Title III and the HBI's

When federal funding priorities in higher education shifted from institutions to individuals, one form of institutional support remaining intact was Title III of the Higher Education Act. The intent of the legislation was to assist smaller colleges in their institutional development and to move them "into the mainstream" of American higher education. A less-explicit purpose of the legislation was to provide financial assistance to the nation's historically black institutions.

Since its enactment in 1965, Title III has been evaluated several times. Both the legislation and its implementation have been criticized for lacking an acceptable theory of institutional development and for failing to define what a "developing college" might be. There were entanglements about institutional eligibility and more than a little discussion about the continuation of support to institutions receiving grants. The Office of Education has not been confused, however, about the intent of the legislation to assist a group of institutions serving the educational needs of black Americans, and funding for Title III was doubled suddenly and unexpectedly under the Nixon administration.

Issues concerning the original intent of Title III and reservations concerning its effectiveness have been ventilated in Congress as deliberations have continued throughout most of 1979 and 1980. Much of the debate has centered on whether Title III should continue to support institutions in financial difficulty or to support institutions with large numbers of students in financial need. Proponents of each view have, on occasion, been critical of Title III's effectiveness in accomplishing what the 89th Congress intended in 1965.

A SURVEY OF TITLE III PRESIDENTS

Several attempts have been made to evaluate the impact of Title III on
the institutions it was intended to serve. As funded programs and projects have been brought to question, funding priorities have changed. The one consistency of the act as it has been implemented in the past 14 years may be its continuing support of the nation’s historically black institutions. Criticisms of Title III are not greatly misinterpreted, therefore, when they are read as a failing commitment to a group of institutions still in need of federal support and public recognition. Although limited in number, the historically black institutions continue to enroll almost one out of five of the nation’s black students.

A Study of Title III Impact on Historically Black Institutions (1980) for the Southern Education Foundation indicates strong support for Title III as originally legislated and implemented. Title III funds are a relative small proportion of the operating funds for the historically black institutions, but their use has permitted these institutions to accomplish a great deal that would have otherwise been impossible. Presidents responding in the survey do not indicate dissatisfaction with the manner in which Title III funds have been administered by the Office of Education. They believe that OE’s personnel understand the original meaning and intent of the act, and funds, for the most part, have been expended in adherence to Congressional intent.

A substantial proportion of the funds received under Title III has purchased professional, technical, and other specialized services which the colleges could not afford without outside funding. Contrary to criticisms voiced in Congressional hearings, the responding presidents do not report an undue expenditure of their funds by assisting agencies. They estimate that almost two out of three Title III dollars have been spent for personal services within their institutions, with most of the remaining funds expended for operating supplies, equipment, and materials.

SPECIFIC BENEFITS OF TITLE III

The use of Title III funds has been significant in improving institutional planning and management, curricular offerings, and student services. Title III has been an important means of institutional support to the historically black institutions, and responding presidents suggest that the funds have meant more to their institutions than to two-year colleges in general or to four-year colleges that are predominantly white. Compared to other federal legislation of the 1960s, the presidents are of the opinion that Title III has been of substantial help in making higher education more accessible to minority groups.

In the area of institutional planning and management, the availability of Title III has been of substantial help in long-range planning and in the