Supported by $745,000 in grants from ECMC Foundation and The Kresge Foundation, MSI Aspiring Leaders is a program developed by the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI) that will bring together prominent leaders from Minority Serving Institutions' (MSI) to engage with mid-career aspiring leaders from the education, non-profit, and business sectors in an effort to prepare the next generation of MSI presidents.

MSI Aspiring Leaders includes both a leadership forum and mentorship program and has been designed to help promote diversity among higher education leadership, where nearly 60% of sitting university presidents are over the age of 60 and where many see a lack of opportunity for women and people of color. By providing professional development workshops focused on 21st-century skills as well as two years of post-forum mentorship, MSI Aspiring Leaders hopes to cultivate future MSI presidents by strengthening pathways to leadership and building connections between peers with similar aspirations and abilities.

The forum will include discussions and workshops on topics such as the presidential nomination process, managing relationships with faculty, using data to make decisions, fiscal management, strategic fundraising, assessing student learning, and navigating the media. After the forum, mentors and their mentees will participate in a one-on-one mentoring relationship through in-person meetings, conference calls, and email over two years. CMSI will facilitate these relationships and provide benchmarks to be completed at various points throughout the two years, with the hope that these relationships may be part of a future longitudinal study to measure the influence of such mentorship on mentees’ career trajectories.

The MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum will be hosted at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA. In our effort to encourage attendance and minimize financial burden, MSI Aspiring Leaders will be hosted without program fees to all invited participants. In addition, all meals and materials will be provided by CMSI. Participants will only have to cover the cost of their personal travel and lodging.
APPLICATION DETAILS

• Online Application
  o Application will be available beginning Wednesday, October 17, 2018 here.

• Components of a Completed Online Application:
  o Personal Information
  o 3-minute Personal Narrative Video
  o Strategic Business Plan
  o Completed Leadership Inventory
  o Contact Information for 3 individuals serving as Recommenders
  o Submitted recommenders’ materials (completed leadership inventory AND responses to questions pertaining to applicant)

• Ideal Applicants Are:
  o Someone who envisions a presidency in 5-8 years
  o Someone who has held an upper-level management or upper-level administrative position
    ▪ E.g. Vice President, Provost, Dean, Department Chair, Senior Level Faculty, Non-Profit Leader, Senior Advisor of Tribal or Indigenous Council, etc.
  o Someone who has demonstrated experience managing systems, processes, budgets, and people
  o Someone with the goal of being president specifically of a Minority Serving Institution

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

Below we have included a few guiding tips on things to consider when working on the various portions of the MSI Aspiring Leaders program application. Following these guiding tips does not guarantee selection into the program but will ensure you put forth a strong application for consideration.

• Personal Narrative Video
  o Use Hi-definition video for best quality
  o Do not record video in “selfie” mode
  o Use bright lighting
  o Ensure good sound quality
  o Maintain professionalism
  o Provide a response to all the questions in the prompt
  o Do not go over the 3-minute limit for the video
  o Avoiding having a script that is visible to the viewer and/or from which you are clearly reading

• Strategic Business Plan
  o Submit only five PowerPoint slides; any additional slides will not be considered
    ▪ Opening title slides are not included in the five slides
  o Maintain professionalism
  o Respond to the items contained in the sample provided in the application

• Recommenders
Follow instructions when providing full information for three recommenders. We require one recommendation from each of these categories:
- A current/past supervisor
- A current/past supervisee
- A mentor who can comment on your leadership potential

Inform recommenders in advance of your intent to apply to this program as recommenders’ role is substantial (i.e., completion of a leadership inventory AND responses to questions pertaining to applicant).

Provide sufficient time for recommenders to submit their portion of your application:
- Recommenders will not receive the link to submit their materials about the applicant until an applicant submits their completed application. Strong applicants should not apply for this opportunity at the last minute as recommenders will not have enough time to complete and submit their materials.
- Applications are only considered complete when an applicant and their three recommenders have successfully completed all relevant materials.

