

Dr. Lorenzo Lamar Esters

The unwavering commitment of Dr. Lorenzo Esters for higher education access and success for underrepresented and low-income students is rooted in his own experience as a first generation college attendee and graduate of three historically black colleges and universities. Because of his own pathway to higher education, he is a true example of the empowering impact that a higher education can have on the trajectory of one's life. The Mississippi Delta native is a summa cum laude graduate of Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and holds a Master of Arts Degree in English from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, and Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.

The professional experiences of Dr. Esters are extensive and have been uniquely centered on generating philanthropic and institutional capacity to support student retention and completion efforts. Dr. Esters currently serves as Senior Program Director for National Engagement and Philanthropy at USA Funds, a nonprofit corporation that provides an average of \$30 million in annual contributions. At USA Funds he is responsible for grant-making in areas that foster comprehensive and innovative strategies for colleges and universities. A former Vice President for Student Success and Enrollment Management at Kentucky State University, a public liberal arts historically black college and university that is also a land-grant institution, Dr. Esters managed a budget of \$11 million and a total of 85 employees responsible for supporting the co-curricular and holistic development of students. He successfully developed a strategic enrollment and retention plan that resulted in increased enrollment, cumulative grade point average and composite ACT scores for incoming students. These outcomes were the result of a targeted effort to expand and enhance the academic profile of the university, and generated increases in overall undergraduate retention.

The breadth of Dr. Esters' work also extends into national policy arenas. He previously served as Vice President for the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities' Office for Access and the Advancement of Public Black Universities. There he worked with the leadership of the 218-member institutions to advance college access and success for all students, with a specific focus on underrepresented groups as well as served as liaison to the Commission on Access, Diversity and Excellence, whose mission was to promote and advance access and equity across all APLU institutions. Dr. Esters successfully implemented a strategic plan to increase student persistence and completion rates, internationalize the curriculum, and forge stronger partnerships with community colleges to produce more graduates in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines. Additionally, he cultivated collaborative partnerships between the historically black land-grant universities with private and federal agencies, and with institutions of higher education in other countries in an effort to help build recruitment and research capacity. Through his entrepreneurial leadership skills, Dr. Esters secured nearly \$1 million in funding to supported the development of the Minority Male STEM Initiative, an initiative designed to incentivize partnerships between two-and four-year institutions toward increasing the numbers of minority males in STEM and to broadly support their engagement in STEM areas.

Prior to his arrival at APLU, Dr. Esters formerly served as Senior Adviser to the President of Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana where he provided counsel to the President in the areas of accreditation and community outreach. He further has over ten years of experience as a career federal public employment including Management and Program Analyst in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education and as Senior Program Analyst in the Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge with the Social Security Administration.

Dr. Esters' research contributions and scholarly publications examine higher education leadership and equity, access and completion in higher education with a specific focus on low-income and underrepresented students. He has lectured in four of the seven continents including North America,

Asia, Africa and South America. Dr. Esters has served as adjunct professor of English at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, and at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland. He is the former Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees at Northern Virginia Community College, and has served on the Board of Directors for Democracy Federal Credit Union.

Dr. Esters' believes fundamentally in the transforming power of education to enable students to achieve rewarding careers and fulfilling lives.