

College of Arts and Sciences

BLACK WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE



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**HOWARD
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CENTER FOR
**WOMEN,
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The Center is an interdisciplinary program with a vision to be a Center of Excellence for Black women and Black feminist consciousness, activism, and global leadership. The Center aims to meet this vision through programming that promotes transformational leadership, global engagement, research, service learning, and building impactful partnerships. The mission of the Center is to promote global excellence for Black women and gender issues, feminist activism, and transformational leadership through global engagement, research, service learning, and impactful partnerships.

The GWGGL Working Paper Series examines issues related to women, gender, and sexuality with a particular focus on the Black experience. It provides a platform for scholars working on issues from all disciplines to share research on a broad range of topics such as science and technology, health, politics and public policy, law, social justice, business and entrepreneurship, medicine, environmental justice, and climate, diversity and inclusion, arts and the humanities.

Black Women in Higher Education: The Howard University Experience is a special edition of the Working Paper Series (WPS) of the Center for Women, Gender and Global Leadership. The reports in this series form part of the Women in Leadership: A Storytelling Project, which uses oral narratives to document the experiences and journeys of women leaders at Howard University. The storytelling project is available on the Center's YouTube page.



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Black Women in Higher Education: The Howard University Experience

A Special Edition of the Working Paper Series by the Center for Women, Gender and Global Leadership

The historic launch of the Howard University Center for Women, Gender and Global Leadership on October 4, 2020, was the culmination of many years of women and feminist organizing and activism at Howard University. The Center stands as an homage to the women and men who have advocated for, advanced, and established programs, initiatives, courses and other forms of activism for women and gender issues in the long history of Howard University.

Howard is known as a place of many firsts, yet the history of women remains largely in the archives. For example, women have established or led seven centers in areas ranging from the Center for Sickle Cell Disease to the Center for Women and Global Leadership. The contributors have also identified notable women faculty, students and staff from the Howard University archives that have not received much attention in existing literature on Howard's history.

Howard's administration has made recent strides in cultivating Black women leaders as deans and leaders in critical administrative positions. Still, there has been little analysis of how gender equity is practiced among faculty, the board of trustees, and executive leadership. The election of Kamala Harris, a Howard alumna, as the first woman vice president of the United States in 2020 reinvigorated Howard University's position as a leading Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the United States and abroad. Howard University has produced several pioneer Black figures and leaders in the United States, including a Supreme Court judge, members of Congress, leaders of big companies and movie stars. Yet, we know little about the women and men faculty who teach, train and develop these leaders.

Black Women in Higher Education: The Howard University Experience is the culmination of a two-year research project designed by J. Jarpa Dawuni, Ph.D., and Anita Plummer, Ph.D., and carried out by graduate students and faculty that documents the past and present status of women faculty, students, and administrators at Howard University. Each working paper provides historical and contemporary data and case studies of women at the institution in areas ranging from their role in leadership positions, faculty rank, salary, retention, post-graduate work, exposure to violence and discrimination, and more. The data reveal a complex story of individuals and groups of women addressing gender inequity spanning the University's over 150-year history.

As a center focused on global leadership, this project draws on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (goal number five) which calls on nations and institutions to work towards achieving gender equality. Equally, goal number four (#4) calls for quality education. Recent efforts to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA) require data and informed research to provide a baseline for assessing where progress has been made and where more work needs to be done. This Working Paper Series (WPS) provides the needed baseline for further research on the topic of women's representation at institutions of higher education—specifically within HBCUs.

Collectively, the working papers document critical areas of women's experiences in different academic departments, colleges, and schools. In 2022, women students comprised 74% of the student body at Howard. It is well documented that women today have more access to education than at any other point in history. (*Continued*)

PREFACE

Persistent gender inequality and inequity point to institutional failures at Howard and in higher education broadly. In 2019-2020, women comprised 55% of the faculty at Howard; however, when divided by rank, 66.81% of full professors and 53.27% of associate professors are men (College Factual, 2020). Lectureships, assistant professors, instructors, and adjuncts are predominantly held by women. Education is viewed as an equalizer, and this working paper series examines how women at the institution that graduates the highest number of Black professionals in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, nursing, law, social work, and education fare in ensuring women are equally represented in those fields at Howard and beyond.

