

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER

THE HBCU FRONTIER SET EXPERIENCE

FRONTIER**SET**

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*



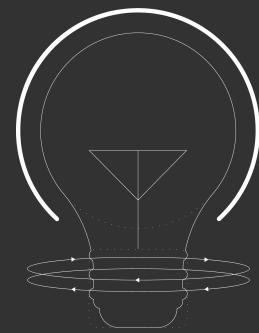
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE EFFECTS OF TRANSFORMING TOGETHER

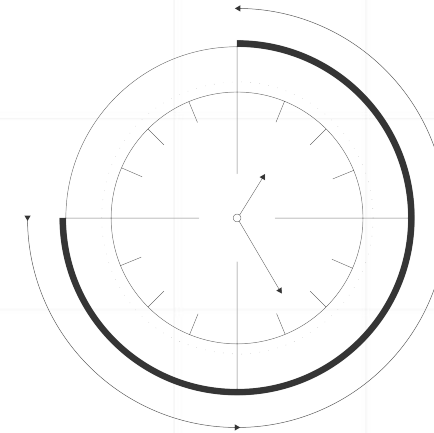




The HBCU Frontier Set unaffiliated intermediary team **developed a bespoke and highly successful approach** to post-secondary grant management for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



RESULTS OF THE HBCU COHORT ARE COMPELLING



+7%

A 7% increase in the first year 15/30 credit accumulation rate

+4%

A 4% increase in the average 6-year graduation rate

+30pp

On average, the retention rate of students meeting the 15/30 credit accumulation threshold is approximately 30 percentage points higher

100%

All institutions eliminated developmental education

“

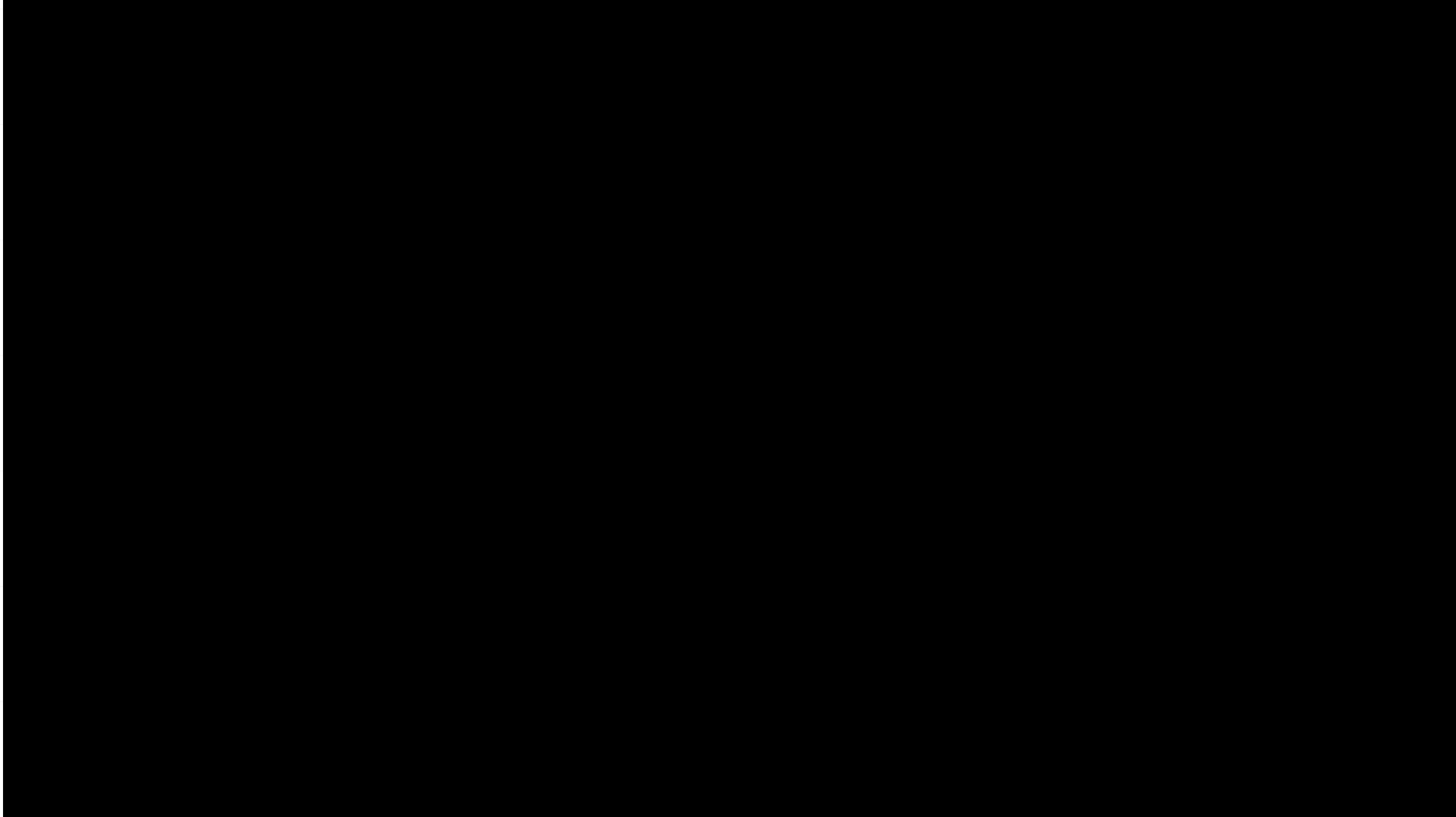
The infrastructure we developed with the Frontier Set's support prepared us to quickly pivot during Covid. We were able to move our 1,500 courses to virtual within a week.”

—PROVOST AND CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, DSU





The HBCU Frontier Set intermediary methodology is not only replicable — **it's immediately scalable**



02.16.22 • FULL DECK

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- 06: The Pillars
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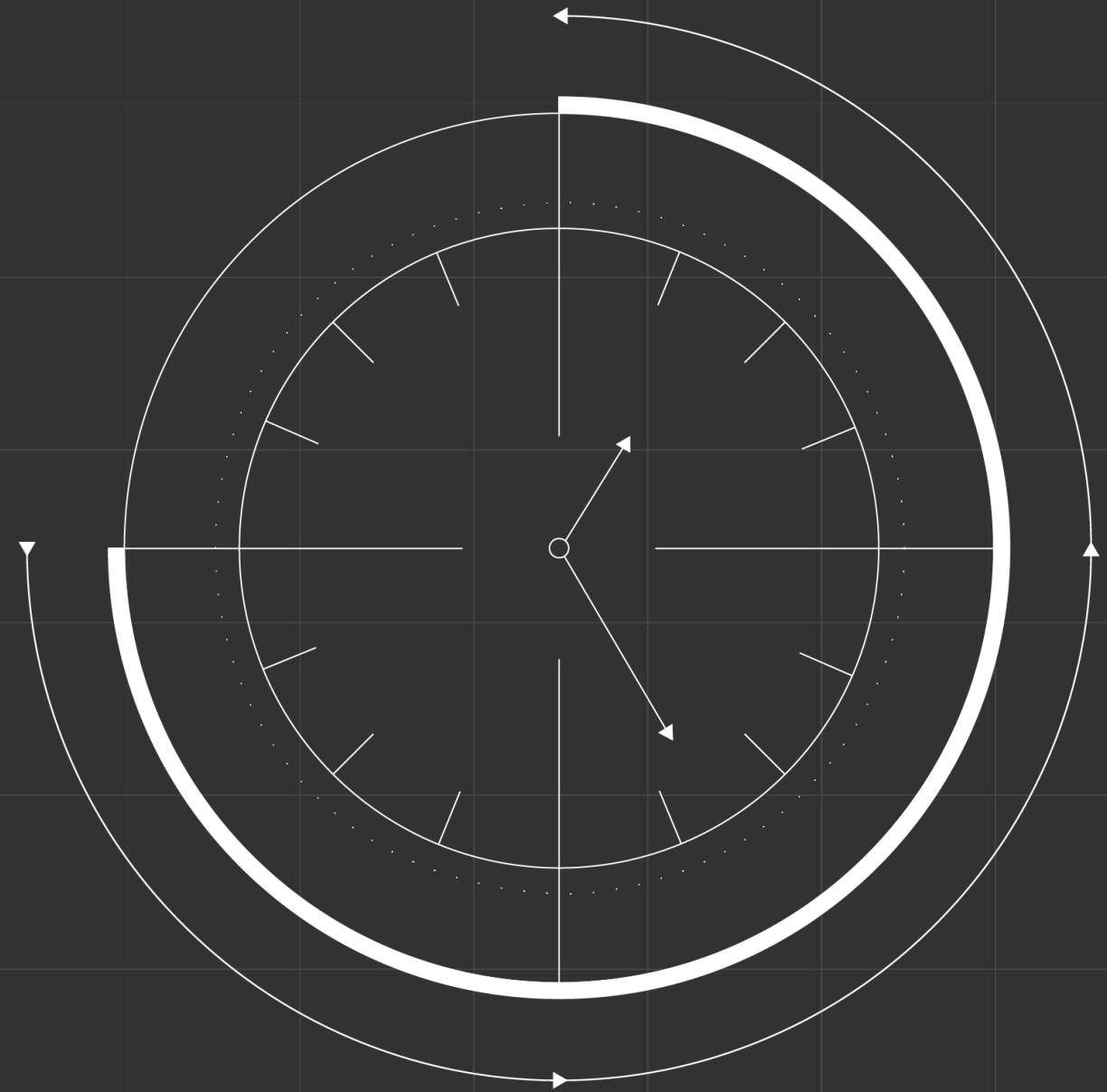


