

Dear PBCOHE Family and Friends,

History is the systemic study of the past. As it relates to academia, it analyzes and interprets evidence to construct narratives about what happened and why. History is a story. It is a chronological record of significant events such as those affecting a nation or institution. While we have never stood in this current space before, those who have come before us have. What we do know about history is that it often repeats itself. How we handle and respond to things that are meant to destroy us dictates what will happen to future generations.

As I reflect on our history as a country and a people, I see what I would consider to be a beautifully complex and challenging picture. I see the struggle, frustration, and setbacks; yet I see perseverance and victory. I also see creation, innovation and rich legacy passed on. I see genius and black brilliance. I see the blueprint of resistance, survival, and triumph. As I look at this picture, what I feel and what I have now is the hope and motivation to carry on. As we watch history repeat itself, our job is to not sit or stand idly by. Our job is to unify, organize, strategize, implement, and act, just as our ancestors did. As a people, we are no strangers to oppression. What we have always and will continue to do is make a way. We will make a way for each other and for the next generation of brilliance coming behind us. History shows us that we do not give in or give up. History shows us that we were not given the spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. We are here, at this present moment, for such a time as this!

As I continue my reflection, I reflect upon the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education, founded by the late Honorable K. Leroy Irvis and how this organization has poured into me as a leader. I was introduced to this organization, via the Robert D. Lynch Student Leadership Development Institute at the age of 16, by one of our current members and mentor to me, Mrs. Barbara Thompson. As this organization has done for many, it has helped to shape and mold me into the leader that I am today. It is with deep gratitude and humility that I now have the pleasure of serving in this capacity.

For the future, we will continue to improve our sustainability by investing in the use of technology and streamlining business processes. My priorities include reimagining the Student Leadership Development Institute, providing more opportunities for organizational/regional team building beyond the annual conference. Lastly, we will continue to plant seeds to grow, engage and retain our membership. I am proud to stand amongst a membership that has a solid foundation, is strong in character, resilient and dedicated to service through education. During these times, we will need each other a bit more. I am encouraging you to reach out to members that you have not spoken to in a while to check in and/or to reach out to invite a new face to the family.

As we face our future and move forward together, I am reminding everyone to take a lesson from history. Unifying is necessary and we are stronger together. Be blessed as we stand firm and serve in the storm together.

Onward,

Danielle Martin, Ed.D.

President, Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education