

Submission for the 2022 AEA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Diversity & Inclusion

Overview

Howard University is one of the nation's leading research universities and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) dedicated to students from diverse backgrounds at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels. Guided by our extraordinary faculty, students are immersed in cutting-edge scholarship and innovation.

The Economics Department at Howard has a proud history of fostering the progress and well-being of African Americans and the African diaspora, producing leaders for America and the global community. Howard and the Economics Department mutually acknowledge and promote the diversity of faculty, giving undergraduate and graduate students alike exposure to a diverse set of professors who are actively researching issues of diversity, including health disparities, labor issues, housing inequalities, income inequalities, domestic violence, higher education, student loan debt and historical perspectives of economic inequality.

The Department offers bachelor's, master's, and is the only HBCU to offer a doctorate degree in economics. The faculty, which consists of 20 full-time members, teaches principles of economics and statistical analysis to over 2,000 students annually from across the University while maintaining a growing number of majors, currently at 135 students. The mission of the undergraduate economics program is to prepare students for leadership positions in domestic and international institutions by providing them with high-quality instruction in economics. Continuing its hallmark role of inculcating rigor and social engagement.

Howard has unparalleled success producing Black undergraduates who complete a doctorate in economics and graduating Black students with a doctorate in economics. We are the most successful University in producing Black Ph.D. graduates (90) and Black undergraduates (37) who have earned a Ph.D. in economics. Additionally, Howard ranks 3rd for doctorate awards to the combination of Black and Hispanic students.

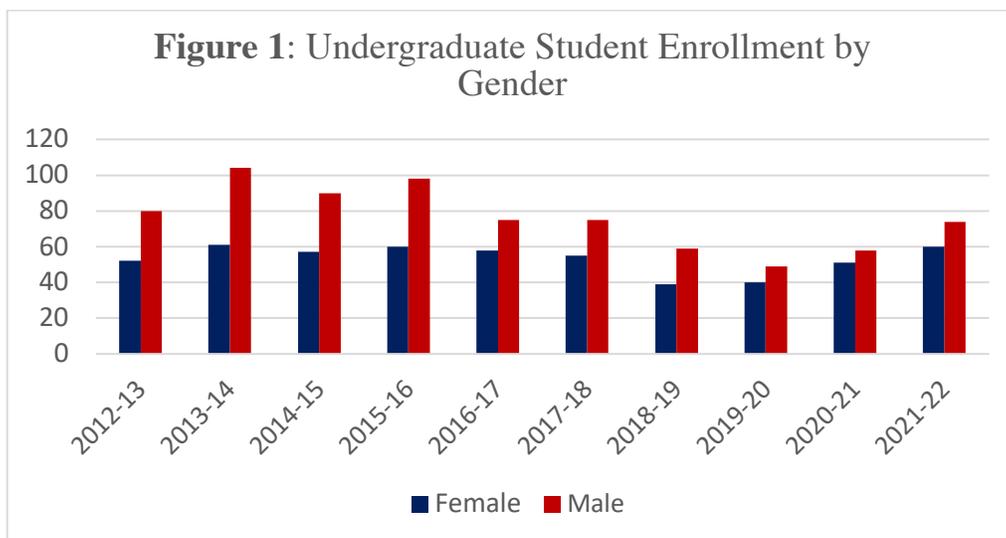
The Economics Department has always had a strong commitment to fighting racial inequities, but efforts toward gender equality was not previously at the forefront. The year of 2018 marked a major shift in the trajectory of the Department. In 2017 we had a department of only nine full-time faculty members, of which zero women were full professors. In her presidential address at the 2018 Annual AEA Meetings, the President of the National Economic Association, Rhonda Sharpe, publicly stated what we (Howard) knew to be true, but others were astonished to hear: as of January 2018, the Department of Economics at Howard University, the preeminent HBCU,

had no tenure-track Black women or women of African descent in our department and had historically never tenured a Black woman, though it had four tenured women. Today the department has 5 Black women tenure-track faculty including two full professors. While embarrassing, it was an urgent awakening that we as a department needed to be more deliberate in recruiting, retaining, and acknowledging the significance Black women add to the economic profession. We have grown leaps and bounds from the department that existed pre-2017, and we will continue to grow and put diversity and inclusivity of faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students, alumni, and the profession at the forefront.

