

PRESS RELEASE

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DATE: August 30, 2022

The Gambrell Foundation Gift Lifts Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative Past Fundraising Goal for Johnson C. Smith University to \$81 Million

Innovative public-private partnership focused on addressing racial inequities will transform Charlotte's only Historically Black University

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The [Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative](#) today announced that the [Johnson C. Smith University](#) workstream surpassed its \$80 million fundraising goal thanks to a \$1.8 million gift from [The Gambrell Foundation](#).

To date, MREI has raised more than \$226 million of the overall \$250 million goal, with more than \$144 million raised of the \$150 million private-sector fundraising goal. The JCSU priority focus area raised \$81 million.

"It's an honor for The Gambrell Foundation to provide the cornerstone gift for this important campaign. Through our grants to organizations supporting young people across Charlotte, we see so much potential for them to make a positive impact on our community and world," said Sally Gambrell Bridgford, M.S.W., president of The Gambrell Foundation. "We need strong institutions like JCSU to make their dreams a reality. That's why we're proud to partner with the university to ensure it has the resources to help transform lives."

Founded in 1867 and located minutes from uptown Charlotte, JCSU is heralded as one of the best small colleges in the nation, with thousands of the University's alumni leading and serving in civic, corporate and government roles throughout Charlotte, the Carolinas, and the country.

"On behalf of Johnson C. Smith University's students, faculty, staff and alumni, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to The Gambrell Foundation for this thoughtful donation," said Clay Armbrister, J.D., the University's 14th president. "As Charlotte's only Historically Black University, so many of our students are the very first in their families to attend college. Thanks to the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative, JCSU will now be equipped with the resources to transform lives for generations to come."

Looking ahead, this unprecedented investment will position JCSU as a top-tier, career-path oriented university by expanding the current academic offerings, recruiting top talent through career-oriented incentives, and appointing a Transformation Leader who will champion positive change.

“The goal of this initiative is to establish public-private partnership for achieving racial equity, social justice, economic opportunity and upward mobility,” explained Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles. “The response from our philanthropic and corporate community is unprecedented, and I am proud that this initiative is setting a new standard for American cities.”

In addition to the gift from The Gambrell Foundation, other funders whose gifts (all or in part) support the JCSU workstream, include Atrium Health, Bank of America, Barings, Coca-Cola Consolidated, Duke Energy, EY, JP Morgan, Lowe's, Truist, Mary & Mike Lamach, the Michael Jordan Family and the Charlotte Hornets Foundation, Novant Health, Nucor, Ric Elias, The Duke Endowment and Wells Fargo.

Previously announced private-sector contributions toward the overall MREI campaign include Ally Financial, Bloomberg Philanthropies, CLT2020 (Host Committee,), National Gypsum/CD Spangler Foundation, Queens University of Charlotte, and Trane Technologies.

The Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative was launched in November 2021 to address racial inequities in Charlotte and help remove barriers to opportunity by:

- Transforming JCSU into a top-tier, career-focused HBCU
- Bridging the digital divide and establishing a Center for Digital Equity
- Investing in Charlotte's six “Corridors of Opportunity” neighborhoods
- Advancing more Black leaders and leaders of color within individual corporations

[Foundation For The Carolinas](#) is leading fundraising efforts, and the private dollars raised are held in a fund at the Foundation, providing support to advance the work of the initiatives. Each of the four priority focus areas has financial oversight by its own Funder Advisory Committee, which oversees expenditures and gives FFTC the green light to release the private-donor funds for each focus area.

Public dollars remain separate and flow through the existing processes for approval, oversight and distribution established at the public entities.

For more information on the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative: EquityCLT.org.

About the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative

Committed to an equitable Charlotte, the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative seeks to set the standard as an American city for achieving racial equity, social justice, economic opportunity, and upward mobility through transformational public-private partnerships. To learn more, visit EquityCLT.org