

S-STEM HUB NEWSLETTER

CAMPUS LIAISON ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

Throughout 2025, the Hub team maintained continuous communication with campus liaisons, providing:

- Assistance with completion and renewal of Institutional Review Board forms
- Executed agreements allowing institutions to receive de-identified student data
- Clear guidelines, deadlines, and periodic virtual check-ins for chapter authors
- Access to collaborative spaces for document editing and version control



IN THIS ISSUE

- * By the Numbers: 2025 Impact
- * Convening Highlights: Building Community & Sharing Knowledge
- * Research in Action: Conference Presentations & Scholarly Work
- * Data Collection Update: Voices from Campus
- * Looking Ahead: Book Publication & Future Events



BUILDING MOMENTUM: THE HUB'S TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR OF RESEARCH, COLLABORATION, AND IMPACT

As we reflect on 2025, the QEM/AIR S-STEM Research Hub celebrates a year marked by significant milestones in our mission to understand and illuminate pathways to success for STEM students from low-income backgrounds at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Through deepened partnerships, robust data collection, and meaningful dissemination efforts, we continue to advance knowledge that shapes the future of STEM education.

This newsletter captures the essence of our collaborative journey, from intimate convenings that brought HBCU leaders together to groundbreaking research presentations that elevated HBCU voices on national stages. Join us as we highlight the achievements, insights, and community that define our shared commitment to educational equity in STEM.

BY THE NUMBERS: 2025 IMPACT

- 12 HBCUs actively engaged in the Hub network
- 479 STEM students participated in our comprehensive survey across 11 institutions
- 54 students shared their experiences through focus groups at 9 HBCUs
- 9 campus liaisons (82%) attended our in-person convening in Atlanta
- 53% of survey respondents were active S-STEM program participants
- 70% of respondents identified as female, 86% as Black/African American

RESEARCH IN ACTION

AERA 2025 - Denver, Colorado

The Hub team presented two impactful papers at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting.

1. "Race x Gender x STEM: Exploring Experiences of Black Women Pursuing STEM Degrees at HBCUs"

- Based on 2023-24 survey data
- Focused on understanding enrollment and retention factors for Black women in STEM at HBCUs

2. "Lift Every Voice in STEM: Amplifying HBCU Student Perspectives to Inform Institutional Repair"

- Based on Spring 2023 student focus groups
- Amplified student voices and experiences as STEM majors
- Examined S-STEM program participation impact

2025 NEA HBCU Summit

In November 2025, Hub Principal Investigator Dr. Ivory A. Toldson was invited as a featured General Session Keynote Speaker at the NEA HBCU Summit, delivering a pivotal address on institutional sustainability.

"Building Our Own Table: A Revolutionary Blueprint for Funding and Sustainability"

- This keynote addressed critical challenges and innovative solutions for HBCU funding and long-term sustainability—issues central to the Hub's research on supporting low-income STEM students at these institutions.

Our two proposals for the AERA 2026 conference were accepted. They include:

1. "Strengthening STEM Pathways: Strategies for Supporting Students from Low-Income Backgrounds at HBCUs"

- Features insights from Fort Valley State, Norfolk State, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and the University of the District of Columbia
- Highlights scholarships, mentoring, and academic enrichment strategies

2. "Organizational Resilience in Action: How Faculty Navigate S-STEM Program Implementation Through Adaptive Leadership."

- Explores faculty resilience during recruitment, engagement, administrative transitions, and COVID-19 impacts

BUILDING COMMUNITY & SHARING INSIGHTS

APRIL 2025 CAPACITY BUILDING WEBINAR

On April 1, 2025, the Hub convened a virtual gathering that created space for connection, reflection, and idea exchange on sustaining our collective work while centering S-STEM student needs. Campus liaisons engaged in candid discussions about their experiences and strategies for supporting students amidst evolving challenges in the grants landscape.

JULY 2025 S-STEM LIAISON CONVENING - ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The highlight of our year came with our two-day in-person convening on July 20-21, strategically scheduled alongside the UNCF UNITE Summit. This intentional alignment allowed liaisons to benefit from both Hub-specific programming and broader UNITE Summit sessions.

What Made It Special:

- Liaisons reflected on preliminary data through innovative, human-centered methods
- Campus-based insights enriched our data interpretation
- Leaders shared successes and challenges from their S-STEM programs
- Collaborative discussions on supporting low-income students
- Dr. Talitha Washington from Howard University delivered a powerful presentation on "Asset-based Approaches to Data Collection"
- Seven of nine attendees completed our evaluation survey, with 100% reporting they acquired valuable techniques for interpreting survey data and felt encouraged to engage with fellow liaisons.

COMMUNITY CORNER

WHAT STUDENTS ARE TELLING US

Our 2024-25 focus groups and surveys revealed powerful insights into the STEM student experience at HBCUs:

- S-STEM program similarities across campuses include
 - Regular meetings for connection and skill development
 - Undergraduate research opportunities paired with faculty mentors
 - Faculty and peer mentoring provide academic and career support
- Unique Program Features
 - Journal clubs for discussing research and writing
 - Service learning partnerships with local schools
 - Prototype development projects applying classroom knowledge
- Impact on Students
 - Peer Connection: S-STEM creates meaningful opportunities to meet peers across classifications
 - Career Development: Access to internships, research conferences, and professional events
 - Financial Support: Scholarships make degree completion possible; many cite it as the primary reason they can attend their institution
 - Enhanced Experience: S-STEM participants report higher course enjoyment and stronger peer support than non-participants

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 PRIORITIES

NETWORK STRENGTHENING

- Capacity Building
- Host spring webinar
- Plan fall research convening during S-STEM PI & Scholars Meeting
- Deepen institutional partnerships
- Build sustainable HBCU research infrastructure

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

- Complete staff interview series
- Conduct final focus groups
- Continue comprehensive data analysis
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to liaisons
- Collaborate with liaisons to disseminate findings

DISSEMINATION

- Publish collaborative book
- Present at AERA 2026
- Share findings with broader STEM community
- Prepare a manuscript for submission in late Spring/early Summer



ACTIVITY CORNER

UPCOMING MILESTONES

Book Publication Approaching Spring 2026

The Hub's collaborative book is currently in the process of being submitted to the publisher for production! This groundbreaking publication features chapters from S-STEM leaders at seven HBCUs, documenting specific findings from eight programs. Each chapter captures unique insights into optimal pathways for low-income students to succeed in STEM careers at HBCUs.

Featured Institutions:

- Albany State University
- Lane College
- Norfolk State University
- Savannah State University
- Tennessee State University
- Tuskegee University (2 chapters)
- University of the District of Columbia

THANK YOU !

To our dedicated campus liaisons, participating students, advisory committee members, and the entire S-STEM community—thank you for your continued commitment to this vital work. Your contributions are illuminating pathways to success for the next generation of STEM scholars. For more information about the S-STEM Hub, visit: <https://qem.org/s-stem-hub/>



THIS NEWSLETTER AND THE PROJECT ARE FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF) AWARD # 2138273. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE OPINIONS OF THE NSF, NOR HAS NSF APPROVED OR ENDORSED ITS CONTENT.