RESULTS + LEARNINGS

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INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

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A NEW CHANGE AGENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



The place in which I'll fit will not exist until I make it.”

—JAMES BALDWIN

- Dr. Kathy Thompson’s strategic vision created custom-built infrastructure for student-centric transformation in higher education
- The HBCU Intermediary Team fostered inter-institutional partnerships, catalyzing lasting collaboration
- Over the course of six years, unprecedented student-centric and equity-driven programs and policies flourished at each participating institution
- The Intermediary Team’s experience unlocked critical learnings to inform future transformation:

01 What are the risks to transformation?

02 What causes transformation?

03 How do people best contribute to transformation?



ACCELERATING TRANSFORMATION THROUGH



An unaffiliated intermediary



Interpersonal infrastructure to build stable, collaborative bridges



A focus on capacity building and sustainability



Continuous Quality Improvement and endurance

RECLAIMING TRANSFORMATIVE IDENTITIES

- HBCUs were founded in the spirit of transformation—to create equality in education for Black people and serve the needs of students systematically excluded from higher education
- HBCUs share a mission of empowering under-resourced and underserved populations through education, leadership development, and economic opportunity

“HBCUs are 3% of all colleges and universities in the country. We're still graduating almost 20% of all black students in the country.”

—**President Tony Allen,**
Delaware State University

INVISIBLE BARRIERS

- Sector outsiders are not always trusted, and data has been weaponized against the institutions
- Despite common experiences, high-performing and high-potential institutions need a transformation broker to help navigate threats to their celebrated and singular identities

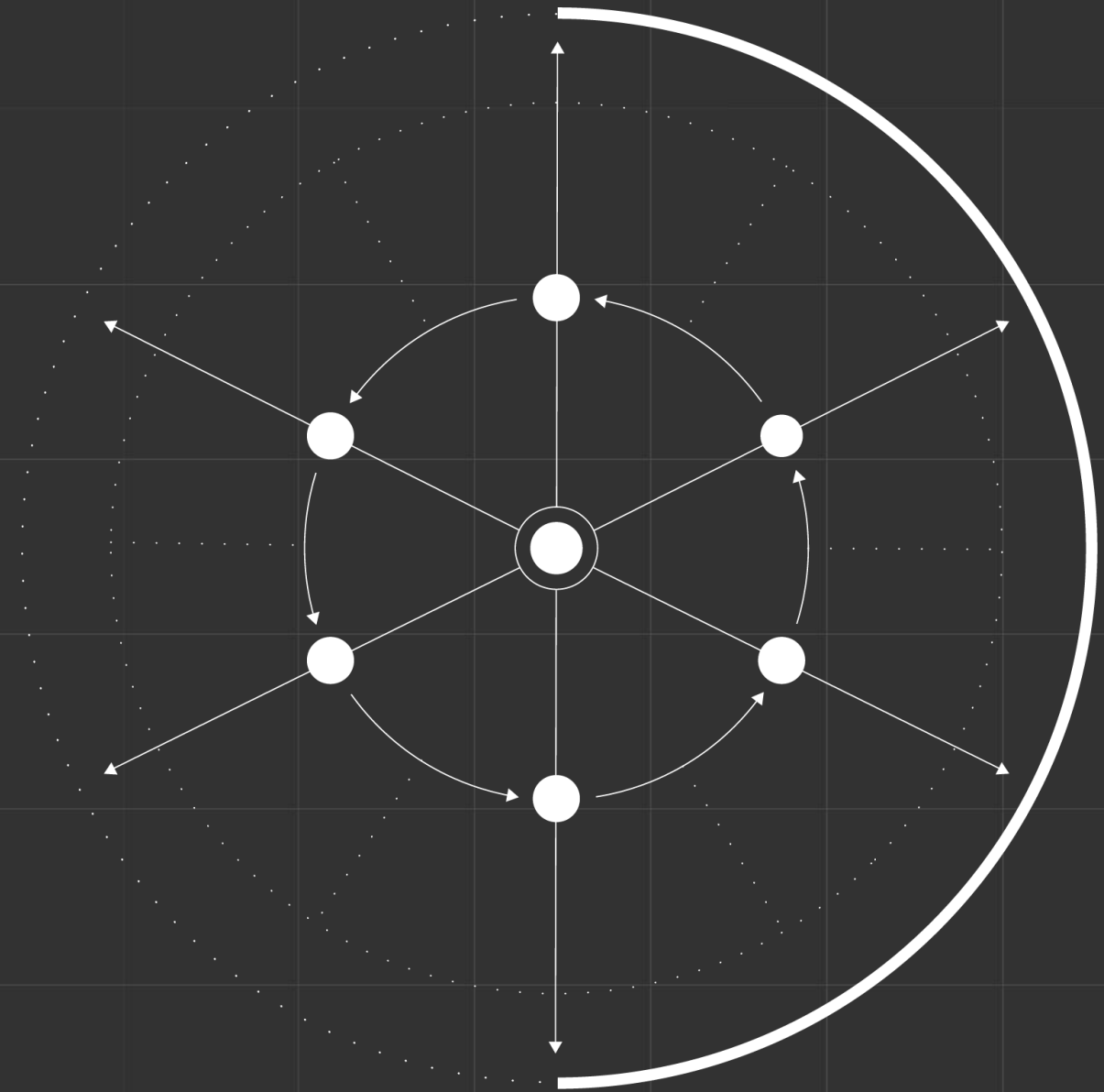
“You’re asking us to give away what we think is special about our institutions. Why would we share that? Why would we give that out to the world?”