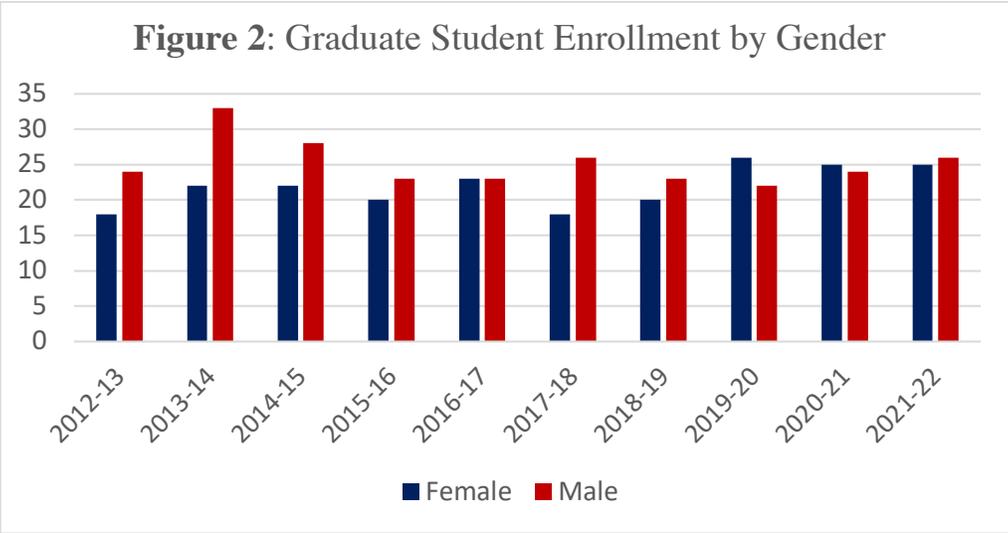
Commitment to Students

From hiring to curriculum changes, the Department has fostered an environment where students from various racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, gender, and sexual backgrounds feel supported and are provided the space and guidance to explore their interests in economics. This has been especially true for female students. Figure 1 - 3¹ displays enrollment and graduation rates by gender for undergraduate and graduate students for the past ten academic years. In the first two reported years, 2012 – 2014, the average female enrollment across all programs was 39%. In the last two reported academic years, 2020 – 2022, the female-male enrollment gap narrowed, with the share of females increasing to 47%.