Representation in administrative leadership and faculty is essential in understanding the story of women's evolving roles at Howard University. Each paper focuses on three aspects of women's roles at the institution. It begins with a microhistory of each college or school, followed by an analysis of women's intellectual contributions in their disciplines over the institution's history. The second area focuses on contemporary data (up to the year 2020) on gender in administrative, faculty, and non-faculty teaching positions. The final part of each paper examines the societal and institutional practices and culture contributing to gender inequality and provides policy recommendations that may help address disparities in Black women's representation in higher education leadership.

Significance and Contribution

The role and experiences of Black women in higher education have been documented in the literature, especially in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

This WPS extends the literature by highlighting the following areas:

- The historical evolution of Black women faculty, administrators and students at Howard University.
- The formal institutional barriers Black women administrators and faculty encounter and the strategies used to address them.
- The informal cultural challenges faculty and administrators experience.
- Feminist theoretical perspectives that specifically focus on gender and race as critical dimensions to framing Black women in higher education.
- Highlights the broader implications of inequality and inequity on women in underrepresented sectors, especially in science and medicine.

This working paper series is the first project that shines a light on the role of women academics and administrators at Howard University. Each paper provides policy recommendations that can help Howard University and similar institutions advance gender equality and inclusion on campus. This project will contribute to existing scholarship on Black women in higher education by using Howard University as a case study.

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Black Women in Higher Education: The Howard University Experience The College of Arts and Sciences¹

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ABSTRACT

This study provides insights into the experiences of women faculty at Howard University's College of Arts and Sciences. It highlights the historical institutional and societal practices that prompted shifts in the roles and positions of women over time. Examining gender representation among faculty and leadership positions in COAS provided several insights into Howard's oldest and largest college. First, the experiences of women have varied over time. Second, women have been overly represented in the arts and have had less representation in the college's sciences departments. Third, while Black women at Howard may have, for the most part, been able to avoid "double jeopardy" at the historically black institution, or what Francis Beale (2008) describes as dual exposure to racism and sexism, the experiences of women faculty were gendered.

INTRODUCTION

It has been nearly 30 years since over one thousand women came together at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to discuss the issues facing Black women at colleges and universities across the U.S. Around the time of this historic event, entitled "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994," which examined the role of Black women scholars in academia and public life, Black women comprised just 2.4 percent of all faculty positions in institutions of higher education nationally (Digest of Education Statistics, 1997). For the "embattled Black women academics," as Saidiya Hartman put it so poignantly in her report on the memorable conference, such a convening marked an escape from their everyday campus experiences of "alienation, oppressive loneliness, and marginalization" (Hartman, 1994). The underrepresentation of Black women on American campuses is a trend that continues today, with Black women comprising just 3.2 percent of faculty nationwide (Digest of Education Statistics, 2020).

Institutions of higher learning, as sites of knowledge production, have an outsized influence in society and, therefore must be interrogated to understand better how they contribute to

¹This work was financially supported by the Center for Women, Gender and Global Leadership.

and perpetuate various forms of discrimination and oppression. Black women have long led such initiatives as a means of resisting their own marginalization within academia. Issues of systemic racism are what has compelled many of them to seek an education and employment at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), where it is less likely that they encounter the kind of isolation mentioned by Hartman.

HBCUs have been shown to be more equitable than other institutions of higher education when it comes to various dimensions of equity. But as institutions situated in a gendered world, HBCUs are not isolated from the sexism and gender-based discrimination that take place on other campuses (Renzulli, Grant, and Kathuria, 2006). In fact, there may be even more of an imperative to investigate these issues at HBCUs, where race has been viewed as “a more important vector of disadvantage” for Black people (Renzulli et al., 2006).

This report seeks to shed light on the experiences of women faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences at Howard University. It provides insights into women’s representation among faculty and at different levels of leadership within the college, while also focusing specifically on women’s academic achievements and contributions. With an interest in highlighting issues of equity and representation, this report is useful for better understanding women’s roles and positions within the disciplines that comprise the arts and sciences, particularly those of Black women.

