

A Critical Moment for the National Black MBA Association

National Black MBA Association—where have we been, and where are we headed? This is a pivotal moment and a crucial time, and I am excited to be here to share this with you.

The National Black MBA Association has had 55 powerful and impactful years. This is our 47th conference, and we have been bringing people together to discuss important topics and help young people find careers. But we must face some realities. The current economic and political environments have put associations like ours under pressure.

If we think back to our heyday, our conference would draw 360 sponsors and 12,000 attendees. Last year, we had a great event, but we were at 260 sponsors and 10,000 people. This year, we are in the middle of a great event, but with 200 sponsors and 7,500 people. Clearly, our current business model is under pressure.

Now, I don't have an MBA—I know you guys don't want me to say that, but I have run a few businesses. And when your business model is under pressure, you need to adapt; you need to change. In this time, we must PIVOT.

Message to the Chapters

Navigating the complexities of our chapter relationships has been a top priority since I stepped into this role. While we've made progress, I want to be direct and transparent: our current situation isn't where it needs to be, and I understand the frustration this has caused.

The most critical issue is the financial one. Simply put, we owe you money, and that's not a foundation for a healthy, collaborative partnership. This is a debt that we must—and will—address. We're actively building new revenue streams, such as the NBMBA 2.0 initiative, to create a more stable financial footing. As this new revenue comes in, paying what we owe you is the first thing we'll do. We are committed to making our chapters whole again.

But this is about more than just money. This is a commitment to building a stronger, more sustainable organization for all of us. This includes enhancing our value proposition for members by creating more impactful programming and opportunities. It also means implementing new processes and systems that will allow us to be more self-reliant and prevent these issues from happening in the future.

I sincerely apologize for the frustration and stress this has caused. Your patience and continued support are critical. Some members join National Black solely for the conference, but people stay because of the chapters. We need both to enable our

greatness. We are dedicated to restoring your trust and building a partnership that is not just whole, but stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Protecting Our Legacy: The NBMBA Foundation

First, let's reflect on our history. We have always flexed with the times. We built programs like Leaders of Tomorrow, enabling and encouraging a significant number of young people to attend college. We've provided scholarships for HBCU students and partners, and we will continue that work in our National Black MBA 2.0 construction. We will do this under what we will refer to as the **National Black MBA Foundation**. We want to protect our legacy of giving back to the next generation and helping young people pursue college and careers. The first brick in the 2.0 construct is the establishment of the Foundation.

So the question becomes: what is the work of the National Black MBA Association now?

NBMBA 2.0: A New Business Model

The way I see this playing out is that we will build **multiple service lines, or lines of business** – we'll start with five. We need to run the National Black MBA Association like a business.

1. **Conference:** First and foremost is the business that we already know. We are here right now. The conference will continue to be a key and marquee event for this association, but it will likely be smaller and more focused. Currently, the conference accounts for 80-85% of our revenue, and we are simply too dependent on this one source. We will continue to do the conference in a more efficient way. It probably will not return to the size and scope it once was, but it will remain a critical element of what we do. We will manage this as a **business summit**—an environment where we come together to talk about important business issues from a Black perspective. We will still host a job fair and help enable careers, but we will also have important conversations about trends and how they are impacting the Black professional. We will do this once a year and may augment it with other types of events.
2. **Workforce Development:** What else will we do? We need to be a **workforce development association**. We do more than just help people get that initial job. We help them launch their careers, pivot in the middle of their careers, and navigate into mid-level and even senior-level management. We want to be a partner that works with our members throughout their entire professional journey.

With the introduction of AI, I am predicting significant job displacement, adaptation, and changes to many work environments. I want the National Black MBA Association to be in a position to help, catch, and support our members and

others as they are forced to pivot. I call this **Project Pivot**. What enables Project Pivot?

We want to have resources and tools that allow people to discover who they are, what their superpower is, and how to maximize that in their corporate path. As people make decisions to pivot to a new job or a completely different career, we want to provide developmental tools and options. We're talking with partners to enable this.

Imagine the ability to self-assess yourself to define your true genius and to figure out your AI capability or readiness. We want you to understand your superpower and what enables you to show up as your best self at work. Then you'll have a choice: you can pivot *inside* your current job by leveraging AI to be more effective and efficient, you may be forced to pivot to a brand new job, or you can use this as an opportunity to pivot into something completely new and pursue that entrepreneurial idea you have. The National Black MBA Association is building resources to help enable whichever path is true for you, all powered by our **AI Academy**.

As part of this AI Academy, we have partnered with several AI advisors. They are helping us identify the resources and tools we need to empower ourselves. AI Advisors, including AI Strategist Dwayne Dixon, Charlotte Jones of Grey AI, James Francis of Artificial Integrity, and pending partnerships with collegiate institutions that have already created impactful AI pathways. They are also identifying tools that truly "see" us, because it's important to understand that the same biases that exist in society are being built into some of this technology. We must make sure these tools are programmed, tested, and used by all of US.

3. **Advisory Services:** We currently spend a tremendous amount of time coaching and counseling our sponsors and partners on how to navigate this current environment. We advise them on managing an anti-DEI environment, the language they should use, and how to connect with consumers. We give all of this research away just to sell a booth at the conference. That's a business. As a former consultant, I would like to see us more formally pursue some of this work with our partners and sponsors. We'll be helpful to them but also be recognized for our expertise. We're launching a new advisory services offering in conjunction with **The Ivy Planning Group**, a 35-year strategy and DEI consulting firm. We're partnering with someone who has already done this, which immediately puts us into business.

4. **Executive Search:** We have 12,000 active members and 82,000 people in our ecosystem. With some of the things that are happening—AI, economic challenges, and the like—I project that there will be a number of people who might get displaced. When they are, we want to be a resource to help connect and catch you. To help with that, we are partnering with several executive search firms, which will serve as official search partners for the National Black MBA Association. When you're looking for a job or that next opportunity, we are going to be a professional resource, backed by companies that have been doing this for years.
5. **Entrepreneurship & Venture Building:** This is the one I am probably the most excited about. Imagine a **Black Shark Tank**. There are a number of you with skills and talents you provide to amazing organizations, and some of you have amazing ideas you'd like to pursue. For those of you who want to pivot and manage your career in a completely different way, we want to be a launchpad for you. How do you go from a side hustle to a formal approach to taking that thought and idea and building it, funding it, and executing it?

We're crafting a new ecosystem of support to help you transform your entrepreneurial vision into a thriving business. Our suite of tools is designed to provide you with a full spectrum of resources, starting with a partnership with **Gravy Wealth**, an entrepreneurial incubator program. They'll offer an ownership DNA assessment to help you understand your readiness for the road ahead. For the financial side of your journey, we're building partnerships with a network of angel investors, private equity firms, and venture capital firms. We're also developing a key partnership with a credit union to be your go-to resource for securing the funding you need to grow and scale your venture.

The Future is Now

So what we have defined here is the pivot for the National Black MBA. We've spent the first 55 years focused primarily on the conference. But for us to survive and thrive in the next 55 years, we need to build a model that allows people to manage their career with their community. We are more than just a conference. We are an entity that will help people navigate their careers from start to finish, in whichever direction they choose to take it. I'm truly excited about this future, this model, and this opportunity.

These are extraordinary times, and extraordinary times require extraordinary actions. NBMBA 2.0 represents a map for us to take action that we own and control. We will pivot to leverage the conference as a critical summit to address the needs of the Black business professional. We will pivot to being a workforce development organization that will help people understand their superpower and lean into their greatness across their career journey, whether in corporate, board, or the entrepreneurship space. NBMBA will support the PIVOT to our advantage.