



A SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE REPORT

HBCU Alumni Drive Brand Awareness

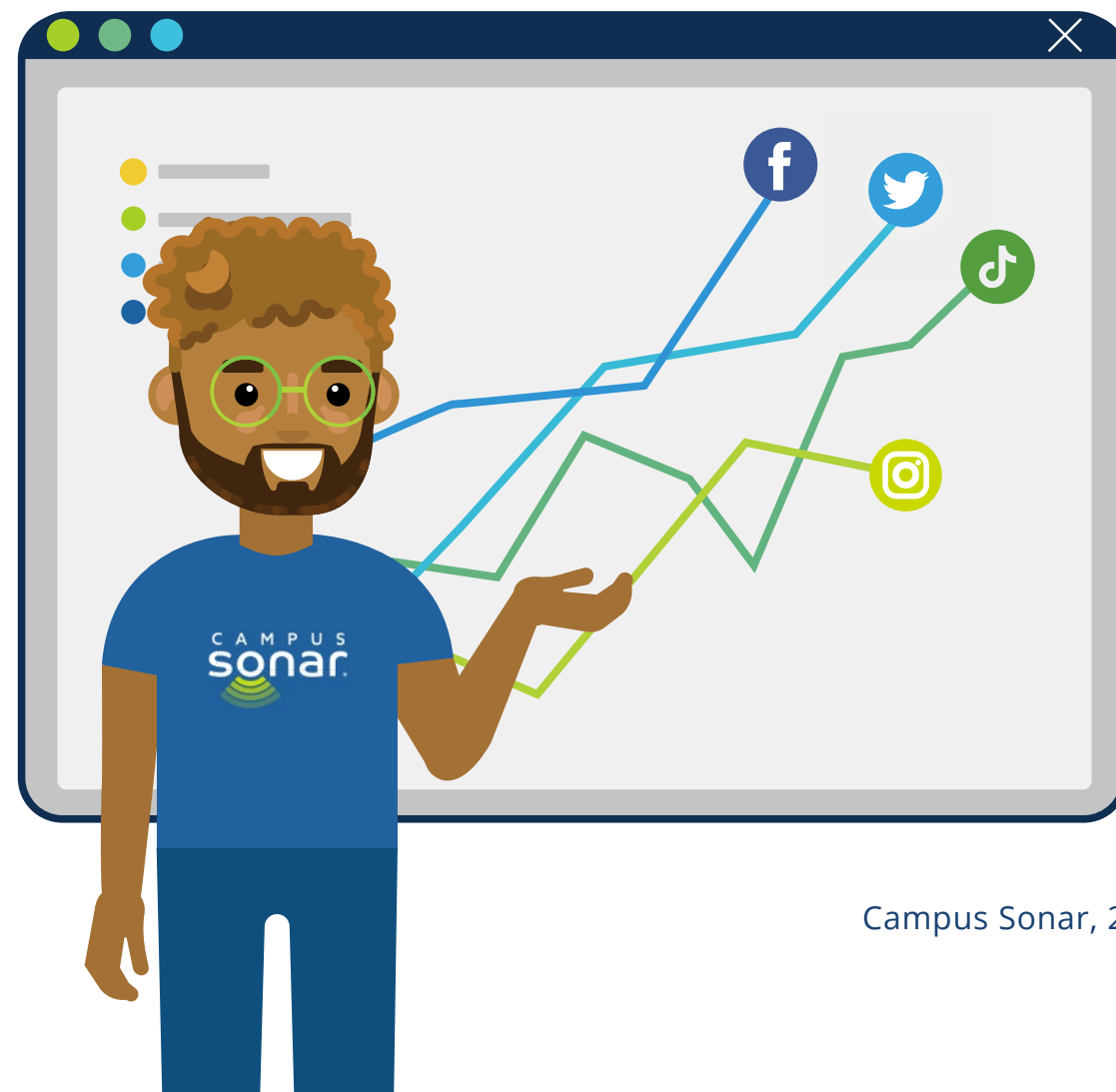
The higher education landscape is evolving rapidly with advancements in online learning, digital credentials, and changing employer demands.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) consistently deliver strong outcomes, but need to continue to adapt their programs to remain relevant and competitive.