WOMEN IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Women have outnumbered men in earning degrees at all levels and enrollment in graduate school in the U.S. in recent years. Data from the Council of Graduate Schools show women accounted for 53.5 percent of graduate school enrollment in 2020 (Zhou & Gao, 2021). Women represented most people enrolled across several fields, including arts and humanities, biological and agricultural sciences, and health and medical sciences. They also accounted for most of the master’s and doctoral degrees earned that year. However, in many science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, men earned nearly three-fourths of the degrees conferred. They earned about 72.2 percent of master’s degrees and 75.1 percent of doctoral degrees in engineering, as well as 64.5 percent of master’s degrees and 74.2 percent of doctoral degrees in mathematics and computer sciences. They also were overrepresented in the physical and earth sciences fields.

Historically, women have been overly represented in specific arts fields, such as English and romance languages, while having a meager presence in the sciences. This has been attributed to social and cultural dynamics in which women have played more domesticated roles compared to men. In academia, this translated to women being “encouraged to pursue fields and studies emphasizing nurturing while men are encouraged in domains emphasizing quantitative reasoning” (Turner & Bowen, 1999). It is also noteworthy that the female-dominated fields have been those that pay less (Benjamin, 1999). Sexism and gender-based discrimination have certainly factored into the equation, as patriarchy has propagated

the culture and beliefs that contribute to male dominance in certain scientific fields of study. Even as women have come to comprise the majority of student populations in many institutions of higher learning, which is mainly the case at HBCUs, the scant appearance of women in fields of science remains an issue of concern.

Still, analyzing race and gender enables the specific experiences of Black women in the sciences to be better understood. For the past ten years, Black women have accounted for a higher share of STEM graduates than Black men, while white women have lagged behind their white male counterparts. In 2019-2020, Black women made up 10 percent of women who earned STEM degrees, while Black men represented 7.8 percent of STEM degree-earning males in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This contrasts with rates among whites, in which white women represented 54.9 percent of all women earning STEM degrees, compared to white men, who accounted for 61.3 percent of men earning such degrees.

The underrepresentation of Blacks in STEM fields has led HBCUs to encourage women and underrepresented ethnic and racial minorities to pursue science studies as they have had a greater emphasis on STEM education compared to PWIs (Perna et al., 2009). HBCUs are the leading producers of Black students who receive PhDs in the STEM disciplines, and recent years have seen these institutions making hefty investments in these areas. This has been attributed to HBCUs understanding that “achieving diversity in STEM will not occur through happenstance or ‘business-as-usual’ practices” (Toldson, 2013).

Dickens et al (2020) show that HBCUs have also had particular success in graduating Black physicists. Yet Black women continue to be underrepresented in the field, representing only 2 percent of faculty in physics doctorate programs and 3 percent in bachelor’s-only physics departments in 2016 (Dickens et al., 2020). While Black women pursuing science degrees at HBCUs may have better educational experiences at the institutions compared to PWIs, STEM disciplines consist of primarily male-dominated fields, and gaps remain in addressing “the disparate advancement of women STEM faculty” (Stephens & Wilson-Kennedy, 2019).

As women are entering college and earning degrees in both the arts and sciences at higher rates than they were five decades ago, disparities persist, particularly within the labor market. Women remain underrepresented among tenured faculty, especially in physics, engineering, and computer science (Hill et al., 2010). Efforts at improving the cultural climate of arts and sciences departments within universities as well as addressing the structural inequities that enable gender and racial discrimination, are necessary to achieve both gender and racial equity at all levels within institutions of higher learning.

BACKGROUND

Howard University was chartered by the United States Congress in 1867 to establish an institution for “the education of youth in the liberal arts and sciences” (“Howard University

Charter” 1867). The College of Arts and Sciences (COAS), then called the College Department, was established within two years of the university’s founding. It offered courses in English, Greek, Latin, French, German, Spanish, mathematics, philosophy, and botany. Within a few years, the curriculum expanded to include theology, history, and additional subjects in the sciences.

In 1907, the department’s designation was changed from the “College Department” to the “College of Arts and Sciences.” University records show that the College of Arts and Sciences experienced numerous name changes and quite a bit of restructuring throughout the history of Howard. For example, in 1919, the College of Arts and Sciences merged with another school to become the College of Liberal Arts. It was also referred to as the School of Liberal Arts. By 1934, the College was organized in a way that it maintained for several decades before returning to the College of Arts and Sciences designation in the early 1990s.