• Timely Submission
  - Under no circumstances will late applications be accepted. Please do not call or email about late submissions. This application will be open for a three-month duration and will not be extended beyond the January 31, 2019 due date.
  - Selected applicants will be required to attend the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum from Friday, November 1, 2019 - Sunday, November 3, 2019. Please make sure you will be available during these dates before submitting an application.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I apply for MSI Aspiring Leaders?
   - You should submit your application online by clicking this link. To be considered for this opportunity you must submit a completed application by the deadline. A completed application will contain all of the materials requested in the application details section located above or the application checklist located at the end of this document.

2. How many people will be accepted for this program?
   - We will accept up to 30 applications for Cohort 2 of the MSI Aspiring Leaders program.

3. Is this a program only for those who already work at a federally designated Minority Serving Institution?
   - This program is not just for those working at an MSI. However, applicants should be interested in becoming president of an MSI in the future.

4. Is this program for undergraduate or graduate students?
• Ideal candidates will have already completed their undergraduate degree. Ideal candidates are not currently enrolled in a graduate program at the time of participation; ideal candidates should already have a terminal degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., etc). However, if an applicant is currently enrolled in a graduate program but already possesses upper-level management or upper-level administrative experience and are within 5-8 years out from pursuing a presidency, they should apply.

5. **Does the applicant need to be from a 4-year institution or can educators from 2-year community colleges apply for consideration?**
   • Applicants do not have to come from a 4-year institution. In fact, this program is open to individuals from other fields outside of education (business, non-profit, etc.).

6. **Is this a program for mid-career administrators only (excluding professors)?**
   • This program is open to applicants from various roles. The ideal candidate will have already gained significant experience and should be within 5-8 years away from beginning a presidency. This means that the most successful applicants may be those who have some experience as Department Chairs, Deans, Provosts, etc.

7. **Is a background within the professoriate or university administration a prerequisite for eligibility?**
   • Applicants do not have to come from traditional pathways such as the professoriate or administrative roles within university settings. Eligible applicants may have backgrounds in other fields and may have established careers outside of academia.

8. **What kind of financial support does CMSI provide selected Aspiring Leaders?**
   • CMSI subsidizes the cost of program registration fees, meals during the event, and provides each Aspiring Leader with $300 in reimbursable funding to help defray the cost of travel or lodging.

9. **Does my current institution have to provide financial support if I am accepted into the program?**
   • Institutions are not required to provide institutional support for accepted applicants. However, please note that while this program does not charge for registration and program fees, each selected Aspiring Leader must cover the majority of their personal travel and lodging. These costs must be covered by the individual, but some may choose to ask their institution for support. However, it is not required of the institution.

10. **May I begin the application and finish at a later date, or must it be completed and submitted in one sitting?**
    • Unfortunately, you cannot work on your application in parts. The entire application must be submitted in one sitting. We advise that you save your responses on a word document and then copy and paste your responses onto the application once you are ready to submit.
11. Is there a way for me to submit the names and information of my recommenders so they can begin working on their recommendations prior to me submitting my application?
   • Unfortunately, you cannot submit the names of recommenders in advance. The entire application needs to be submitted first, with the information on the recommenders as a part of that application. For this reason, we encourage you to start working on this application as soon as possible so that your recommenders have sufficient time to submit their portion of your application before the deadline. Your application is considered incomplete until all recommenders’ materials are submitted.

12. Do my recommenders need to fill out the “Perspectives on Leadership” survey and write a separate letter of recommendation? Or, will the survey, with comments, be considered the complete letter of recommendation?
   • The recommenders only need to fill out the survey as there are some written responses required there. There is no need to send in a supplementary letter.

13. Since recommenders are unable to receive the link for recommendations until after the application is submitted, is it possible to receive the details as to what is required for them to submit?
   • Recommenders will be asked to complete a “Perspectives on Leadership” survey where they will be asked to respond to a series of statements regarding their perspective on your leadership and work style. Recommenders will also be asked to reflect on the following prompts:
     o In what capacity they have known you
     o Qualities that make you a viable candidate to lead a university or college
     o Your areas of further development prior to attaining a senior leadership role at a university or college

14. For the Strategic Business Plan, do you want applicants to respond to the items contained in the sample from Sonoma State University or do you want us to simply use that as a model?
   • For this part of the submission, applicants are expected to provide a "supplementary response to the business plan," so please take the care to review the Sonoma State University Plan. All reviewers will be familiar with the Sonoma State document hyperlinked in that section of the application.