—HBCU Cohort Member

THE HBCU INTERMEDIARY

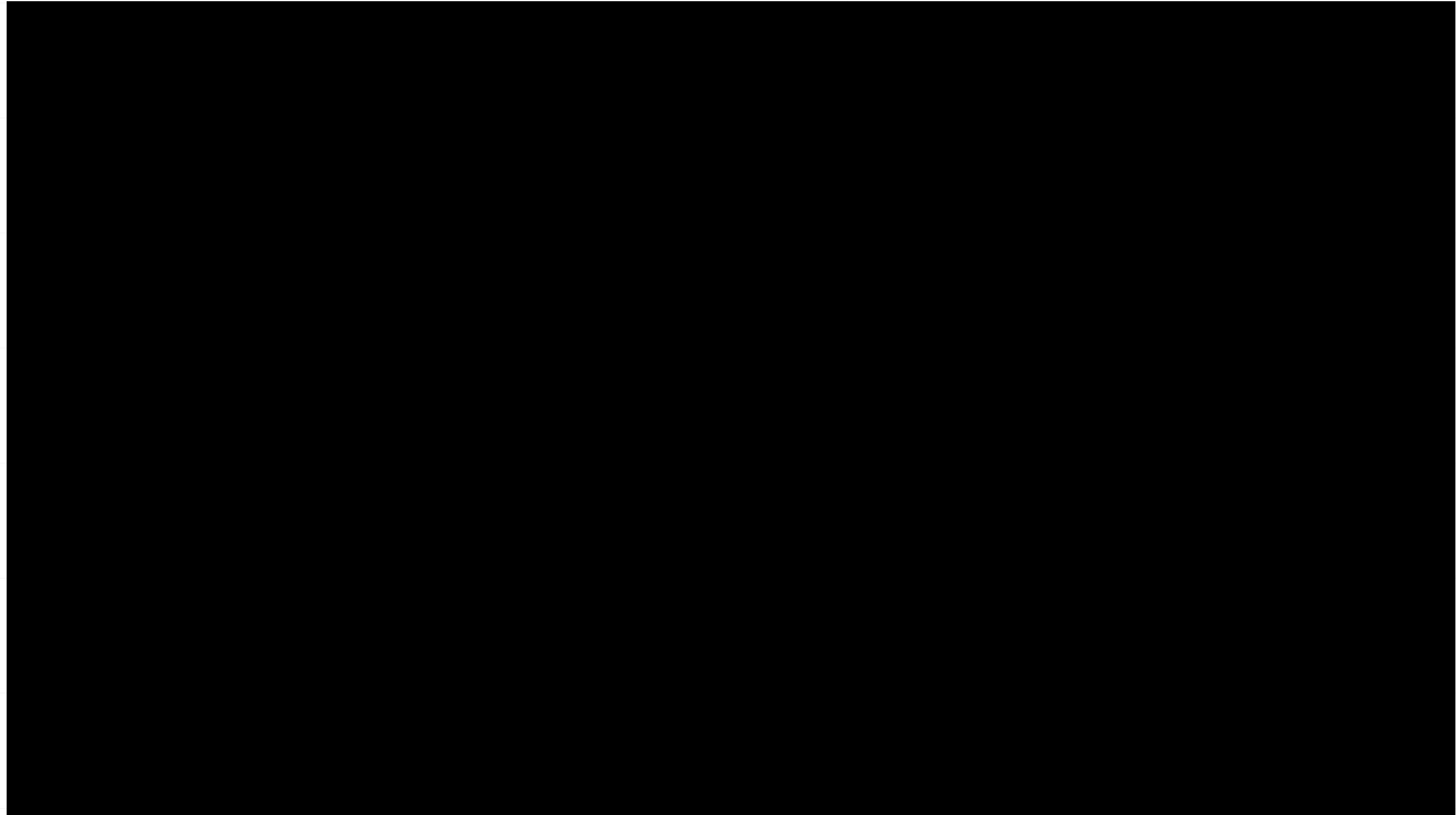
04: The Intermediary

05: The Foundation



ADVOCATE, ARCHITECT, & AGITATOR

? What (or who) does it take to realign an institution's structures, culture, and business model to create a student experience that results in dramatic and equitable increases in outcomes and educational value?



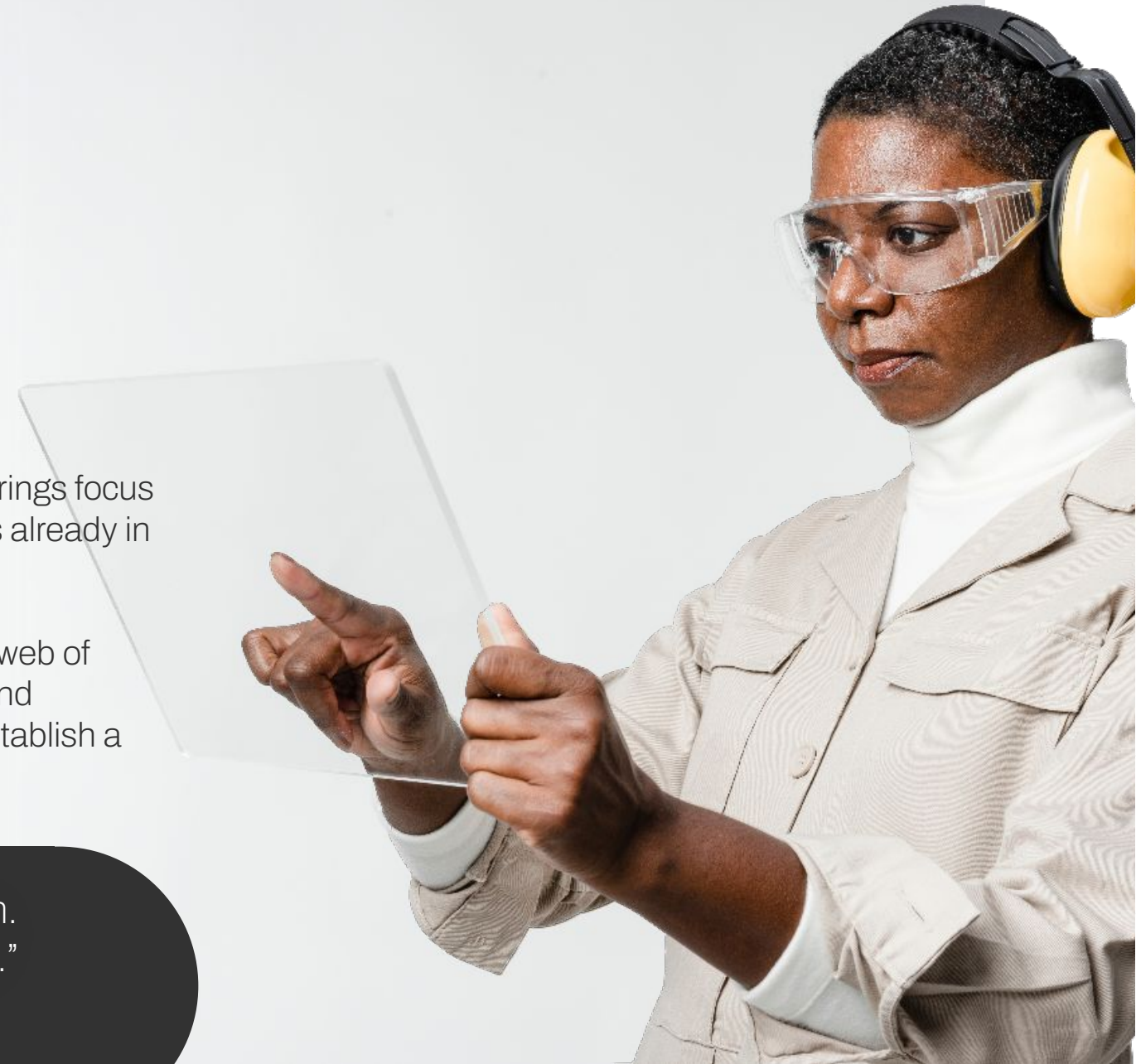
THE UNAFFILIATED INTERMEDIARY CLEANS THE SLATE

- In 2016, the HBCU Cohort's new intermediary, Dr. Thompson, begins harnessing the powers of trust and advocacy
- She develops a systematic vision to unite the cohort around improving equitable student outcomes at each institution
- The Intermediary's vision brings focus to the successful strategies already in place at each institution
- Dr. Thompson envisions a web of inclusion around, across, and throughout the cohort to establish a solid foundation



I want every person I deal with to know that I hear them, I see them. What they say is important, and I'm going to reflect it in my actions.”

