



# CASE STUDY



How Innovative Learning Center helped increase the efficacy of a multi-million-dollar funded program to implement change resulting in an increase in underrepresented STEM faculty receiving promotion and tenure at an alliance of three historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)

When the three-university alliance of **Tuskegee University, Jackson State University, and Tennessee State University** were awarded a grant through the National Science Foundation's Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate Program, their goal was to help more underrepresented STEM faculty achieve tenure and promotion.

**Dr. Tucker-Blackmon** of Innovative Learning Center is so detail-oriented and her background and experience is vast. She was able to expertly evaluate our project, then give us a roadmap to follow to make our program better. Because of her guidance, we've seen institutional change that allows us to create environments where African American junior faculty know that we actively support their growth.

**Carol Banks**  
Project Manager, Tuskegee University

## HIGHLIGHTS



### Challenges

The alliance needed a program evaluator who could:

- Critically assess their program to be sure operations were running well.
- Identify gaps in the program components as well as in its administration and implementation.
- Make data-driven recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program for participants and other stakeholders.



### Solution

**Dr. Tucker-Blackmon** of Innovative Learning Center, a world-class program evaluator with the background, skill sets, experience, and demeanor to evaluate and improve complex programs through both data and vision



### Results

Because of their work with Innovative Learning Center, the alliance of three universities was able to:

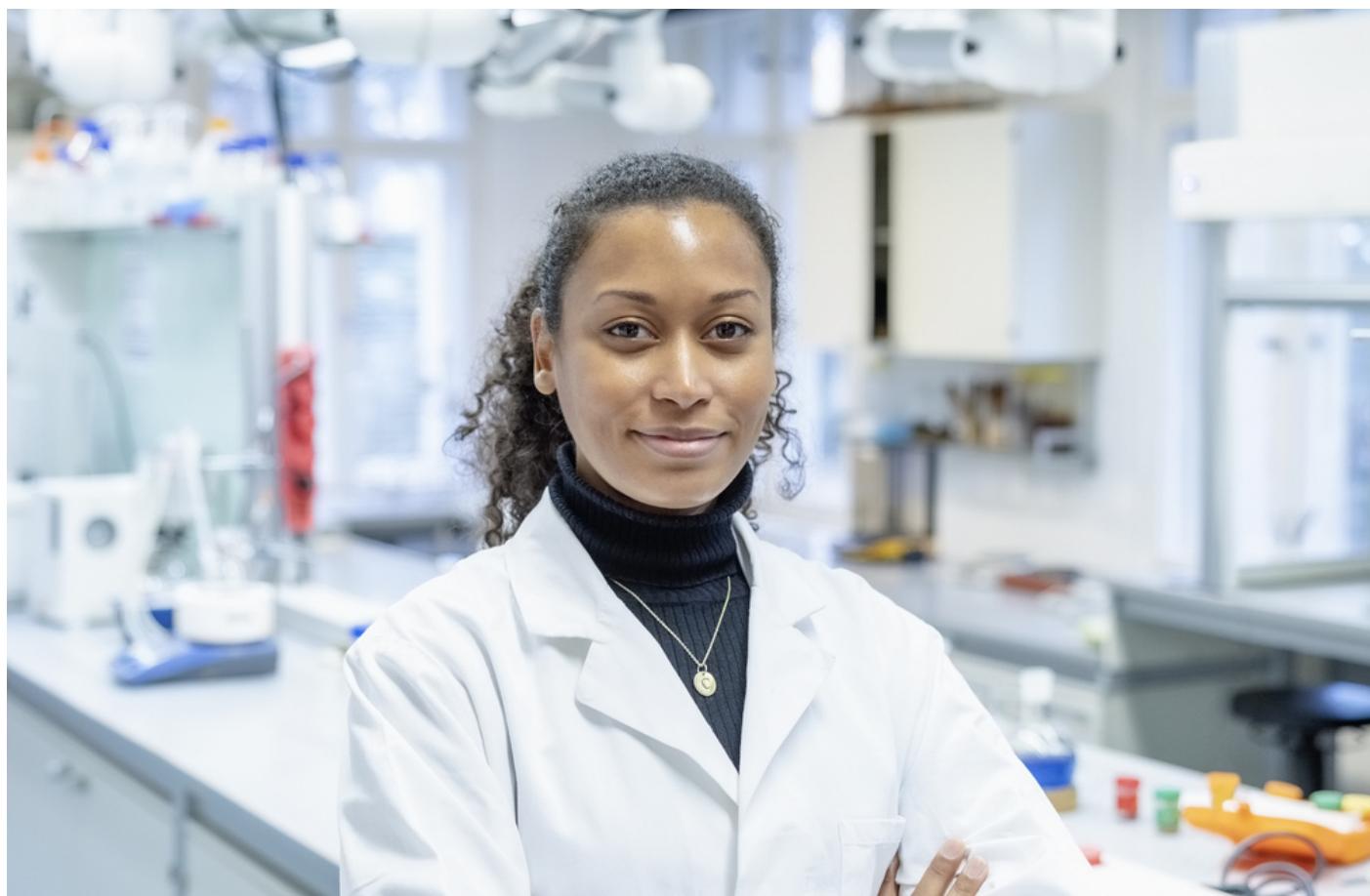
- Increase awareness and support in the program by engaging institutional officials in program meetings.
- Increase clarity about the necessary action steps to make the program highly effective for its targeted participants.
- Form new collaborations with other funded university alliances to implement similar programs.

