

Valuing a Legacy of Education

A perspective on the value of HBCUs with Kevin Higgins

In February, Dreyfus announced an exciting new partnership with leading Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Howard University. The partnership includes a charitable contribution to Howard's Graduation Retention Access to Continued Excellence (GRACE) Grant, facilitated through the BOLDSM shares for Dreyfus' Government Cash Management fund as well as a non-financial program aimed at both mentorship and raising awareness of the career opportunities at BNY Mellon and investment management in particular.

The launch of the BOLDSM share class, which stands for Black Opportunity for Learning and Development, required close collaboration across the organization. Kevin Higgins, a Director, relationship manager and 30-year veteran of BNY Mellon, was one of many passionate colleagues responsible for raising awareness of the BOLDSM initiative. His family's legacy of higher education played an inspiring role.

The Higgins household always placed a high value on the importance of education. Higgins remembers it being so ingrained in the family ethos that he can point to many family members who established that standard. In 1925, his paternal grandfather graduated from Howard University and went on to become the President of HBCU Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina, a position he held from 1937 to 1956. Higgins' father and maternal grandfather followed in his footsteps, earning degrees from Howard in 1952 and 1960, respectively. His father graduated from HBCU Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1956, and his mother went to neighboring HBCU Fisk University. To put into perspective how exceptional that achievement was, only 2% of Black men and women had 4 years or more of college education in 1950.¹

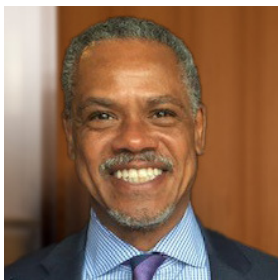
Three generations of Higgins family men earned graduate degrees, a fact that his mother reminded him of after Higgins started his career with Merrill Lynch. That gentle reminder eventually prompted him to go back to school to pursue his MBA/MS in Accounting from Union College. When asked about his rich family history that began at the turn of the 20th century, Higgins remarks that, "At the time, quite directly, they had to attend Black schools if they were going to go to college or graduate school. Today, majority white schools are open to people of color – including Higgins and his brothers – but generations would have been excluded from education and lifelong professional careers without institutions like Howard and other HBCUs who provided the environment to do so."

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¹ National Center for Education Statistics. US Department of Education. January 1993.

The Higgins family carries on that tradition today. Kevin is the youngest of three brothers. While his domain is financial services, his older brother, John, was a prominent lawyer and has a scholarship fund dedicated in his name for minority students at his alma mater Albany Law School in Albany, New York. Kevin’s oldest brother, Robert S.D. Higgins, MD, MSHA, was recently appointed the first Black president of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and recently started an endowment for minorities at the private high school they all attended. They share an inspirational favorite quote by Winston Churchill, “We make a living by what we get. But we make a life by what we give.” When asked about BNY Mellon’s commitment to having a legacy of impact Higgins says, “It’s an important step to make a fixed commitment tied to the success of the Dreyfus Government Cash Management fund. I’m excited to see how supporting the young people who qualify for the GRACE grant at Howard University will make a difference.”

Dreyfus worked closely with BNY Mellon’s Global Impact Citizenship (GIC) group, who is devoted to building a legacy of impact through community citizenship and philanthropic work. BNY Mellon is proud to have established partnerships with a number of HBCUs, including Howard University, Morehouse College and Spelman College.



Kevin Higgins | Director, Relationship Manager

Kevin Higgins is a highly-experienced relationship manager who works to address client challenges through every market environment. He began in the industry at Merrill Lynch in 1984 and has been with the Bank of New York Mellon since 1993. Since then, Kevin has played a vital role within Global Client Management, delivering solutions to address clients’ unique challenges. Kevin earned his Master’s in Business Administration and Accounting from Union College and his BA in English Language and Literature from Franklin & Marshall College.

Disclosure

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