—DR. KATHY THOMPSON



PARALLEL PATHS

INTERMEDIARY ROLES



Information Conduit
Igniting the connection
between the Foundation
and the HBCU cohort



Cohort Coordinator
Nurturing the
connection between
the Intermediary Team
and the cohort



Future Builder
Forging the connection
between the institutions
themselves



I'm very intentional about walking people through a process. I systematically go about bringing people together and identifying what their strengths and talents are."

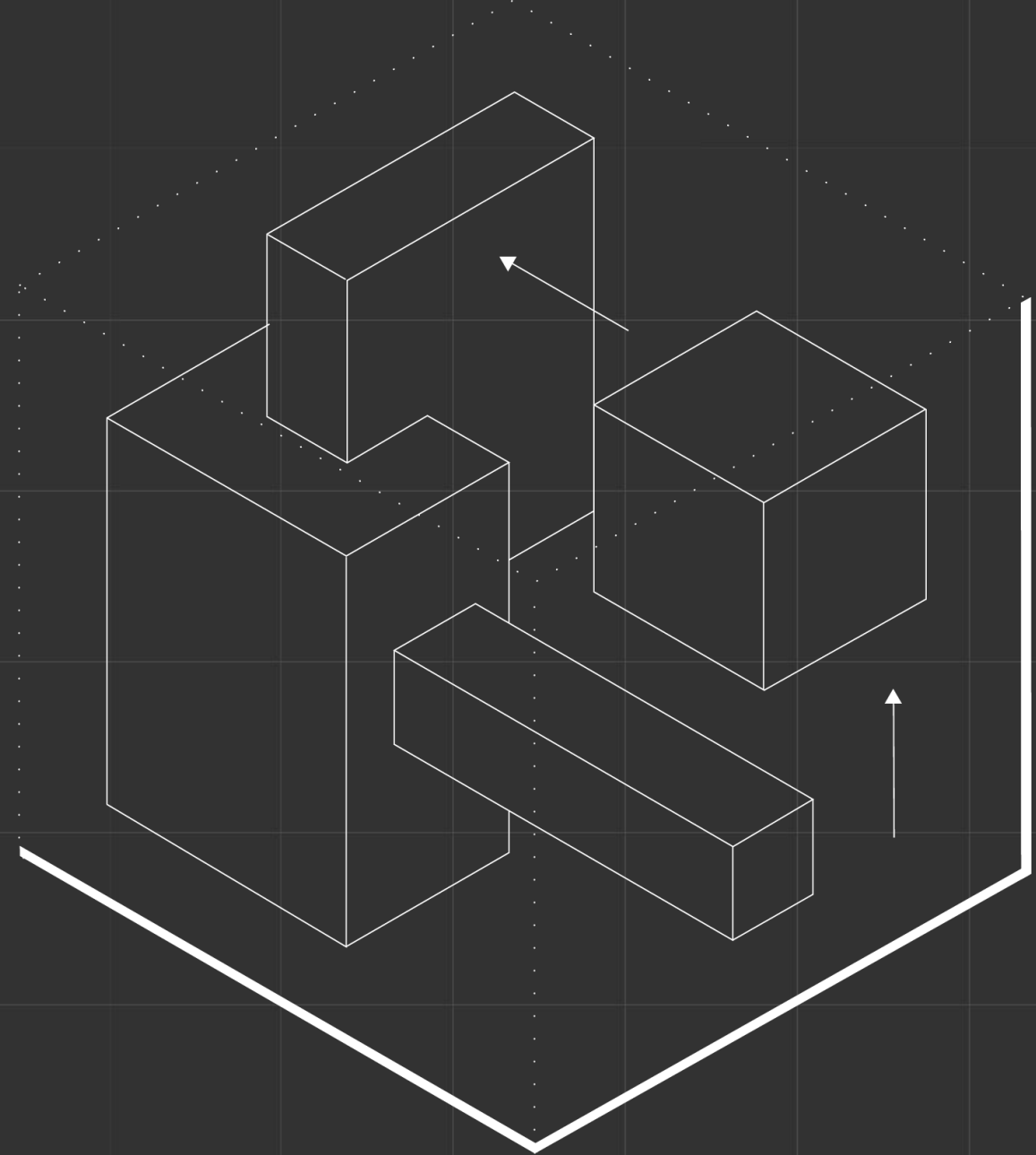
—**DR. KATHY THOMPSON**

Intermediary Goals:

- 01 **Capacity Building**
- 02 **Relationship Building**
- 03 **Cohort Management**
- 04 **Service Design and Delivery**

BUILDING THE STRUCTURE TO TRANSFORM

- 06: The Pillars
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A STRUCTURE BUILT ON TRUST

ATMOSPHERE SETTING

Safe space with empowered voices

01

NAVIGATING TENSIONS

Feedback loop and transparency about concerns

02

INTENTIONAL LISTENING

Regular and reliable communication channels

03

ADVOCACY

Celebrating success and acknowledging needs

04

RESOURCE CONNECTION

Obtaining and sharing the right resources

05

A LEARNING COMMUNITY EMERGES

“COLLABORATE, DON’T COMPETE”

- The community is the place for safe and judgement-free inquiry
- Technical assistants and evaluators join the space and help reframe and remove barriers
- Institutions are empowered to share their challenges



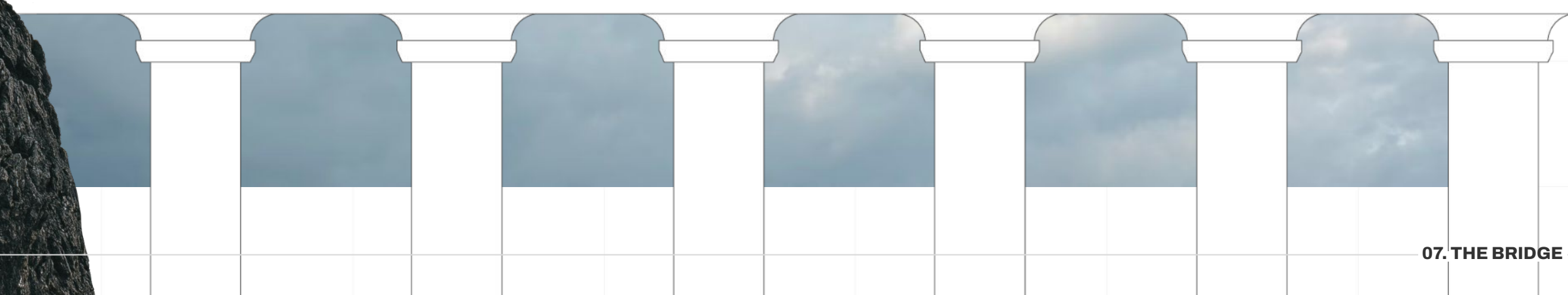
“

We came up with some hard questions for Kathy and the team to grapple with, and they did the same for us. But it was a process of respectful, healthy inquiry— . . . there was a lot of integrity there. [We] all realized the high level of respect the Foundation had for our institutions **and** us. Because of that, we developed a respect for the Intermediary Team and a very high level of trust.”