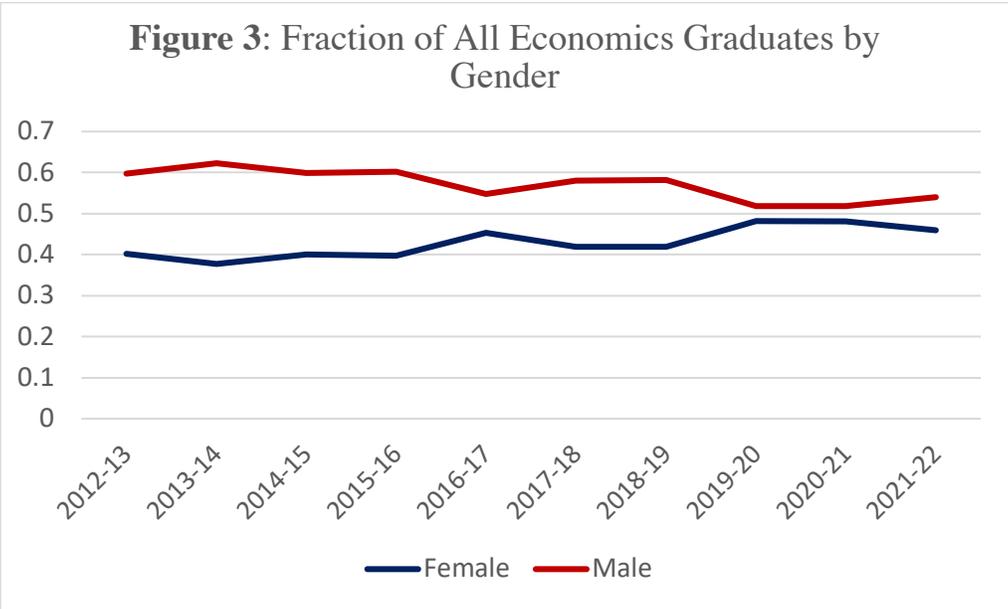
While Figure 2 shows near parity in the last four reported years, for 6 of the ten years, the Department enrolled more female Ph.D. students than male. According to the 2021 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP), female enrollment into Ph.D. programs in economics has ranged from 32-28% from 2013-2021. During this time, Howard’s average female Ph.D. enrollment was 50%. Additionally, 53% of our Ph.D. graduates in the Economics Department are female.



¹ Made available by the Howard University Institutional Research and Assessment Office.



As a department, we are invested in creating an environment where all students feel welcomed and a community that supports them through their matriculation. On average, as shown in Figure 3, the Department graduates a higher fraction of male students from all programs. The gap narrowed from a 22 to a 6-percentage point difference during the past ten years. Over this period, we have not only been successful at increasing the fraction of female students who choose to pursue an Economics degree at Howard, but we have also been successful at supporting their educational journey. In the last three reported years of the Report of the Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession (CSMGEP), on average, 5 Black women earned doctorates in Economics. In 2021 the Howard Economics Department alone graduated 2 of those Black women.



Student Support

Due to institutional constraints, we cannot fund each of our graduate students internally. Yet, all current and foreseeable graduates are funded. This is made possible by the faculty's commitment to our students. In 2021 the Economics Department secured nearly \$11 million in external grants. While faculty are committed to research, they prioritize providing undergraduate and graduate students funding and research opportunities to conduct meaningful research while training the next generation of economists.

Additionally, the Department partners with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, which teaches an Advanced Research Methods and Statistical Programming course and trains students to use R. It has resulted in several Howard graduates accepting research assistant positions at the Board.

The Department supports several internal organizations, which help to provide a sense of belonging and peer support for students. Additionally, aiming at their smooth transition into the workforce, we partner throughout the academic year with top employers to host information sessions and guest lectures to support the placement of our students in high-impact economics-related roles. Our students have been placed as consultants, economists, professors, lawyers, engineers, politicians, and more.

- Abram Harris Economics Society connects economics majors with academic and professional resources.
- Omicron Delta Epsilon Beta Chapter was started in 1954.
- Graduate Economics Student Association provides mentorship and support for students by hosting workshops and research seminars which provide a platform for students to present their work and receive feedback from peers and faculty.
- Howard University Economics Department Alumni Association advises and supports our faculty and students in the program.

Faculty and Professional Development

Howard has invested heavily in the faculty of the Economics Department. The Department has hired seven women economists in the last nine job searches. According to the 2021 CSWEP Report, women comprise only 26% of tenure-track faculty at PhD-granting economic departments. At Howard, women in the Economics Department account for 53% of the tenure-track faculty. Including 2 (33%) full, 3 (50%) associate, and 5 (71%) assistant professors. A great deal of the success in attracting and retaining qualified and diverse candidates has been the collegial and supportive nature the Department has established. In the last ten years, only one faculty member has left the Department.