# STEM FACULTY WORKLOAD CHALLENGES

Because of the large number of hours STEM faculty members spend teaching and advising each semester, it had been difficult – if not impossible for them to take the appropriate steps to write the proposals and manuscripts that are required for tenure.

“**Dr. Tucker-Blackmon** brought to our attention that the Fellows were always in meetings with the leadership team,” Ms. Banks said. “She advised us to allow them to be by themselves more often so they could brainstorm, give feedback and talk freely. That helped us gain some valuable insight into what was working and what the Fellows needed.”

**Carol Banks**  
Project Manager, Tuskegee University



# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



Yet perhaps the most transformational recommendation that Dr. Tucker-Blackmon made for the project was to engage each of the participating universities' high-level officials in the project meetings, including the presidents, provosts, deans, and department chairs.

Ms. Banks said this seemingly simple suggestion has been a game-changer for the degree of support the Fellows – and the overall project – has received

**“**When we first started the project, the plan was to brief the officials from the three universities with our insights,” Ms. Banks said. “But **Dr. Tucker-Blackmon** told us to engage these officials and bring them into our meetings so they could hear first-hand what the Fellows’ needs were.

“Once they began attending the meeting they were able to hear directly from their faculty members. That was huge, and it filled a big piece of the puzzle that had been missing. It was an institutional change that has made a big impact for us, and it’s thanks to **Dr. Tucker-Blackmon**.**”**

# FACULTY SUPPORT AWARENESS

Ms. Banks said that impact includes having university officials that are now more aware of and open to the need for junior faculty release time, as well as the need to do more recruiting to get new hires.

“Because our institutional officials have become engaged, we can support our junior faculty better,” Ms. Banks said, “We’ve been able to give our faculty members release time because now everyone understands that it’s difficult to do research, submit proposals, and write while teaching 12-15 hours per semester and 9 hours during the summer. It’s become easier to see that we need to do more recruiting to get new hires so we can free up our Fellows – and potentially provide an attractive package to our new hires that gives them seed money for supplies, equipment, and the other things they need.

Kudos to **Dr. Tucker-Blackmon** for giving us the reason to focus on this institutional change, because we needed this to happen. We’re now actively creating environments that support our junior minority faculty and give them what they need to promote and achieve tenure at our universities.”



Ms. Banks said that because of **Dr. Tucker-Blackmon’s** extensive skills and background, any program evaluated by her stands to gain a lot – and the experience their alliance has had with her is one they’d love to have again.

# VISIONARY GUIDANCE

“She came in very willing to share her expertise and provided us with great guidance,” said Ms. Banks. “She was honest about what wasn’t working on our project and what we needed to do. She had the background to know that we had to get all of our stakeholders together to have real success, and she saw so many other things that we hadn’t been seeing.

“It was huge for our project and our results. She is such a visionary, and we’re excited to find ways to work with her in the future.”



To learn more about Dr. Tucker-Blackmon's work and ILC's Evaluation Services, [Click here.](#)