The college underwent major staffing and curriculum changes prompted by historic campus protests in 1968 (Howard University, 1969). COAS had been a critical target of the protests as students demanded curricula more reflective of the Black experience (Winston, 1998). The protests drew greater attention and inspired action toward shifting Howard away from “an identity rooted in adherence to the white power structure” to truly becoming a Black university (Cohen, 2018).

Today, the College of Arts and Sciences, known as Howard University’s “flagship,” is divided into three divisions – humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. In addition to being the oldest of Howard’s colleges, COAS also boasts the most majors, professors, and students spread across its academic departments and programs (College of Arts and Sciences, n.d.). Howard University is often ranked top among other HBCUs, partly because of its reputation for producing high numbers of graduates who go on to work in STEM fields.

COAS has aimed to provide students with an education “grounded in the quest for intellectual freedom, social justice, artistic expression, and the pursuit of knowledge” (“Mission & Vision” n.d.). This has been evidenced by the trajectories of many women students and faculty in the college whose careers have been marked by both high academic achievements and being in service to their communities and the world at large.

Early Women Students and Faculty in the College

Howard University was founded in 1867, just four years after the Emancipation Proclamation declared Black people free in the U.S. after centuries of enslavement. By the end of the 19th century, 1,190 male students and 164 females had graduated from the university (“Alumni 1867-96,” 1867). The College Department at the time was the least popular of the university’s six departments. It accounted for only seven of the university’s female graduates. An overwhelming majority of female students were instead found within the Normal Department, which prepared students for teaching careers. This was in line

with enrollment at other schools across the nation, as teaching then was largely a women's profession.

The first woman to graduate from the College Department was Matilda Nichols in 1874. Nichols, who received her Bachelor of Arts degree, had been among the university's first cohort of four white women, who were all daughters of faculty. Other early women graduates of the department included Josephine Turpin in 1886 and Julia Caldwell in 1888. Turpin went on to become an accomplished writer and educator. Her essays covered topics such as increasing access to higher education for women and she contributed greatly to the development of the black press within the context of post-Reconstruction-era racial and gender uplift (Danbridge 2019). Caldwell became a teacher, working in Atlanta and Dallas. She continued her studies at various institutions in the U.S. before becoming principal of Booker T. Washington High School in Dallas (Logan 1969).



Figure 1 Photo of Elizabeth Appo Cook

Among COAS faculty, the first woman to teach in the college was Elizabeth Appo Cook, who appears in university records as an instructor of French and German as early as 1894. Cook came from an elite family. Her mother, Helen Appo Cook, had worked with Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, and other influential Black women in 1892 to form the Colored Women's League, which sought to unify Black women and advance education among Black communities (Brooks, 2018). Elizabeth Cook's father, John Cook, was an advocate for the civil rights and welfare of Black people and served as a Howard University trustee. Elizabeth Cook had an impressive stint in

the Romance Languages department in COAS, where she worked for several decades before earning the title of emerita professor in 1948 ("1948-49," 1948).

Cook was soon joined by another female faculty member, Ethel Robinson. Robinson broke barriers as the first Black woman to be admitted to Brown University and graduated with honors with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1905. She taught English and Literature at Howard until 1914. Robinson was also credited with helping COAS students organize the first-ever Black sorority – Alpha Kappa Alpha – in 1908 (Howard University, 1915).



Figure 2 Photo of Ethel Robinson

By the early decades of the 20th century, Howard University had emerged as the premier academic institution for Black people in the U.S, attracting the nation's top intellectuals dedicated to uplifting the race. Many of them found a home in COAS, including the first-ever Black women to receive PhDs – Eva Dykes and Georgiana Simpson. They both earned their doctorates in 1921. Dykes' degree was in English Philology from Radcliffe, while Simpson received her degree in German from the University of Chicago. Dykes had been

hired at Howard as an associate professor of English after teaching at Washington D.C.'s Dunbar High School. At Howard, she taught within the department for over a decade before leaving to head the English Department at Oakwood College, a historically Black Seventh-day Adventist institution. Simpson also spent time teaching at Dunbar High School. She had joined Howard by the 1930s as an associate professor of German. She was promoted to a full professor position and given the emerita title by 1938.