— HBCU COHORT MEMBER

BEING THE BRIDGE

- Once project stability is in place, the Intermediary Team serves as the connecting structure for the cohort
- Each institution becomes a collaborator on the transformational highway, rapidly exchanging lessons and strategies
- Resources are intentionally deployed and flow freely throughout the cohort



NAVIGATING TENSIONS

- Regular convenings gently expand the boundaries of trust
 - Five in-person meetings over six years, site visits, regular calls
- Direct feedback allows for vulnerability
 - HBCUs in particular need space to address traditional higher education structures that do not fit with their unique context

“

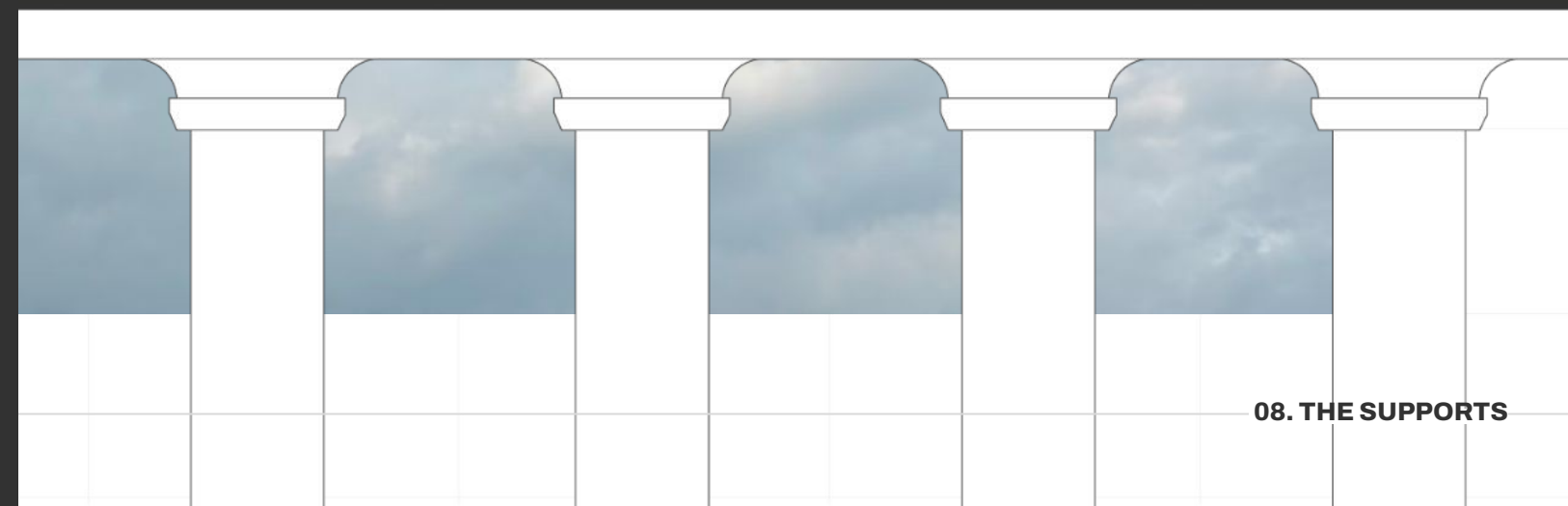
Kathy and Lillian helped us realize the significance of sharing what has been successful... If there are successful efforts at our different institutions, why wouldn't we want to share that? Because, in the end, we're going to be helping our students and our families.”

—HBCU COHORT MEMBER



INTERWOVEN AND BALANCED STRATEGIES

- **Future Building Tools for Sustainable Transformation**
 - Process mapping: Student-centered operational assessments to identify opportunities, capacities, and areas ripe for reorganization
 - Cross Institutional Relationship Building: Site visits with peers to observe what happens on the ground
 - Data Transparency and Governance: Understanding and improving both data quality and the ability to interpret it
 - Transformation Capacity Building: Analyzing the intersections of processes, offices, and resources needed for evolution

