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Successful strategies for building thriving undergraduate physics programs at minority serving institutions
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After having been pulled back from the brink of academic program deletion, Jackson State University (Jackson, Mississippi) is now the only HBCU (Historically Black College and University) listed as a top producer of B.S. degrees earned by African Americans in both fields of physics and geoscience. Very pragmatic, strategic actions were taken to enhance the undergraduate degree program which resulted in it becoming one of the most productive academic units at the university. Successful strategies will be shared for growing the enrollment of physics majors, building productive research/educational programs, and improving the academic performance of underprepared students. Despite myriad challenges faced by programs at minority serving institutions in a highly competitive 21st century higher education system, it is still possible for undergraduate physics programs to transition from surviving to thriving.