

2023 – 2024

Dr. N. Joyce Payne
Research Center
Biennial Report



— DR. N. JOYCE —
PAYNE
RESEARCH CENTER

Mission, Aim and Philosophy

Our Mission

The Payne Center conducts rigorous, evidence-based research and develops innovative programs to address systemic challenges, drive policy solutions, and improve outcomes for populations facing barriers to opportunity.

Our Aim

The Payne Center is dedicated to developing sustainable solutions to societal challenges through collaboration with diverse stakeholders. It generates research-driven strategies and interventions to address societal issues, with a focus on the contributions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Our Philosophy

The Payne Center prioritizes stakeholder-centered research -- ensuring that the voices of those most affected by systemic challenges shape its work. Through deep collaboration with researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners, the Center produces research that drives meaningful, lasting change and informs solutions that strengthen society and expand opportunity for all.



Statement from
Dr. M.C. Brown, II
Executive Director & Research Scientist
Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center

Transforming Research and Policy

As the Executive Director and Research Scientist at the Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center, I am honored to reflect on our ongoing efforts to address systemic challenges in education, industry, and government. The Payne Center is dedicated to producing evidence-based research that informs and improves education, economic mobility, healthcare, governance, and workforce development. Our mission is to generate actionable insights that shape public policy and drive measurable, positive outcomes. Central to this mission is our commitment to elevating Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), ensuring their inclusion as critical contributors to national and global policy dialogues.

Since its inception, the Payne Research Center has been at the forefront of research and policy development, addressing some of society's most pressing issues. Our initiatives prioritize the experiences of communities on the margins of progress, ensuring their needs, challenges, and aspirations inform the policies we advocate. Through strategic partnerships with universities, policymakers, and community organizations, we have fostered an ecosystem where research catalyzes solutions to complex social, economic, and political challenges. As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to drive transformative change through innovative research and stakeholder partnerships.

Strategic Research and Collaborative Partnerships

Over the past two years, the Payne Center has solidified its role as a leading institution in addressing critical issues at the intersection of industry, academia, and society. Our research agenda spans education, healthcare, economic development, and governance, employing methodologies that center the perspectives of those most affected by documented inequities. This approach ensures that our research not only informs public policy but also generates tangible improvements in the lives of individuals and communities.

Collaboration lies at the heart of our work. Through partnerships with global institutions such as UNESCO and academic leaders like Binghamton University, the Payne Center has expanded its reach and impact. These engagements have enabled us to conduct groundbreaking research, establish new academic alliances, and elevate the global profile of HBCUs. By fostering a diverse network of scholars, policymakers, and advocates, we have created a unified platform for advancing equitable solutions.

Quantifiable Achievements and Policy Impact

The Payne Center has made significant contributions to advancing research, policy, and systemic change. Our annual Black Thriving in America reports, produced in collaboration with Gallup, provide critical data on the lived experiences of Black Americans. These reports have sparked national conversations on racial equity, informed policy debates, and identified actionable pathways to address systemic barriers. By leveraging this data, we have equipped policymakers with a nuanced understanding of the challenges facing underrepresented populations, enabling the development of targeted, evidence-based solutions.

Initiatives such as the Beacon of Hope Summit and the Building Individual and Institutional Research Capacity Seminar have empowered stakeholders with the tools to drive meaningful change. These efforts have amplified the visibility of HBCUs in global academic and policy arenas, positioning them as essential contributors to addressing shared global challenges.

Strengthening HBCUs for the Future

The Payne Center is committed to enhancing the individual and institutional research capacity of HBCUs and expanding our global partnerships. A key focus is building the professional capabilities of HBCU faculty, equipping them with the skills, strategies, and resources needed to secure competitive funding and lead innovative research projects. Through targeted training programs, we are supporting HBCUs in their mission to sustain academic excellence and drive innovation.