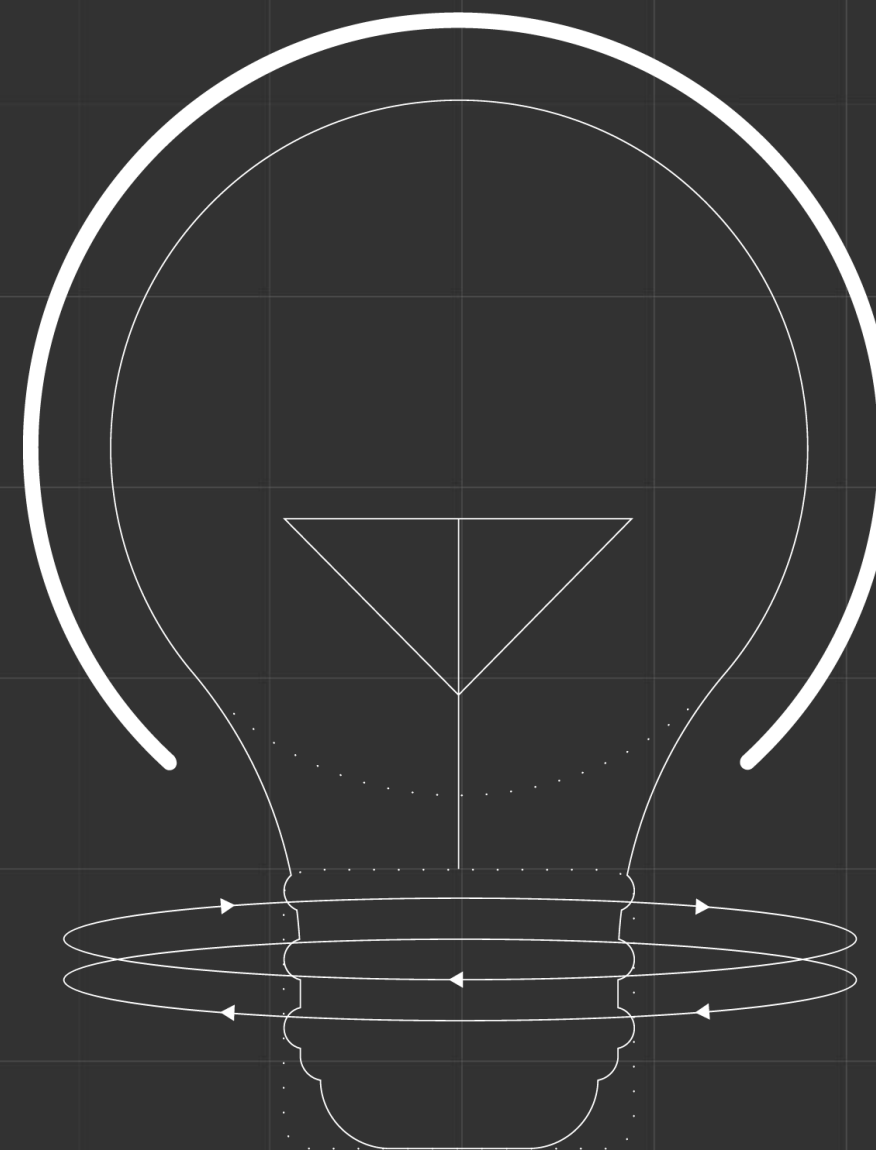


RESULTS AND LEARNINGS

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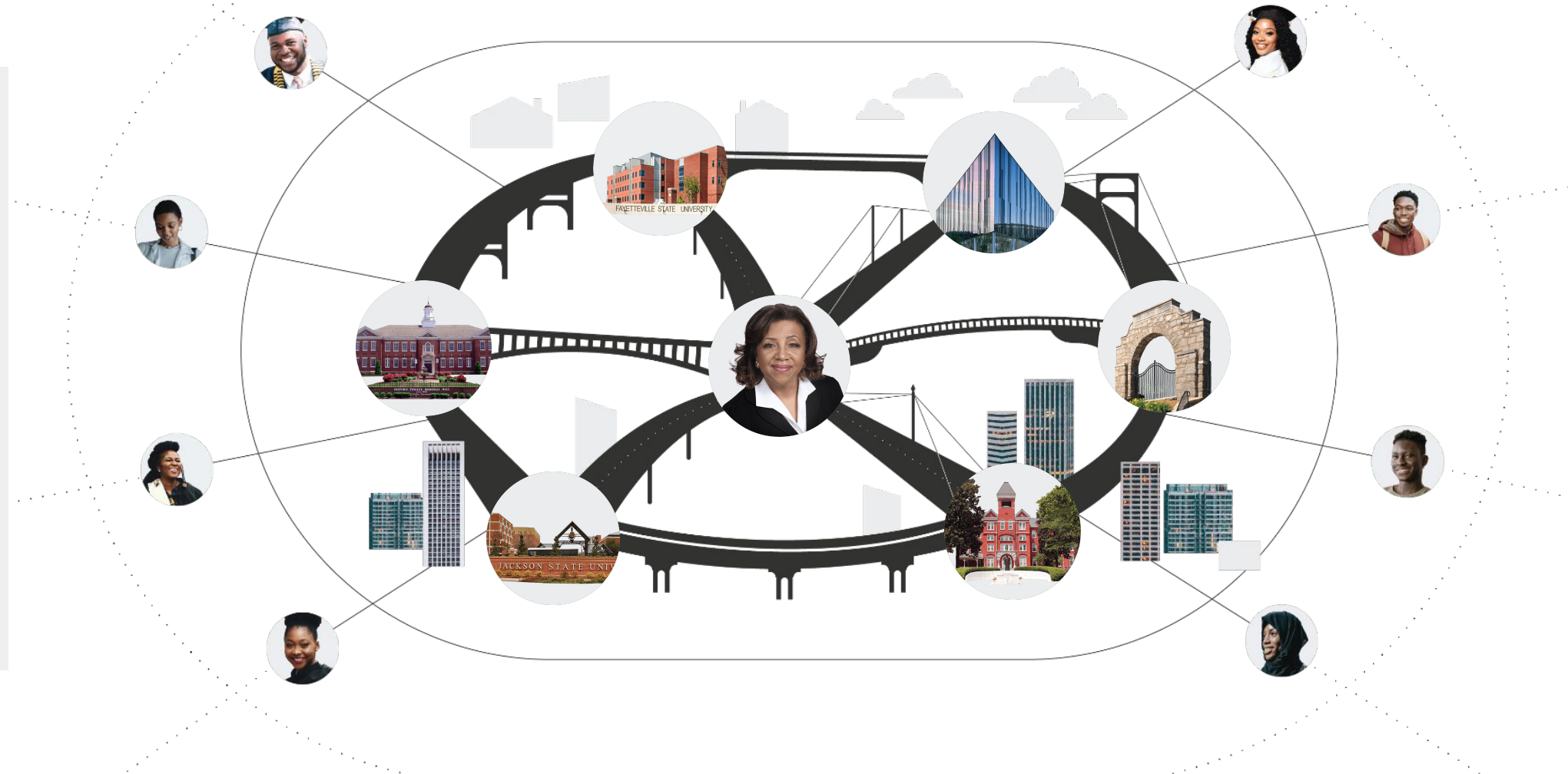


THE TRANSFORMING TOGETHER MODEL IS READY FOR SCALE

- The HBCU intermediary developed custom solutions using replicable methodology

THE MULTIPLYING EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATION

- By modeling collaborative freedom to transform, the HBCU Intermediary leaves a legacy of limitless expansion
- Students and institutions are discovering new paths to ascend every day