What We Set Out to Uncover

We examined the value and opportunity of HBCU alumni as a driver for institutional awareness and enrollment marketing. Using social intelligence research, we **analyzed authentic perceptions about how alumni are succeeding in their professional careers, common topics and themes, and where institutions should focus their energy to find and amplify alumni stories.**

Social Intelligence Research Framework



Campus Sonar's trends research explored how HBCUs are meeting current student needs and industry demands by understanding the success of their alumni.

The Social Intelligence Data

Using social intelligence research and our cultural competency expertise, **we analyzed conversation about 10 HBCUs from 2021–23 with a variety of enrollment sizes, locations, and an equal mix of public and private institutions.**

The gathered insights examined authentic perceptions about first person celebrations and general announcements to understand the scope of success for HBCU alumni:

- ➔ If HBCU alumni are mentioned in a Top 10 news source, how do campuses use the information?
- ➔ Who celebrates HBCU alumni online?
- ➔ Does positive conversation exist online about HBCU educational outcomes?

Elevate Brand Awareness & Increase Trust

Research shows that HBCUs overperform in terms of outcomes, but they continue to be underfunded compared to predominantly white campuses. And in their communities, they possess an inherent trust that doesn't always translate to a wider audience.



OPPORTUNITIES

Alumni success stories

Leveraging alumni success creates three opportunities for HBCUs to increase trust and elevate brand awareness with a broader audience through increasing public relations and marketing efforts:

- 1 Highlight** educational outcomes
- 2 Boost** positive perception with local news
- 3 Increase** storytelling including educational outcomes



CHALLENGES

Ever-changing social media platforms

Social platform verification and algorithms are constantly in flux, creating even more challenges for HBCU brands. Campuses should focus on staying up-to-date with platform updates and strategically using platforms to their maximum potential. As platforms prioritize paid or verified posts, it may become even more difficult for your audience to see your organic content.

How to Do it



Highlight Educational Outcomes

85% of HBCU alumni news mentions are alumni success stories. However, in major news outlets, the value of an HBCU education is not consistently referenced.

Perception Gap

The economic mobility rate for HBCUs is often almost double that of all U.S. colleges and universities.

Opportunity

Reach prospective students and donors championing the value of an HBCU education. Broaden reach by:

- Enhancing your public relations and news strategy
- Consistently sharing alumni news, success stories, and encouraging alumni to share their experiences
- Connect the HBCU experience to alumni success to strengthen fundraising strategy



Boost Positive Perception with Local News

50% of HBCU alumni news conversation is from large campuses—with large campuses making up only 20% of our sample, they receive a disproportionate amount of news coverage.

Perception Gap

HBCUs continue to be underfunded in private gifts, grants, and contracts compared to PWIs.

Opportunity

Small campuses: increase storytelling strategies and capability to illustrate positive outcomes and support financial needs.

Large campuses: more alumni and name recognition make mentions likelier. Leverage them, and work to increase regional and state-wide mentions for smaller campuses.



Increase Storytelling Including Educational Outcomes

First-person celebration from alumni about their job placement and career advancement only accounted for 1% of the online conversation.

Perception Gap

With an incredible community of graduates, HBCUs have an opportunity to activate alumni as storytellers and brand advocates.

Opportunity

Strengthen relationships with your grads by celebrating and sharing their successes on owned channels, growing awareness of HBCU's educational and career outcomes. This finding doesn't mean alumni don't celebrate their success, but first-person posts don't typically list degrees and accolades.



Take Action

The strong outcomes and success stories of HBCU graduates encourage prospective students and nurture the community culture of success and belonging. Leverage these findings to center student voices and increase the impact and value of HBCUs.

- ➔ **Repurpose alumni news stories for internal use and encourage alumni to share their affiliation with their alma mater.** Internal uses could include alumni publications (magazines, newsletters, social), initiatives (appeals, alumni profiles), volunteer opportunities (board members, industry partners, career ambassadors, mentors, influencers) and events.
- ➔ **Pitch alumni success stories to media outlets, particularly local sources, to enhance positive outreach to your communities despite your size.** If your campus goal is to increase brand awareness, start with your local community and tell stories of alumni outcomes. This is a good strategy for campuses of all sizes, but smaller campuses in particular.



To find out more about how we're rebuilding trust at institutions, visit campussonar.com or [contact us](#).