These aid in developing robust infrastructures that provide HBCUs with access to comprehensive, real-time institutional data. This will enable HBCUs to make informed decisions, refine strategic priorities, and advocate more effectively for policies that support their growth and sustainability. Our commitment to global research remains unwavering, with plans to foster transatlantic partnerships that connect HBCU scholars with researchers in historically marginalized regions. These exchanges will facilitate collaborative research, knowledge transfer, and joint academic initiatives, further enhancing the global impact of HBCUs.

A Path Toward Continued Innovation and Impact

The Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center remains dedicated to its mission of advancing rigorous, evidence-based research that informs policy and practice. As we build on our achievements and expand our partnerships, we are optimistic about the future. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to empirical excellence, the Payne Center will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping national and global conversations on education, opportunity, and equitable solutions. Together, we will ensure that underrepresented communities remain at the center of our work and that HBCUs continue to thrive as leaders in research, scholarship, and global impact.

Our Research and Programmatic Agenda

The Payne Center integrates research, consulting, convening, publishing, and program development to address society's most pressing challenges. The Center drives change, informs policy, and generates sustainable solutions that strengthen communities and institutions.

Key Areas of Focus include:

Community & Culture

Exploring the social and cultural forces that shape identity, cohesion, and civic life.

Education & Opportunity

Assessing learning systems and workforce pathways that drive economic and social mobility.

Government & Policy

Analyzing institutions, laws, and decision-making structures that shape national governance.

Health & Well-Being

Investigating the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health across populations.

Innovation & Progress

Advancing science, technology, and infrastructure to drive societal and economic development.

Labor & Economy

Examining workforce systems, financial resources, and economic mobility.

Noteworthy Progress

2023 Review

Beacon of Hope Convening

Black Thriving in America: 2023 Release

Building Institutional and Individual Research Capacity: Grants, Contracts, and Dissemination

Dr. Edmund W. Gordon Symposium

Established the New Educational and Research Alliance (newERA) with Binghamton University

Launched Certificate in Equity and Urban Development

White Paper on Financial Equity for 1890s Institution

2023 Media Coverage

Black Thriving in America released on C-SPAN

Diverse Issues in Education – Black Americans May Be Thriving, but Racial Struggles Persist

New Educational and Research Alliance (newERA)

Politico - Some Black Americans Are Thriving — If They're Higher Income

USA Today - Most Americans are confident in local police, but many still want major reforms

Noteworthy Progress

2024 Review

- Black Thriving in America: 2024 Release
- Established AERDF Partnership
- Established Fulbright Association Partnership
- Established Journal Editorial Board
- Established MacArthur Grant Foundation Pilot Year
- Launched Payne Book Series Volume 1
- Summit on Climate Change and Black Communities

2024 Media Coverage

- Black Enterprise – New York City Students to be Introduced to Black Studies This Fall
- Diverse – Advancing Social Justice Through Scholarly Work
- Education Week - How These Teachers Build Curriculum 'Beyond Black History
- GlobeNewsWire - Black Thriving in America Report Dives Deep Into Black Life Experiences

Adoption of Key Funding Verbiage

Payne Center Adoption of a Theory of Change

The Payne Center initiates engagements by conducting evidence-based research on race and equity, informed by the contexts of HBCUs. We amplify marginalized voices and foster inclusive dialogue, leading to actionable strategies. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, we report and transfer these strategies, measuring the impact of our interventions to ensure reliable progress toward equity for Black Americans and marginalized communities.

Payne Center Adoption of a Land Acknowledgement

As stewards of space, the Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center acknowledges with humility and respect the ancestral lands of the Anacostan (also known as Nacotchtank), the Piscataway, and the Pamunkey Peoples. The District of Columbia occupies the sacred and ancestral homelands of these communities, nestled along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. We extend our deepest appreciation to their citizens and elders, both past and present. While these First Residents and other Indigenous Peoples continue to thrive and uphold their cultures across these lands, the Payne Center recognizes their enduring commitment to equity and justice. With this acknowledgment, we honor their resilience and aspirations for a better future.

