaw University
- Winston-Salem State University

Common Cause North Carolina was founded more than 45 years ago and began its HBCU outreach program in 2005. With several organizations leading GOTV efforts at public Predominantly-White Institutions (PWIs) throughout the state, Common Cause NC started a program at public and private Historically-Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to elevate those voices that were—and remain—politically silenced.

Though our program connects with every HBCU institution across the state — from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte with an enrollment of less than 1,000 students to North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, the nation's largest HBCU with tens of thousands of students — there are a set of common objectives we strive for with every school. We seek to support students' holistic development as activists, leaders, and academics. This is facilitated through our paid campus Democracy Fellows and our strong relationships with campus administration.

Our program currently includes two full time staff: one College Outreach Program Manager, one regional College Outreach Coordinator. We also have regional Organizers focused primarily on community engagement in the multiple areas of the state home to HBCU campuses. In addition to our professional staff, our work is made possible by a talented and passionate group of student Democracy Fellows. with representation at every active HBCU in the state.



Starting in Spring 2022, our Fellows continued to focus on preparing their peers to vote. Students were responsible for social media outreach, community engagement, and GOTV activities. In the spring of 2023 we also created spaces for students, admins, and our team to discuss how to evolve our work for the elections ahead, including:

- **County Board of Elections Monitoring** to ensure accurate and transparent voter information, education and access during early voting and on Election Day, sussing out problems and ensuring voter confidence.
- **Recruiting and training HBCU students** for roving poll monitoring as well as providing support to the election protection hotline and post-election canvass monitoring.
- **Voter Registration Events and Drives** (including national voter registration day) in late summer/early fall to build momentum for early voting and Election Day events and participation.
- **Phone/Text banking/Canvassing:** utilizing our current database of student contacts as well as connecting with HBCU institutions to use their own systems to disseminate messages and information.
- **Student-led Education and Advocacy** (op-eds, town halls, webinars): The HBCU Student Alliance hosted multiple webinars throughout the summer and fall, to disseminate information about the election, train organizers about best practices and new tactics, and to mobilize students heading to the polls.
- **Training student government and college administrators and faculty** about digital organizing, campaigns, and creating connectivity amongst our schools to share resources and provide support.
- **Marches to the Polls/Parties at the Polls**, including dozens of on-campus events and actions in November 2022 alone.
- Created and distributed nearly 50,000 voter guides statewide, including major metros and rural hubs, and the HBCU campuses.
- **Extensive GOTV digital advertising**, including targeted Google and Social Media Paid Ads and radio ads in the regions home to some of the state's most marginalized voters (NE North Carolina).
- **In-person *Moore v. Harper* events in 60+ NC counties** to show how the US Supreme Court case impacts elections, and use it to energize voters, young and seasoned, to vote.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND FOCUS

- **Building Lifelong Commitment to Civic Engagement**
- **Voter Education and Training**
- **Increasing New Voter Participation through New Partnerships and Capacities.**
- **Boosting Voter Participation in Local Elections**
- **Listening and Learning from Students and Administrators**
- **Nurturing and Developing Leadership Skills among Democracy Fellows**
- **Fostering an Academically Rigorous Experience**



SPRING 2022 SEMESTER HIGHLIGHTS

In spring 2022 we faced many challenges—dealing with COVID-19, fighting to protect voting rights, and keeping democracy safe.

During the primary election, Common Cause NC and our partners produced nonpartisan voter guides for 10 areas around North Carolina, distributing 120,000 print editions of the guide and receiving thousands more visits to the online version of the guide. Our students collectively helped their community by hosting over 30 events to help educate, train, recruit, and mobilize their peers.

1 Marches/Bus to the Polls



3 Bennett College Candidate Forum



4 FSU Change Agent Cafe series educating students about redistricting, voter suppression, and other key issues



2 Spring Weeks of Action registering nearly 500 students



5 NCCU Phone Banks targeting voters of color aged 18-30



FALL 2022 SEMESTER HIGHLIGHTS

In the Fall 2022, we were able to hire 43 HBCU students – doubling the size of our traditional cohort of student leaders – to maximize our civic engagement efforts, including student-led mobilizing events, peer-to-peer trainings, and campus actions, as part of our overall HBCU GOTV work with partners like New North Carolina Project and NC Black Alliance. Our expanded program allowed us to connect with hundreds more HBCU students through coordinated events and actions, from marches to the polls to voter education drives on all 10 HBCU campuses. This election cycle we were also able to host our largest Election Protection effort in our HBCU program's 17-year history.

