if not most, HBCU physics programs are having trouble attracting, training, and retaining qualified faculty and students. I believe the problem is one of marketing, coupled with the dwindling talent pool of potential students. Middle- and high-school teachers and counselors need to promote physics as a viable academic and career choice. If HBCUs want more physics students, they need to let middle and high schools in on the secret.

When I attended secondary school, I was never informed about the opportunities or career choices available to students who pursued physics in college. The school's guidance counselor promoted engineering and computer science. During my undergraduate years at an HBCU, I noticed that engineering scholarships, grants, and stipends heavily outnumbered similar funding options for physics majors. The college and its corporate and government sponsors invested heavily in the programs and recruitment efforts for engineering.

It is well known that the talent pool of minority students ready to pursue physics as a college major is rather small. We cannot expect HBCUs to single-handedly solve that problem, but if they need more physics students, they need to help increase the talent pool. As an example, HBCUs can provide tutors and mentors to secondary-school students. Their faculty and physics majors need to be present at science fairs and actively participate—for example, by serving as judges. If HBCUs do not plant the seeds and fertilize the crops, they cannot expect a big harvest of applicants ready and eager to pursue a physics degree. In fact, all college and university physics departments, not just those in HBCUs, need to market their existence to teachers, counselors, and potential students at the secondary level.

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Williams replies: The issue of students not pursuing physics in large numbers at HBCUs is a convolution of many factors, but it boils down to a lack of financial resources. There is a common misperception that the pool of African American students is dwindling. However, according to the 2004 *Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education*, published by the American Council on Education, the college enrollment rate for African Americans had risen 56% over the 20-year period beginning in 1980. More African Americans are going to college these days; however, they're not choosing to major in physics. It is not feasible for HBCU physics faculty and students to go into every high school to recruit, and guidance counselors often do not know about the myriad career paths that come with a physics degree. With more money invested, HBCU physics programs can offer more scholarships, attract high-quality faculty due to improved physical plant and science infrastructure, provide more professional development opportunities for existing faculty and staff, and produce more physics and science teachers for the secondary schools. With adequate and judiciously deployed resources, the situation can be totally changed in a few short years.

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Scientific societies should speak out

I respectfully disagree with B. K. Ridley's conclusions about the role of prestigious scientific societies in areas of