Key Research Accomplishments

Black Thriving in America Reports (2023 and 2024)

With a 100-year commitment from Gallup, The Payne Center chartered new territory, releasing the inaugural Black Thriving in America report 2023 and subsequent annual report in 2024. The report annually represents the voices of 40 million Black Americans. It assesses life experiences in the U.S. across several dimensions. The findings are condensed into a readable dashboard. The first of its kind, this report serves as the “Dow Jones of Racial Equity” and “NASDAQ of Black Experiences”.



The Payne Center Book Series

The Payne Center published its first volume in The Payne Center Book Series, which focuses on pragmatic policy ideas related to social justice. The first book, titled “Creating New Possibilities for the Future of HBCUs” provides critical examination of the current contributions and future directions of the nation’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This publication critically examines the contributions and future directions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), serving as a vital resource for researchers and policymakers. The book is edited by Drs. Terrell Strayhorn (Virginia Union University), Michael Williams (University of Missouri), and Royel Johnson (University of Southern California).

Key Research Accomplishments

EQUITAS: The Handbook of Research on Race, Policy and Society

Equitas: The Handbook of Research on Race, Policy and Society is a peer-reviewed academic journal published annually by the Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center boasting an editorial board of leading scholars, researchers and practitioners in the field. *Equitas* is multidisciplinary in focus and invites scholars writing on myriad topics, from established, conceptual, methodological, and substantive approaches.

Moreover, this journal publishes original articles, essays, and reviews that advance the study of equity in society, with a particular focus on issues that relate to Black communities and HBCUs. *Equitas* aims to provide broader understanding of systemic inequality in all its various dimensions. Additionally, with a broad scope, the journal provides a focus on the societal implications of race and policy and appeals to a wider audience, including those interested in sociological studies, cultural analysis, and public policy discussions.

The Payne Research Center Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Bringing research integrity and academic processing to the Payne Center, the Center has joined SMART IRB as a participating institution to collaborate through George Washington University to provide IRB processes for Payne Center projects.

Key Research Accomplishments

Launch of Payne Center Affiliates Program

The Payne Center focuses on advancing knowledge and addressing critical issues impacting Black Americans and marginalized communities across key societal domains. To support these efforts, we offer a range of non-staff affiliations designed to leverage the expertise of scholars and professionals from diverse backgrounds. The Payne Center selects and invites student interns, dissertation scholars, postdoctoral fellows, faculty fellows, senior fellows, visiting scholars, and scholars-in-residence through the Payne Center Affiliates Program. The Payne Center Currently hosts Dr. J.Z. Bennett (University of Cincinnati) as a Faculty Fellow, Dr. Francis “Frank” Cullen (Stockholm Prize Recipient) as a Senior Fellow, Dr. Herman Felton (Wiley University) as a Presidential Fellow, and President Rick Gallot (University of Louisiana System) as a Dissertation Scholar.

Dr. J.Z. Bennett
University of Cincinnati



Dr. Francis Cullen
Stockholm Prize
Recipient



Dr. Herman J. Felton
Wiley University



Rick Gallot, J.D.
University of Louisiana
System



Key Research Accomplishments

White Paper on Financial Equity for 1890s Institutions

This publication is a joint initiative with TMCF's Government Affairs division. The white paper released new federal data on the historical funding gap between HBCUs and PWIs to help advocate for better resource equity between land grant institutions, the manuscript led to the drafting of an official letter from the U.S. Secretary of Education to the governors of the 19 southern and border states.

Certificate in Equity & Urban Development

The Payne Center hosted a free online webinar series sponsored by CBRE for HBCU students, HBCU faculty, and CBRE professionals. It exposed participants to key theoretical concepts, contemporary issues, and research methods in the field of urban development. Seminar participants developed skills and knowledge to help build stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient urban communities in a variety of professional arenas. Each seminar was led by a distinguished academic faculty member and/or a leading industry professional.



