

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 21

BY SENATOR DUPLESSIS

A RESOLUTION

To recognize Tuesday, March 17, 2026, as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.

WHEREAS, Louisiana is proud to be home to eight Historically Black Colleges and Universities that play a pivotal role in expanding educational opportunity, strengthening communities, and preparing generations of leaders who contribute to the economic, cultural, and civic vitality of the state; and

WHEREAS, since their establishment nearly two centuries ago, HBCUs have stood as enduring symbols of resilience, opportunity, and excellence, opening doors to higher education and cultivating generations of scholars, leaders, innovators, and public servants whose contributions continue to enrich Louisiana, the nation, and the world; and

WHEREAS, HBCUs not only transform lives but also strengthen the economy and workforce, aligning academic programs with the evolving needs of society and preparing graduates who excel as scientists, doctors, educators, artists, lawyers, judges, engineers, entrepreneurs, public servants, and community leaders whose impact resonates across every sector of society; and

WHEREAS, this tradition of excellence, leadership, and service is powerfully embodied in the life of Dr. Norman C. Francis, an Xavier University of Louisiana graduate who went on to integrate Loyola University New Orleans College of Law; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Francis provided over fifty-eight years of service to Xavier University and forty-seven as president of the university, having the distinction of becoming one of the longest serving university presidents in the nation, and through his visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and commitment to transforming Xavier into a national model of higher education, he pursued the university's mission by shaping generations of scholars, health professionals, and civic leaders and by expanding access, fostering growth, and advancing academic excellence for students across Louisiana and the nation; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's HBCUs have distinguished themselves, both nationally and in the state, in numerous ways including:

Dillard University continues its longstanding tradition of academic excellence and national competitiveness, with the university's nationally recognized Honda Campus All-Star Challenge team advancing, for the third consecutive year, to the 2025 National Championship Tournament in Los Angeles, a premier academic quiz competition that celebrates scholarship and teamwork. The university recently received a nineteen million dollar gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, the largest private donation in the university's history, to support student success, scholarships, and institutional advancement;

Grambling State University remains a pillar of opportunity and leadership in Louisiana, advancing academic innovation through the establishment of the state's first PhD program in Criminology and Justice Administration, while celebrating a proud legacy of achievement marked by one hundred years of Tiger Athletics and one hundred years of the World Famed Tiger Marching Band;

Southern University and A&M College, the flagship institution of the Southern University System and a Carnegie Research 2 institution, continues more than one hundred forty-six years of leadership in higher education and while opening a forty-eight million dollar state-of-the-art STEM complex and Global Innovation and Welcome Center, and celebrating the internationally recognized "Human Jukebox" Marching Band which was named ESPN's Band of the Year for 2025;

Southern University Law Center continues to expand access to justice and experiential legal education through the construction of a new Clinical Legal Education Building, strengthening opportunities for students while enhancing legal services for the Baton Rouge community;

Southern University at New Orleans, celebrating seventy years of excellence and service to the Greater New Orleans community, recently hosted the first-ever Egyptian-commissioned replica King Tutankhamun exhibition at a historically black college or university and celebrated the SUNO Men's Basketball Team for capturing the 2026 HBCU Athletic Conference Tournament Championship, its first conference title since 2012;

Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center continues to advance agricultural innovation and workforce development as the only historically black college or university selected as a site for the United States Department of Agriculture's

Agricultural Research Service laboratory and also provides hands-on learning through programs such as its Viticulture and Enology research vineyard, and the VET Explore program preparing future veterinarians;

Southern University at Shreveport continues to strengthen workforce development and community impact in North Louisiana through the Aerospace Technology Center, which serves as the region's premier training hub for aviation technicians, while advancing entrepreneurship through the Roy Griggs School of Business, and expanding community partnerships, including a re-entry workforce training initiative with the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office;

Xavier University of Louisiana continues its legacy of academic excellence established under the leadership of Dr. Norman C. Francis and remains a national leader in preparing students for careers in health professions the university ranks among the nation's leading producers of African-American undergraduates who go on to complete medical school, and is one of the top producers of African-American Doctor of Pharmacy graduates, and contributes significantly to the educational, cultural, and economic vitality of the state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to commend Louisiana's Historically Black Colleges and Universities for their outstanding achievements and their numerous alumni for contributions to their local communities, the state of Louisiana, and the world as a whole.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize Tuesday, March 17, 2026, as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Day at the Louisiana State Capitol and does hereby acknowledge Louisiana's HBCUs for their invaluable contributions to our residents and state.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE