

# UP TO US: ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION



Michael A. Peterson (center) with members of 2017 Up to US competition teams

PRESIDENT AND CEO MICHAEL A. PETERSON welcomed the winners of the 2017 Up to Us competition to the stage. Launched in 2011 in partnership with Net Impact, Up to Us is a rapidly growing millennial initiative on more than 200 college and university campuses that engages and empowers students to raise awareness about the nation's fiscal challenges. As a key part of the program, student teams from across the country take part in an annual competition to run substantive and highly visible campaigns to educate their peers and inspire action on the national debt and the economic opportunities the millennial generation will inherit.

The students who participated in the fifth annual competition attest that when it comes to our steep fiscal challenges, the country's emerging leaders have been galvanized into action.

Jackson State University took home first prize in this year's competition, and the team attended the Fiscal Summit along with representatives from the other 19 top teams. The Jackson State team members engaged their local community by meeting with state lawmakers, delivering classroom presentations, and creatively engaging their peers through a variety of events.

"Students walk away from these events with a little more entertainment and a little more enlightenment about our fiscal issues facing our country," said Peterson.

"The fact that this debt will be inherited, not just for us but for future generations, shows you how important [this issue] is," said Terrence Dillon, leader of the winning team. "You can't just shrug it off just because we aren't seeing the consequences right now. We have to do something about it. We have to get the ball rolling now, or we'll see something possibly catastrophic later on. And I don't want to put that [burden] on my future children."

Taking that message to policymakers and thought leaders in Washington following the Fiscal Summit, the Up to Us participants met with several members of Congress and their staff on Capitol Hill. The students also attended meetings with budget policy experts to sharpen their insights as advocates for fiscal responsibility.

Since launching on 10 campuses five years ago, Up to Us has engaged more than 100,000 students across almost 400 campuses and provides a platform for emerging civic leaders to help their peers take charge of their economic future.

"While the national debt affects everyone, the millennial generation has the most at stake. The budget decisions that we make today will impact the opportunities that they have tomorrow. Our growing debt will affect everything from finding a job to paying off loans to accessing capital to start a business or buy a home," said Peterson. "Well, it turns out the next generation is catching on."