GENDER REPRESENTATION AND FACULTY EXPERIENCES

During the early years of the university, at a time when women across the U.S. were battling for equal rights, male student enrollment was exponentially higher than that of female students. Yet, as women gained the right to vote and secured other forms of recognition as equal citizens in society, they had increased access to education. For educated Black women who often faced racial discrimination at white universities, HBCUs provided an intellectual home for them to feel empowered to continue their scholarly pursuits.

Howard did not have its first Black president until 1926 when Mordecai Wyatt Johnson assumed the role. Many have noted the significant efforts Johnson made in recruiting the leading Black thinkers and scholars of the time, both male and female, into the faculty. Included among this esteemed group were COAS faculty members such as Simpson and Dyke, Merze Tate, Alain Locke, Ralph Bunche, and E. Franklin Frazier. Howard was the only HBCU to have established faculty ranks and a tenure system and it also paid higher salaries, making it “the first choice for Black academics” (Perkins, 2014). Yet while this class of prestigious scholars at Howard was arguably better supported by their institutions to be able to conduct research and engage in other activities to advance Blacks and fight racial discrimination, the experiences of men and women faculty were notably different.



Figure 3 Faculty of the College of Liberal Arts, 1949. Source: Moorland Spingarn Research Center

Institutions of higher education, including HBCUs, throughout the first half of the 20th century, had emphasized women learning “teacher education and the homemaking arts rather than political science, economics, and sociology” (Herdlein, Cali, and Dina, 2008). At COAS, women faculty were holding positions primarily in the fields of English, Romance Languages, physical education of women, and home economics. Yet there were a couple of early women standouts in areas dominated by men, such as Mary Alda Fitch, who was a botany professor in the 1930s.

Many of the careers of COAS women faculty were characterized by notably long tenures at Howard. For example, Elizabeth Cook (Romance Languages), Grace Coleman (English), Gertrude Burroughs Rivers (English), Flemmie Kittrell (Home Economics), Lettie Austin (English), and Leonie Harper (Physical Education for Women) served at Howard for over 50 years, 36 years, 44 years, 31 years, over 60 years, and 42 years, respectively. These women were able to move their way up the professorial ranks throughout their time at the college, although at differing speeds. For example, Dr. Kittrell joined COAS as a full professor and head of the Home Economics Department in 1944, while university records show Grace Coleman was an instructor in 1921 and retired as an assistant professor in the early 1970s. According to scholar Linda Perkins, these women whose careers were marked by longevity in COAS were unlike “many of the distinguished Black male faculty who left for other posts during their careers as academics” (2014).

But there were other COAS women faculty who did not see it in their interest to stay and left for different advancement opportunities. Mary Daly, the first Black woman to receive a PhD in chemistry in the U.S., was a physics instructor at Howard from 1947-48. She left the university after receiving a grant from the American Cancer Society to continue her postdoctoral research (Corless, 2020). Marion Wright, professor of education and history, left to pursue a doctorate before coming back to COAS and promoting through the ranks. In addition to her professorial duties, Wright had also taken up several other assignments throughout her time at COAS, including participation on several committees and serving as faculty advisor to graduate students (Daniel, 1963). Margaret Strickland Collins, who was a zoology instructor around the same time, left Howard after perceiving that it “was slow in promoting women faculty” (Warren, 1999). She went on to obtain a full professor position at the historically black Florida A&M University in 1951. She, too, eventually made her way back to Howard in 1964, this time as a full-time professor in the zoology department.

Collins’ claims of gender-based discrimination within COAS were shared by other women faculty at the time, most notably by Merze Tate. Tate, a pioneer in the field of international relations and longtime professor in the History Department, championed efforts for gender equity related to pay and promotions. She began her more than 30-year career in COAS as a temporary faculty member in the department before becoming one of the earliest women to be tenured at Howard. She used her position to advocate for other women at the

university. Tate compiled data for COAS as part of her role in Howard's Female Faculty Club (FFC), finding that there were salary scales for different professor ranks "but the women were always at the lower in the middle" (Perkins, 2014). She even appealed to COAS Dean Joseph St. Clair Price in 1951 for adequate compensation based on her many academic qualifications and achievement (Perkins, 2014).