Key Research Accomplishments

Launch of New Educational and Research Alliance (newEra)

The New Educational and Research Alliance is a groundbreaking collaboration among the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, Binghamton University and six historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs):

- Alabama A&M University
- Central State University
- Tuskegee University
- Prairie View A&M University
- University of the District of Columbia
- Virginia State University

The focus areas of research include artificial intelligence (AI), data science, cybersecurity, materials, biomedical engineering, smart energy, future manufacturing, healthcare and agriculture. The partnership also supports HBCUs in their pursuit of a high research Carnegie classification by leveraging the strengths and expertise of all involved institutions.

Key objectives include (1) support of faculty collaborations and, (2) nurturing a diverse talent pipeline of graduate students interested in pursuing careers in engineering and computer science.

Extramural Recognition

The corporations, foundations, and individuals below have provided critical financial support to the Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center.



James Berkman

Richard Berkman



Jim Clifton



Mark Frohman

Joseph Galligan



JL-USA

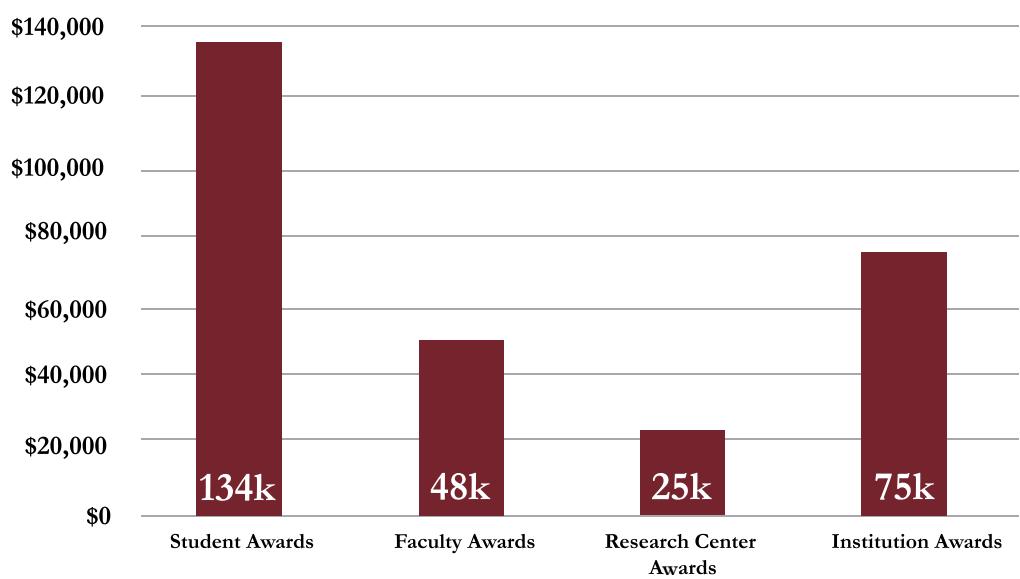
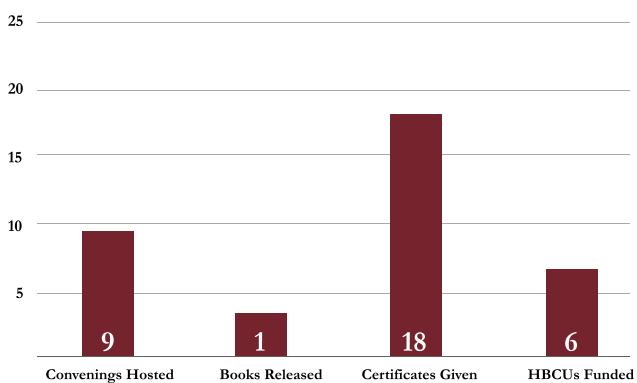
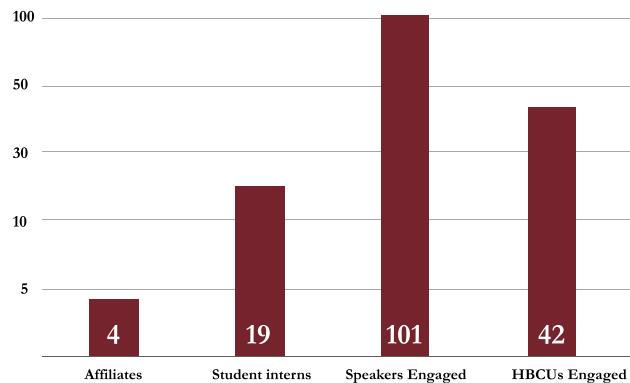