- 1** JCSU's community canvass, distributing voter guides and connecting with the community



- 3** 8th Annual HBCU Think Tank



- 2** Fayetteville State University recruiting and training poll monitors for Election Day



- 4** Shaw University's first post-COVID dorm storm to register students



- 5** Moore v. Harper bus trip to the US Supreme Court



SPRING 2023 SEMESTER HIGHLIGHTS

In Spring 2023, we began to prepare for first post COVID-19 HBCU Advocacy Day, which has long been a staple of our program. We had almost 50 students from 9 of 10 HBCUs in North Carolina. After advocacy day we took time to debrief from the election with students on the campuses we hosted events where we discussed Moore V Harper and focused on listening to the students and how we could support them in the next election cycle. Our students focused on their communities hosting forums, town halls, and webinars to both learn from and educate their peers about local issues from voting to food insecurity.

1 2023 HBCU Advocacy Day at the NCGA



2 HBCU Jeopardy nights to foster relationships and educate students about HBCU history



3 JCSU-hosted voter education town hall



4 Peoples Coalition Rally at the NC Supreme Court on March 14th



MEET OUR FELLOWS*

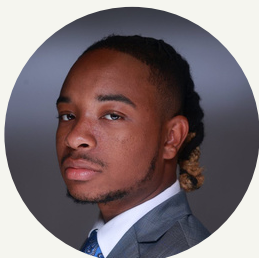
2022 - 2023



*not all are listed

FELLOWS HIGHLIGHTS

JAYLEN ROBINSON



"I became a Common Cause Fellow because I wanted to be the leader for my institution when it came to helping my fellow classmates go out and vote local and presidential elections as a minority in a era where they're trying to find ways to move our election polls and also encouraging them to have a voice when it comes to speaking about local/ major issues going on in the United States. --Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced- James Baldwin "

ALEXIS WOOD



"I became a Fellow to learn more about the power of voting and educating myself and my peers about ballots, what's going on with the government and how we can make a change starting on our campus."

JORDAN COLLINS



"After Completing a very successful program on campus about getting students to vote, I wanted to continue my work to prepare for the midterm elections"

ZAID STEELE



"I chose to be a Common Cause Fellow because it exposed me to different information about voting rights and more. As a college student, I am put in a box because people believe I may not care because of my background. I am aware that my vote matters. Common Cause has helped me through that process and understanding that I can make a change by learning and being understanding our local and state laws. My time at Common Cause has gave me opportunities to spread more awareness on my campus so more students like myself have the ability to change the world."

JAIYLYN FARMER



"I became a Common Cause Fellow because I enjoy having a hands on approach with my campus and community. Common Cause has also educated me on issues and topics I didn't know about before."

CHARLIE COLLINS



"I became a Fellow to support my right to vote and to encourage and educate our community on the right to vote"

RHEYANN KIRBY



"I became a Common Cause Fellow because of the immense amount of power that HBCU's have in politics and their communities. The work that Common Cause does on our campus of NCCU helped to make students, including myself, aware of this potential that we hold."

FELLOWS

HIGHLIGHTS

MARIAH WILLIAMS



"I joined Common Cause to be able to educate not only myself, but my peers as well about the importance of voting and the importance of paying attention to what's going on within North Carolina, more specifically, the community surrounding our university."

JUSTIN NIXON



"I decided to become a Common Cause Fellow as I believe active participation in the democratic process is essential to a fully-functioning society. My strong belief in the necessity for participating in civic affairs is what led me to become a Common Cause Fellow. The fellowship would give me the tools and skills necessary to help promote greater civic engagement. Plus, Common Cause is a very respected and renowned organization so it was a no brainer for me to become a fellow."

CAMERON KELLY



"I joined Common Cause, so I could learn more about my voting rights."

DANAIZHA WILLIAMS



"I chose to be a Common Cause Fellow because they often work on projects and initiatives that address critical social challenges that are important to me. As a Common Cause Fellow, I have actively engaged in events that directly impact people's lives—for example going to Washington, DC to protest Moore v. Harper. Ultimately, being a Common Cause Fellow offers a unique opportunity to work alongside a diverse group of people, collaborate on meaningful projects, and contribute to positive societal change."

CAMERON EMERY



"I chose to join Common Cause Fellows to bring awareness to the importance of voting on my campus."

