DETROIT (April 3, 2009) – Continuing its long-standing tradition of promoting education and the entrepreneurial spirit, Ford announced today its finalist teams for the 2009 HBCU Business Classic. The five finalist teams hail from Florida A&M University, in Tallahassee, FL; Lincoln University in Chester County, PA; and Howard University in Washington, DC. On Friday, April 17, the finalists will present their business plans to Ford and celebrity judges at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, GA, and compete for $100,000 in scholarship prizes.

“The Ford HBCU Business Classic is an exciting opportunity for students to apply their classroom knowledge and develop real-world business ideas and solutions,” said Crystal Worthem, Multicultural Marketing Manager, Ford Brand. “In the current economy, it is as important as ever that we continue to foster the development of future business leaders and entrepreneurs. We are proud to offer this program to students for a third year.”

To enter the competition, students, individually or in teams of two to five, along with a faculty advisor, submitted a business plan via the Ford HBCU Business Classic Website at www.fordHBCU.com. The plans required several key elements to be considered for the competition, including type of business, product or service, pricing considerations, target market and competition, and general operations. The five finalists were selected from the national entries by SCORE - Counselors to America’s Small Business.

Finalists will have 25 minutes each to present their business plans to the judges and prove that their plan can be converted into a viable business strategy. The judges for the competition include George Fraser, Chairman & CEO of FraserNet/author; Boris Kodjoe, actor/entrepreneur; Pat Lottier, CEO of Atlanta Tribune; Will Packer, Chairman & CEO of Rainforest Films/producer; and Dr. Randal Pinkett, Chairman
Ford 2009 HBCU Business Classic

& CEO of BCT Partners/author. The event will be hosted by Kevin Frazier, TV anchor and entertainment correspondent.

“This is my second year participating in the Ford HBCU Business Classic and the students continue to impress me with the level of professional dedication that they put into their business plans,” said Dr. Randal Pinkett. “They are presenting timely real-world solutions and business models for a number of industries, including real estate, automotive, manufacturing, technology and the environment. These finalists are poised to become the business leaders of tomorrow.”

The Grand Prize-winning team will receive $35,000 in personal scholarship funds and $15,000 for their HBCU, courtesy of Ford. The first runner-up team will receive $20,000 in scholarship funds and $10,000 for their school; the second place team will receive $15,000 in scholarship funds and $5,000 for their school.

The Ford HBCU Classic finalist competition will also premiere as a TV One special in May 2009. The “Ford HBCU Classic Special” will feature candid moments with the student teams as they prepare for the competition, highlights from each business plan presentation as well as the celebrity judges’ selection process to determine the 2009 winners. Students, alums, parents and business professionals can visit www.tvoneonline.com for exact air date, local times and channel listings.

For more information on the 2009 Ford HBCU Business Classic competition, visit www.fordHBCU.com.

Ford HBCU Business Classic
The Ford HBCU Business Classic launched in the fall of 2004 in response to Ford’s recognition of a need in the Black business community to educate and develop the next generation of entrepreneurs. It was designed to offer students the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real-world entrepreneurial experience. The competition was opened to HBCU students nationwide, and received business plan submissions from students from more than 80 percent of the nation’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Commitment to Education
For more than 40 years, Ford Motor Company has been a major supporter of the hopes and dreams of HBCU students. In the last six years alone, Ford has donated over $10 million to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

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