EARLY MOMENTUM MATTERS

HBCUs MOVED THE NEEDLE WITH TARGETED STRATEGIES

01 — 02 — 03 — 04 — 05

Curriculum redesign

Corequisite remediation

General academic and non-academic supports

Technology systems in advising

Digital supports and technology in online education

HBCU Cohort Student Population Characteristics



~50% – 80%
Pell Grant Recipients

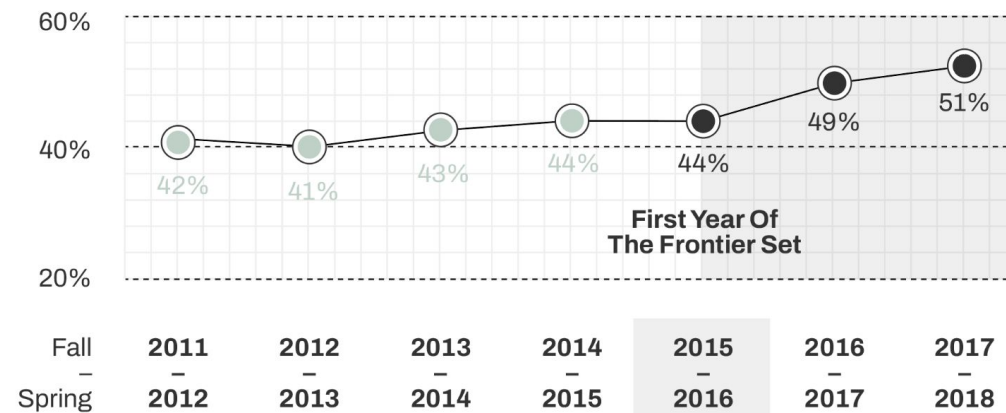



~20% – 88%
First Generation Students



~9% – 75%
Transfer-in Students

HBCU Average First-Year 15/30 Credit Accumulation Rate





Increases in 15/30 credit accumulation rate

High enrollment among first-generation and Pell Grant recipients

Stable retention rates across all student groups

STUDENTS STALL WITHOUT MOMENTUM

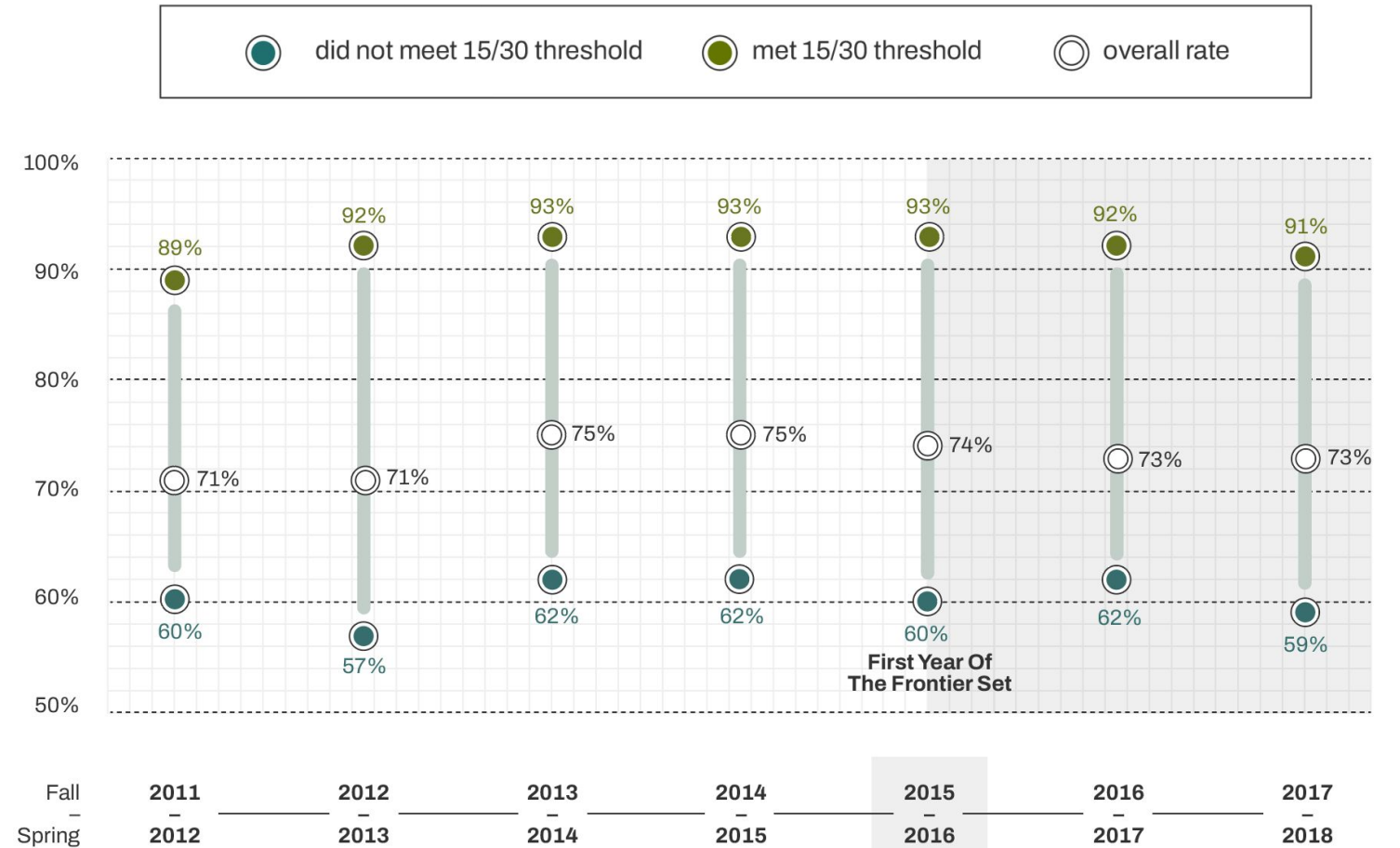
KEY FINDINGS



01 The first year is crucial

02 Those who met the 15/30 credit accumulation rate were more likely to retain into their second year

HBCU STUDENT RETENTION RATE BY 15/30 CREDIT ACCUMULATION THRESHOLD STATUS



% GAP BETWEEN STUDENTS WHO MET AND DID NOT MEET THE 15/30 THRESHOLD

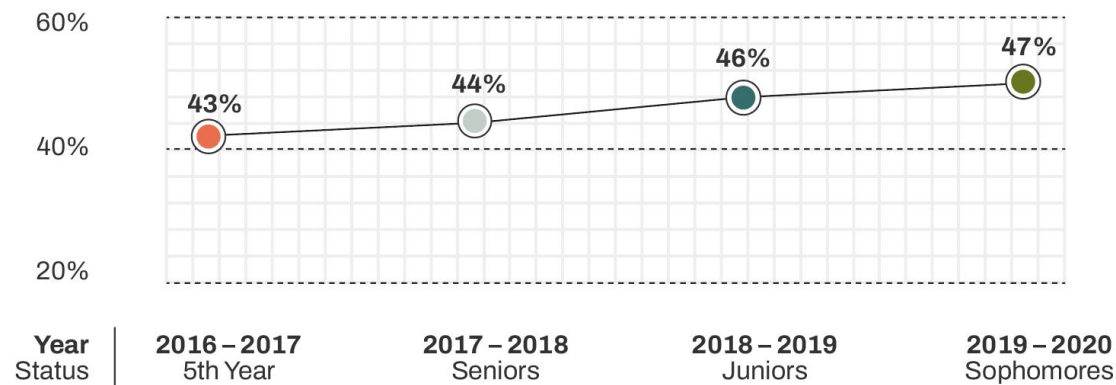


EVIDENCE OF LONG-TERM STUDENT SUCCESS

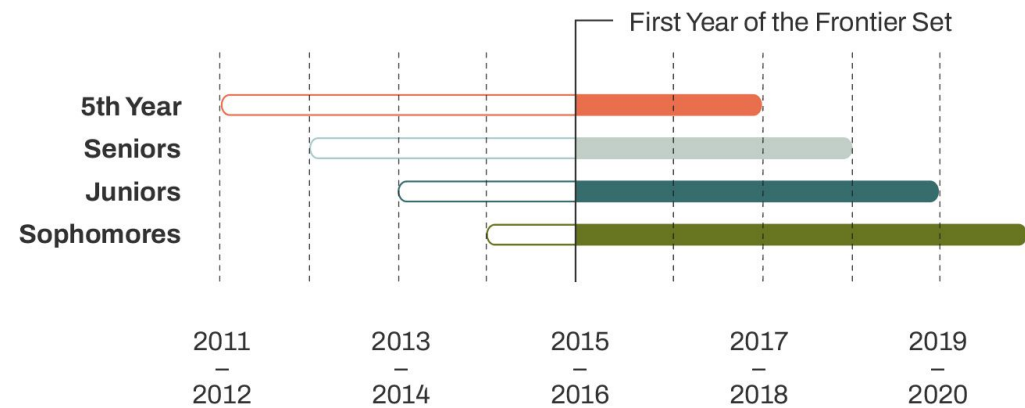
KEY STRATEGIES SUPPORTING LONG-TERM STUDENT SUCCESS

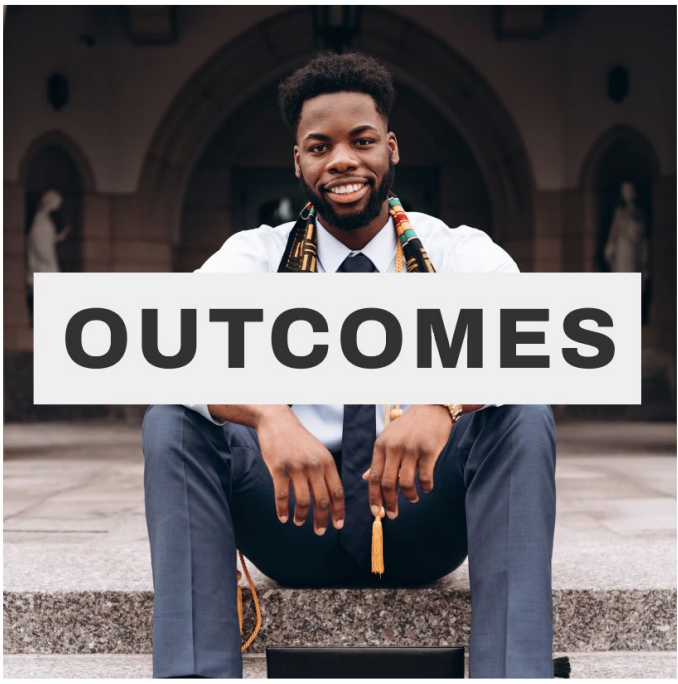
- 01
First-year experience
- 02
Early credit accrual
- 03
Transfer policy
- 04
Systems and processes in advising
- 05
Restructuring of advising

Average Six-Year Graduation Rate For Frontier Set Cohorts



Status During The 1st Year of the Frontier Set





OUTCOMES

Rising rates of graduation and degree attainment

Steady time from enrollment to credential



WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO TRANSFORMATION?