15. The program is set up as a leadership forum (MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum) with subsequent mentoring relationship that will last for 2 years. How will the mentorship relationship be established? How will mentor-mentee pairs be initiated? What are the expectations for follow-up?
   • Aspiring Leaders will be assigned a mentor prior to the Forum. Each mentor is a current or recently retired president of an MSI. Our center assists with facilitation of the mentoring relationships by keeping them on track, providing training to mentors on being a good mentor, and providing training to the Aspiring Leaders on how to get the most out of the experience.
16. When is the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum?
   • The MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum for Cohort 2 will be hosted in Philadelphia from Friday, November 1, 2019 to Sunday, November 3, 2019.

17. Is attendance at the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum mandatory?
   • Attendance at the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum is mandatory for all selected Aspiring Leaders. This event is a major component of the program as we will cover important topics pertaining to MSI presidencies, we will build community among the Aspiring Leaders cohort, and it provides valuable time for mentorship between the Aspiring Leaders and the current/past MSI presidents serving as mentors for the program.

18. Who will lead the various sessions at the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum?
   • All sessions will be led by the mentorship team which consists of current and previous sitting presidents. Other presenters include representatives from our various program affiliates such as Issacson, Miller search firm, the American Association of University Professors, Widmeyer Communications, Penn’s Executive Doctoral Program, the Association of Governing Boards, foundation program officers, and media agents.

19. Are there expectations for the completion of a capstone project? By the cohort of Aspiring Leaders? By the mentor-mentee pair?
   • There are no expectations of an end-of-program capstone project. However, Aspiring Leaders will receive a case study to work on prior to the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum. Aspiring Leaders will be asked to solve a series of challenges presented in the case studies which they might work on in conjunction with another Aspiring Leader and/or their mentor. These case studies will be presented at the Forum and each Aspiring Leader will be able to receive feedback on their work.

20. How many of the previous cohort of Aspiring Leaders has achieved a Presidency?
   • While we are currently working on building Cohort 2 of this program, Cohort 1 of MSI Aspiring Leaders is still in the midst of the two-year mentoring period of this program. Selected Aspiring Leaders begin this program while they are approximately 5-8 years out of pursuing a presidency. As such, it is still very early in the program. However, it should be noted that this program is advised and in partnership with two entities that possess outstanding track records—Isaacson, Miller, which has placed more presidents than any other search firm and the Penn Executive Doctorate program, which has produced 36 college presidents to date.

21. Beyond providing a credential for participation in this program, how will CMSI assist alumni of the program in pursuing nominations for open positions?
   • All 15 mentors are regularly asked to recommend people for presidencies and the Aspiring Leaders will be on their radar. In addition, the search firm will be exposed to all 30 Aspiring Leaders. Information about the Aspiring Leaders will also be shared with foundations, search firms, and other agencies as aspiring presidents.
22. In comparison to some of the other leadership development programs for aspiring presidents, what sets this program apart?

- Our program is different due to our emphasis on the cost, curriculum, mentoring, and a nuanced focus on Minority Serving Institutions:
  - This program is free of cost to the selected Aspiring Leaders. Most other programs charge large program fees. In addition, we offer support funding to help offset the cost of travel and/or lodging.
  - Our curriculum has been vetted by funders, search firms, presidents, and higher education experts.
  - The program includes two years of mentoring that is assessed quarterly as participants are required to participate in a study that will strengthen the program and inform future cohorts and the field.
  - Lastly, the focus on MSIs is substantial as all of the sessions focus on the unique issues across MSIs. Above all, the presenters represent a highly diverse group of presidents who are hands on, candid, and on a first name only basis.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST:

Online application due by Thursday, January 31, 2019 at 11:59pm EST. All checklist items should be submitted through the online application. A completed application will consist of the following items:

- Personal Information
- 3-minute Personal Narrative Video
- Strategic Business Plan
- Completed Leadership Inventory
- Recommender Information for 3 individuals
- Submitted recommenders’ materials (completed leadership inventory AND responses to questions pertaining to applicant)

Apply Here:

MSI Aspiring Leaders Online Application

By January 31, 2019

Contact for More Information:

Paola “Lola” Esmieu
Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions
Associate Director for Programs
pesmieu@gse.upenn.edu