Toni Townes-Whitley



Impact Data

Payne Center Programmatic Activities



Program Successes

Program: 2023 Beacon of Hope Inaugural Summit

Goal: To co-create effective, measurable solutions for equity, focusing on enabling the next generation of leaders in Clinical Trials Centers of Excellence and Research Centers of Excellence.

Partner: US Novartis Foundation

Outcome: One hundred twenty-one participants attended the 2023 Beacon of Hope Inaugural Summit. 15% of participants were faculty members, 20% were college administrators, 35% were students, 15% were corporate partners, and 15% had other employment roles. 100% of participants indicated they learned something new by attending the summit. Additionally, 100% of participants indicated they were confident about participating in future Payne Center programs. 100% of participants indicated they were satisfied with the summit. Presenters provided overall positive feedback on their experience at the seminar. 100% of the presenters were satisfied with the program and customer service Thurgood Marshall College Fund staff provided. Additionally, 100% of presenters indicated they were satisfied with the audience interaction. 89% of presenters were confident collaborating on future TMCF Payne Center projects.

Program Successes

Program:

2023 Building Individual and Institutional Research Capacity: Grants, Contracts, and Dissemination

Goal: To ready and advance attendees on the proper submission and ways to stand out in the process of garnering extramural funding.

Partners: US Novartis Foundation and Blue Meridian

Outcome: Outcome: Fifty-three participants attended the 2023 Building Individual and Institutional Research Capacity Seminar. 76% of participants were faculty members, 18% were college administrators, and 6% were agency employees. 100% of participants indicated they learned something new by attending the seminar. Additionally, 100% of participants indicated they were confident about participating in future Payne Center programs. 94% of participants indicated they were satisfied with the seminar. The average participant satisfaction between the four sessions was 91.3%. Presenters provided positive feedback on their experience at the seminar. 100% of the presenters were satisfied with the program and customer service Thurgood Marshall College Fund staff provided. Additionally, 100% of presenters indicated they were satisfied with the audience interaction and were confident in collaborating on future projects.

Program Successes

Program:

2024 Financial Literacy: The Pursuit of the “Middle Class” Freedom(s)

Goal: The event aimed to foster conversations on financial literacy and provide practical insights, tools, and inspiration for financial empowerment through the lens of John Hope Bryant's book - *Financial Literacy for All*, Gallup, and the *Black Thriving in America* report.

Partner: Operation Hope

Outcome: Twenty-seven participants attended the 2024 Financial Literacy: The Pursuit of “Middle Class” Freedom(s) program. 94% of participants were students. 61% of participants were from Howard University, and 39% were from the University of the District of Columbia. Additionally, 83% of participants indicated this was their first time attending a Thurgood Marshall College Fund or Payne Center program.

100% of participants indicated they learned something new by attending the program. Additionally, 100% of participants indicated they were confident about participating in future Payne Center programs. 87% of participants indicated they were satisfied with the program, and 80% indicated they were likely to promote the program to their peers and colleagues.

Program Successes

Program:

2024 Summit on Black Communities, Climates, and the Environment: Science, Systemic Inequalities, and Solutions

Goal: To convene policymakers, leaders, academics, advocates, and students from the Black community to form a new front in the movement to address the climate crisis in the United States. The summit addressed the racialized impacts of climate change and highlighted how Black communities are key agents of change in the fight for a sustainable future.