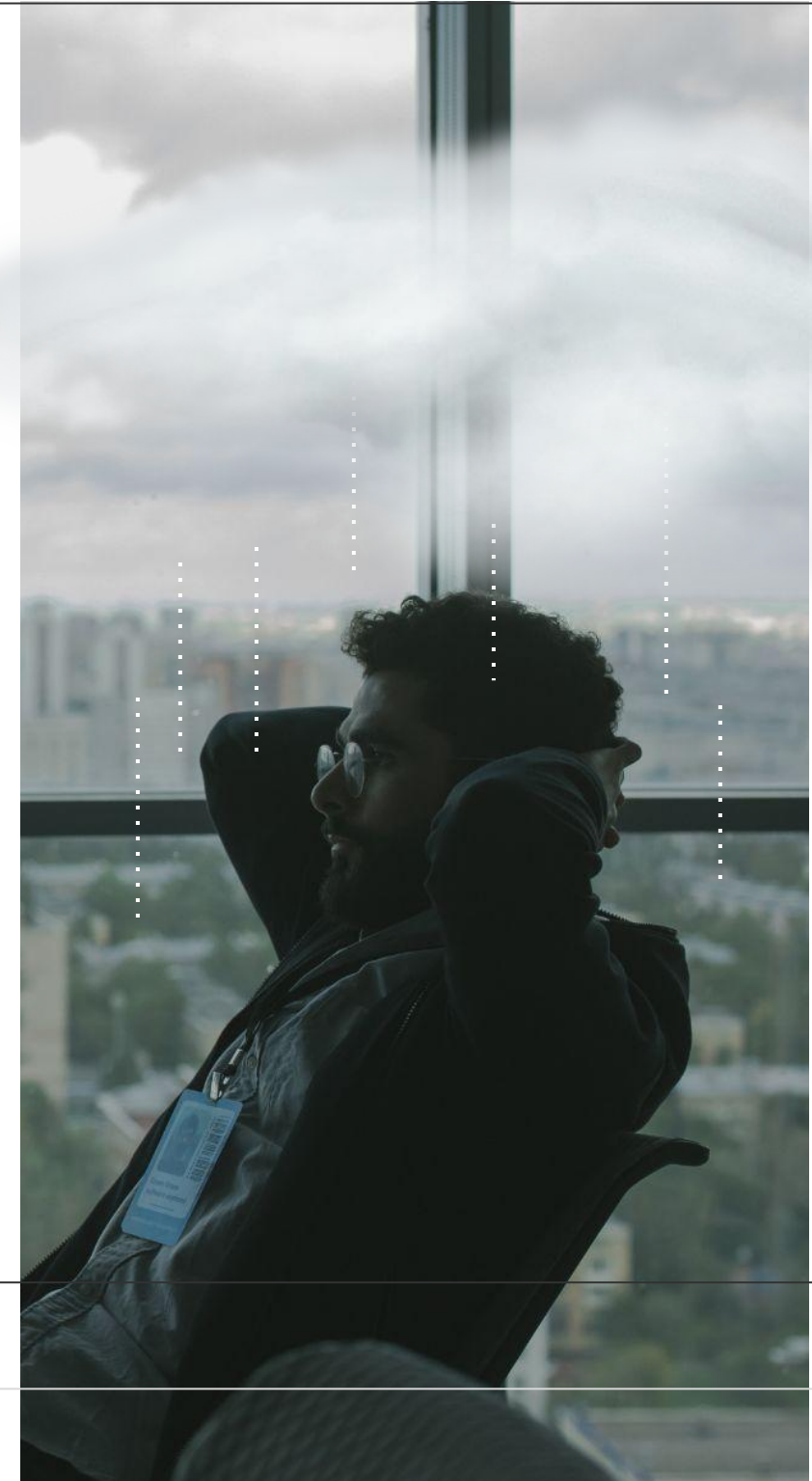
INSTITUTIONAL

- Lack of adequate resources for sustainability
- Perceived risk to the historical preservation of unique student populations and fear of identity loss
- Difficulty integrating technological platforms
- Ability to address problems
- Lack of a plan to institutionalize transformation
- Lack of diverse stakeholders

WHAT ARE THE RISKS TO TRANSFORMATION?

PERSONAL + INTERPERSONAL

- Individual burnout and capacity (time)
- Relationship risk
- The sacrifice of career advancement (i.e focus on administrative work vs. research and publication)
- Resistance to change, changing too quickly, change fatigue



WHAT CAUSES TRANSFORMATION?

PRIMARY CAUSES

- Environmental changes such as funding models or market opportunities/demands
- Internally derived pressure to adapt and better meet student needs





WHAT CAUSES TRANSFORMATION?

MOTIVATING FACTORS

- Quantitative and qualitative data assessment
- Familiarity and personal connection to students' challenges
- Use of consistent advising models throughout the campus
- Accountability to students and the institution
- Timely measurement and tracking of an initiative's success based on specific, student-related measures
- Responsiveness to ongoing changes in student population demographics
- Degree accumulation, job placement, and preparedness as collectives that measure success.

HOW DO PEOPLE BEST CONTRIBUTE TO TRANSFORMATION?

With the right infrastructure, as demonstrated by the HBCU Intermediary and her team, people best contribute by:

- Identifying and understanding individual strengths and skills
- Collective understanding and support to enhance student success
- Communicating around solution-based practices

HOW DO PEOPLE BEST CONTRIBUTE TO TRANSFORMATION?

- Ensuring departmental plans and individual roles connect to the overall strategic plan
- Ensuring transformation processes connect to the strategic plan and mission
- Establishing and assuring buy-in from administration, faculty & staff, alumni, students, and the community at large
- Embracing a common Message of organizational transformation for student success
- Involving and empowering multiple stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation process



HBCU TIMELINE

'15
-
'16

● **The Frontier Set HBCU Cohort Launches**

Six Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are selected for the FrontierSet cohort to refine successful and innovative approaches to transformation in higher education



'16
-
'17

● **Unaffiliated Intermediary introduced**

Dr. Kathy Thompson begins designing a service delivery model tailored to the HBCU cohort

● **Intermediary Builds Collaborative Infrastructure**

Dr. Thompson institutes in-person meetings and site visits to develop cohort culture, and establishes solution sharing practices for monthly and quarterly calls

'17
-
'18

'18
-
'19

● **Intermediary Builds Collaborative Infrastructure**

Dr. Thompson institutes in-person meetings and site visits to develop the cohort culture, and establishes solution sharing practices for monthly and quarterly calls



● **Relationship Building Takes Off**

The cohort leans into an ambiguous schedule of convenings, completes and shares solution maps, and builds consensus around key transformation principles

● **Data Sharing Strengthens the Cohort Alliance**

A facilitated Institutional Transformation Assessment (ITA) workshop propels the cohort towards real-time, data-informed understanding of successes, capacities, and challenges

HBCU TIMELINE



Strategic Thinking/ Strategic Doing Launches

In response to the pandemic and the national Black Lives Matter social justice movement, Dr. Thompson holds listening sessions and navigates institutional leaders through quick decision making around the crises

RPA Funding Leveraged

The intermediary uses funding from the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) to meet the cohort's capacity gaps and holds Frontier Set network events to develop institutional process mapping and discuss equity issues among men of color



'19
-
'20

'20
-
'21

Dr. Thompson's Intermediary Team Expands

The foundation provides additional funding to extend the cohort's timeline and recruit experts in process mapping, instructional design, data and evaluation, communication, and storytelling



New Learning Agenda Introduced

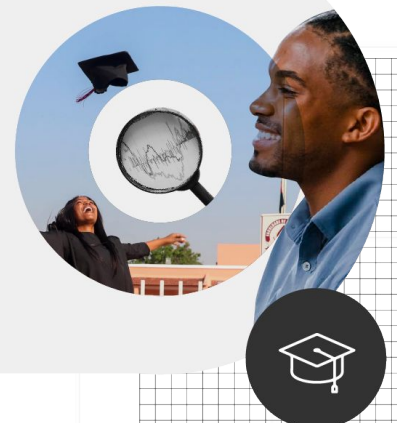
The agenda renews focus on improving near-term measures of student success and contributing to the body of knowledge regarding transformation.

Three primary questions emerge:

- What causes transformation?
- How do people best contribute to transformation?
- What are the risks to transformation?

COVID-19 Pivot

Massive institutional disruptions and travel restrictions call for adaptations to the Intermediary Team's service delivery



FOR THE FUTURE TRANSFORMATION ARCHITECTS

- The HBCU Intermediary's process is both scalable and customizable
- Transformation demands support, mobility, and freedom from constraint
- Now is the time to scale these transformative solutions to ensure more equitable student outcomes

“

We now know what the prescription is. We now know how to ensure these institutions of color achieve the outcomes that we want.”

—**DR. KATHY THOMPSON**