LAUREN BANKS



"I am motivated by the belief that democracy thrives when every voice is heard and every vote counts. In my work as a Common Cause fellow, I knew would aid in being committed to fostering a future in which our democracy is stronger and more inclusive for all through promoting fair elections, transparency, and civic engagement."

MILES BEASLEY



"My campus needed a voice, someone who was going to push students to get involved and advocate for themselves, I wanted my college community to be fully represented and prepared and as soon as I got the chance to advocate and represent I took it."

FELLOWS HIGHLIGHTS

GREGORY GERMAN



"I became a Common Cause Fellow because I wanted to be a part of change for my community and instead of just talking about it I wanted to be able to ACT on it!"

DAVID WILSON



"I joined Common Cause to help the fight for Democracy, to be the acceleration for our generation to obtain the equality and representation we all deserve."

MICHAEL GILYARD



"I decided to become a Common Cause Fellow because i wanted to be an advocate for my student body and campus. To voice the importance of voting and our voting rights."

THADDEUS STEWART



"I became a Common Cause Democracy Fellow because I believe in the power of grassroots organizing to drive meaningful change and protect our democracy. Through this fellowship, I had the opportunity to work alongside dedicated advocates and learn effective strategies for promoting transparency, accountability, and equitable representation in our political system. It was a transformative experience that deepened my commitment to civic engagement and inspired me to continue fighting for a more just and inclusive democracy."

LINDSEY DODSON



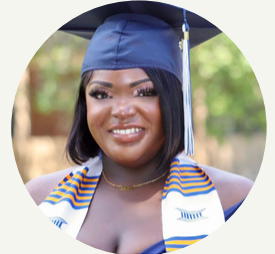
"I wanted to become a Common Cause Fellow to become a better advocate for causes I truly believe in."

KINYON MCCLAIN



"I joined Common Cause to become the difference that difference that can change the future for the better."

TIMESHA HALL



"I am a Common Cause Fellow because I wanted to help motivate myself and my fellow peers on the importance of voting."

OP-ED SPOTLIGHT

TITLE HBCUS & North Carolina

by Justin Nixon

By Justin Nixon

Historically Black colleges and government underfunding



COURTESY JUSTIN NIXON

Johnson C. Smith University student, Justin Nixon.

Historically black colleges and universities across the country and in the state of North Carolina have served as bastions of excellence.

HBCU graduates go on to be agents of excellence in their respective fields and communities. Many of these institutions were created in the South after the Civil War to help bring educational opportunities to newly freed African Americans.

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, originally known as the African Institute and then the Institute for Colored Youth before its official name came into being, was founded in 1837 by Richard Humphreys. Cheyney was the first HBCU established in the country, and its students focused on trades and agriculture.

Several other colleges serving a predominantly black student body were established after 1837, with Lincoln University of Pennsylvania established in 1854 as the first HBCU granting college degrees, Wilberforce University in 1856, and Harris-Stowe State University in 1857. The first HBCU to come about after the Civil War was located here in North Carolina – Shaw University (Raleigh).



LOOKING AHEAD 2023 - 2024



We are excited for the events, programs, and activities our students will plan for this coming year as we refocus on traditional organizing methods that allow for listening and learning from our state's youngest voters, including one-on-one conversations with students. In Fall 2023, our focus will be on the upcoming elections, registering campus communities, educating our campuses on election changes, and working hard to make sure HBCU students are ready to vote. As part, we will strive to ensure that students are not only aware of the importance of voting, but also feel motivated and encouraged to actively engage with the all facets of the process.

In 2023-2024, we look forward to building a strong statewide HBCU network as we grow a new generation of engaged voters in North Carolina.



52

Total number of Common Cause Fellows we hosted in 2022 - 2023

200

Number of events our Common Cause Fellows hosted in 2022-23.

10

Number of HBCU Campuses in North Carolina with HBCU Fellows



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Each school year, **Common Cause NC's HBCU Student Action Alliance** works diligently to develop and maintain relationships with campus and community partners. We thank all of North Carolina's HBCUs for your partnership and look forward to continuing to work together to protect a democracy inclusive of our state's youngest voters.

Special Thanks

NC Black Alliance

NC PIRG

NoCap/Southern Vision Alliance

Black Voters Matter

Democracy NC

Carolina Youth Partnership

NC Campus Engagement

SCSJ

Emancipate NC

Civic Influencers

Campus NAACP Partners

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR

OUR PROGRAMS