Special consideration has been given to junior faculty to ensure their professional success and development. For example, college-wide Junior Faculty Workshops and Seminars, as well as

departmental Junior Faculty Meetings are regularly held. The Department Chair, Omari Swinton, with the support of senior department members, hosts workshops and meetings to help promote a collegial nature for recently hired faculty and provide a natural mentorship opportunity. Many junior faculty have co-authored and have secured grants with senior faculty members. Some featured funding secured in the last two years are listed below.

- \$1.4 million Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Grant, Assistant Professor Smythe, and Professor Swinton
- \$30,000 Department of Labor, Assistant Professor Henke, and Assistant Professor Hsu
- \$2.7 million National Science Foundation, Assistant Professor Grooms, Associate Professor Daniels, and Professor Swinton
- \$485,000 National Science Foundation, Assistant Professor Smythe, Professor Spriggs, and Professor Brown-Robertson.
- \$4.5 million U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Professor Kurban, and Professor Swinton.

Faculty Scholarship

Representation among students and faculty in the program is pivotal in demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusivity. It is also paramount that a department and institution support research and initiatives that address inequalities and disparities in our society. This also extends to research opportunities undergraduates and graduates can access. Faculty within the department direct three centers- the Center for Race and Wealth, Center for an Equitable Economy and Sustainable Society, and the Center of Excellence in Housing and Urban Research and Policy - with the common goal of using research to help achieve an equitable and inclusionary society, especially for the racially and economically oppressed.

Service to the Profession and the American Economic Association Summer Program

Faculty in the Department are committed to their students and to diversifying the profession more broadly. To name a few activities, faculty have served the profession by spending time on NSF, Sloan Foundation, and NIH grant review boards, in top leadership positions in the NEA, on the NBER Board and with LERA, as well as participating in AEA, ASHEcon, APPAM, and the Federal Reserve Systems diversity initiatives. In addition, multiple faculty members have regularly served as mentors for the AEA Mentoring Pipeline Program and the Diversity Initiative for Tenure Faculty in Economics.

In 2021 the Department of Economics at Howard University became the 13th host of the American Economic Association Summer Training Program (AEASP). The AEASP began in 1974 to prepare Black students for the rigors of graduate education in economics. It will remain at Howard until 2026. Roughly 20% of the doctorates awarded to minorities in economics are alums of the AEASP. To ensure students have exposure to economists at all levels and various

institutions, we host the Program in collaboration with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Women’s Institute for Science, Equity and Race. Research has found that participants of the Program were 40 percentage points more likely to apply and attend a Ph.D. program in economics and 26 percentage points more likely to complete a doctorate. While at Howard, the AEASP has continued its current structure with foundation and advanced students (two-tiered) and, with the generous support of the NSF and Sloan Foundation, has been able to grow the Program from 25 to 40 participants.

Finally, two innovations have been introduced at Howard to ensure students succeed. The first has an experiential learning component in which the students will get hands-on research training either with the FRB or another institution in Washington, DC. The second has an inclusive mentoring program that fills the gap in mentoring minority students in economics.

Conclusion

The Howard University motto, **Truth and Service**, is woven throughout how our faculty and Department approach teaching and research. Howard faculty are driven by a deep-rooted sense of purpose and inquiry, passionate about teaching and research, and committed to helping their students succeed. As an institution, Howard has produced more than 4,000 social engineers, including the economics department’s alumni, Vice President Kamala Harris, Maryland Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford, and IMF General Counsel Rhoda Weeks-Brown.

The University has long committed to studying disadvantaged persons in American society and throughout the world. The goal is the elimination of inequities related to race, color, and social, economic, and political circumstances. The Howard University Department of Economics will continue to support this goal and the legacy of Howard as we continue to impact the individuals studying economics. Those who will go on to be responsible for influencing laws that will directly impact the economic well-being of all people. Diversity in all forms will provide a richer conversation and actions that benefit all, not merely a few.

Submitted on behalf of the Department of Economics at Howard University by,

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