

August 14, 2009

To all with an interest in Paul Quinn College,

The turbulent times that gripped the post Civil War United States is referred to as the Reconstruction Era. During this period of roughly 12 years, our nation experienced a tremendous social and infrastructure concussion left by the Civil War. It was a time where the ripped collective consciousness of our nation sought to reconcile the definition of who is an American? Like any great wound, oftentimes there are setbacks before the road to recovery is revealed.

It was in this turbulent climate that many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) were founded. This includes Paul Quinn College which set its foundation in Austin, Texas in 1872. Imagine the excitement and incredulity the first students of Paul Quinn must have felt. Former slaves, now with a chance to gain an education, a trade, an affirmation of their very right to learn! In the 137 years to follow, thousands of students have come to this college to seek education, to gain wisdom and to contribute to our great, but fragile world.

Those who have followed the Paul Quinn accreditation challenge are aware of the facts. The SACS committee has recommended that the school lose accreditation. One must imagine that this was not an easy decision for the committee to reach. They outlined their concerns, they reviewed the documentation, and with the certainty that standards and policies provide, they issued their ruling.

However, the story of Paul Quinn cannot be fully told by a series of compliant or non-compliant checkmarks in an accreditation audit program. By all accounts, Paul Quinn has made massive strides in recent years to correct deficiencies. They have implemented academic and fiscal measures that focus on student success and academic excellence. In the meanest economy in over 70 years, this new spirit continues to envelop the institution, and improvements have been tangibly realized in the SACS accreditation benchmarks.

The loss of accreditation is the gravest of all punishments that SACS may impose. It would likely signal an end to this historic school, and a sad silence would replace the Dallas neighborhood where Paul Quinn resides. There is still work to do at Paul Quinn, President Sorrell has proven himself as a leader who gets things done and who has made great strides in addressing SACS' issues. Given a little more time, Paul Quinn will reach the top of the mountain and continue to educate and produce responsible citizens. For 137 years, Paul Quinn has had a home in Texas and been an inspiration and a catalyst to thousands of students. Given the compelling progress by Paul Quinn, the granting of more time by SACS is not only appropriate, but wise and compassionate.

Sincerely,  
  
Richard Schneiderman

Concerned Citizen and higher education professional