Partner: Binghamton University

Outcome: Seventy-five participants attended the 2024 Summit on Black Communities, Climates, and the Environment: Science, Systemic Inequalities, and Solutions. 97% of participants indicated they learned something new by attending the summit. Additionally, 100% of participants indicated they were confident about participating in future Payne Center programs. 97% of participants indicated they were satisfied with the summit. All presenters indicated they received excellent or good customer service from TMCF staff. Additionally, 94% of presenters indicated they were satisfied with the audience interaction. 100% of presenters were confident in collaborating on future TMCF Payne Center projects.

Program Successes

Program: 2024 GoogleARI Internship Program

Goal: The inaugural Applied Research Institute HBCU Undergraduate Research Internship Program paired 16 scholars from 10 HBCUs with dedicated faculty mentors for hands-on STEM research.

Partner: Google

Program Features: The program garnered 93 applications and 75 student submissions from 27 institutions. The program included components focused on comprehensive graduate school preparation training alongside direct research experience, fostering both academic and personal growth.

Institutions Represented: Alabama A&M University, Albany State University, Florida A&M University, Fort Valley State University, Howard University, Morgan State University, North Carolina A&T State University, Prairie View A&M University, Tennessee State University and University of the District of Columbia.

Program Successes

Program: 2024 MacArthur Summer Internship Program

Goal: Three interns engaged in an immersive 8-week program focused on criminal justice reform. The internship program consisted of three main components: a Capstone Research Project, Convening/Policy Panel Projects, and a Career Exploration Project.

Partner: MacArthur Foundation

Key Experiences: The Payne Center hosted 3 interns from Howard University engaging in research on over-incarceration and hands-on policy development. The interns developed and enriching understanding of the United State justice system learning from top criminal justice faculty and formerly incarcerated individuals. The interns engaged in tours of the U.S. Supreme Court, state penitentiaries, criminal justice advocacy groups, and reentry facilities.

Future Plans

2025

- Black Thriving in America: 2025 Release
- Criminal Justice Convening
- Equitas Journal Volume 1 Release
- HBCU Faculty Research and Grant Training
- Inaugural Payne Symposium in Higher Education
- Just Leadership USA (JLUSA) Engagement Launch
- MacArthur Grant Foundation Implementation Year
- TMCF Aligning Black Colleges and the National Science Foundation

2026

- 1890 Underfunding Report Release
- Inaugural Payne Black Paper Release
- Inaugural Payne Women in Social Justice Luncheon
- Payne Center Book of the Quarter/Year Launch
- Summit on Climate Change and Black Communities
- Volume 2 of Payne Center Book Series Release

Testimonials

“The mentorship aspect of the program was so helpful. I was able to ask questions about my research, but also learn more about my field from someone with experience.”

Javaun Harriot, a senior at the University of District of Columbia

Student Quote

“The Center is an ideal space for scholars to come together to explore and exchange disruptive ideas for the creation of a new and more inclusive social order. Their work is second to none, providing hope and inspiration despite nearly insurmountable challenges.”

Dr. N. Joyce Payne, TMCF

Founder Quote

“Working with the Payne Center has been nothing short of extraordinary. As research partners, they have been instrumental in helping us develop and cultivate the next generation of criminologists at HBCUs, while advancing transformative criminal justice reform efforts in Black communities.”

Dr. J.Z. Bennett, Center for Justice and Communities

Partner Quote

“For [the past several years, the Dr. N. Joyce Payne Research Center] has been bringing together crucial voices and perspectives to positively impact Black life in American society.”

Diverse Issues in Higher Education

Media Quote

Payne Center Staff 2022-2024



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ACLS Leading Edge Fellow



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Director for Administration
& Research Strategy



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Research Consultant



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& Programs



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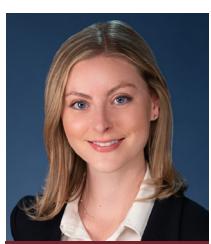
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