By the early 1970s, there were more women spread across the disciplines at varying professorial ranks in COAS. But there were still few women holding full professor positions. Tables 2, 3, and 4, drawing on Howard University archival data, including COAS annual reports, show the gender breakdown among faculty within the college by rank at different points in the college's history. As faculty numbers increased for men and women from the 1950s to the 1990s, key gaps between the two genders were constant. Men significantly outnumbered women across all professorial ranks during the 1953-54 academic year and in the 1971-1973 academic periods. In the 1994-1995 academic year (the latest COAS annual report available), things shifted as women outnumbered men at two faculty ranks – instructor and assistant professor. Yet there was also a glaring gap at the full professor level, with men outnumbering women 95 to 24. While women certainly made great strides in terms of educational attainment and increasing representation among faculty ranks over the years within COAS, they continued to have lesser representation than their male counterparts in more senior positions within COAS.

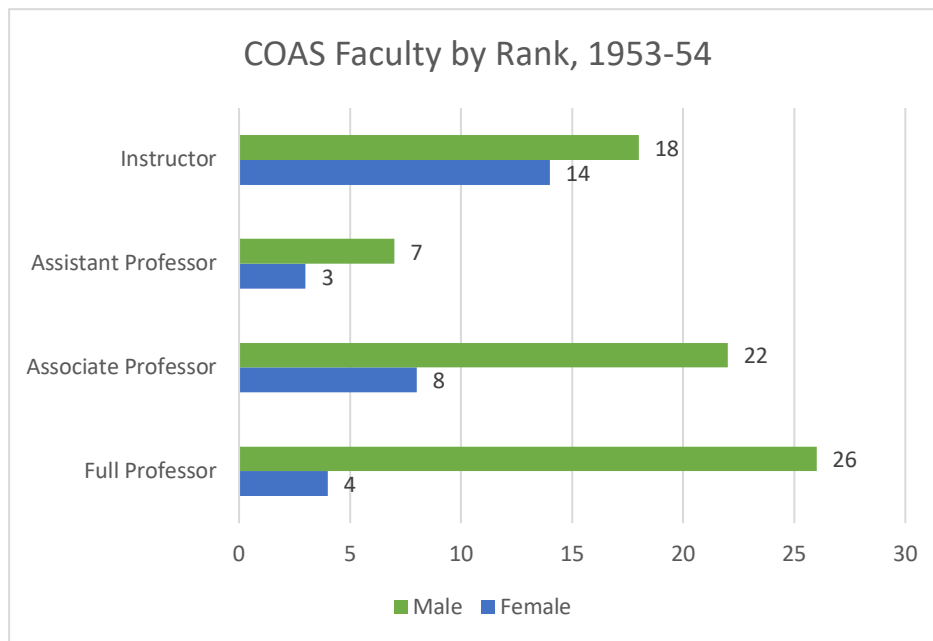


Figure 4 COAS Faculty by Rank 1953-1954

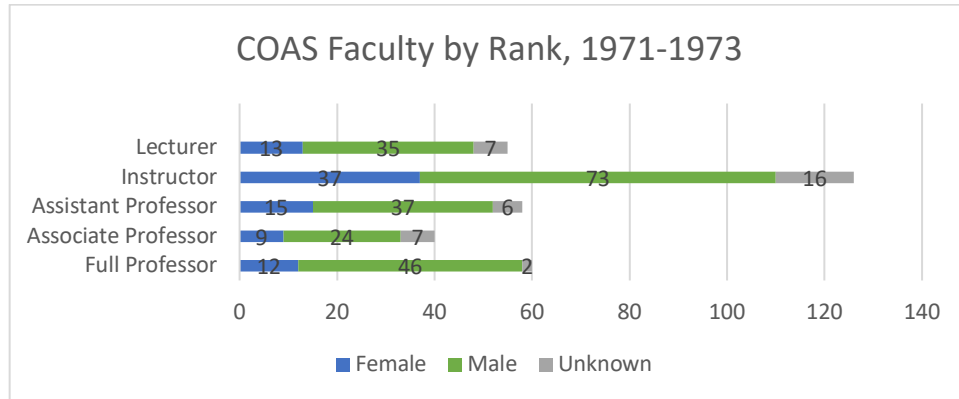


Figure 5 COAS Faculty by Rank 1971-1973

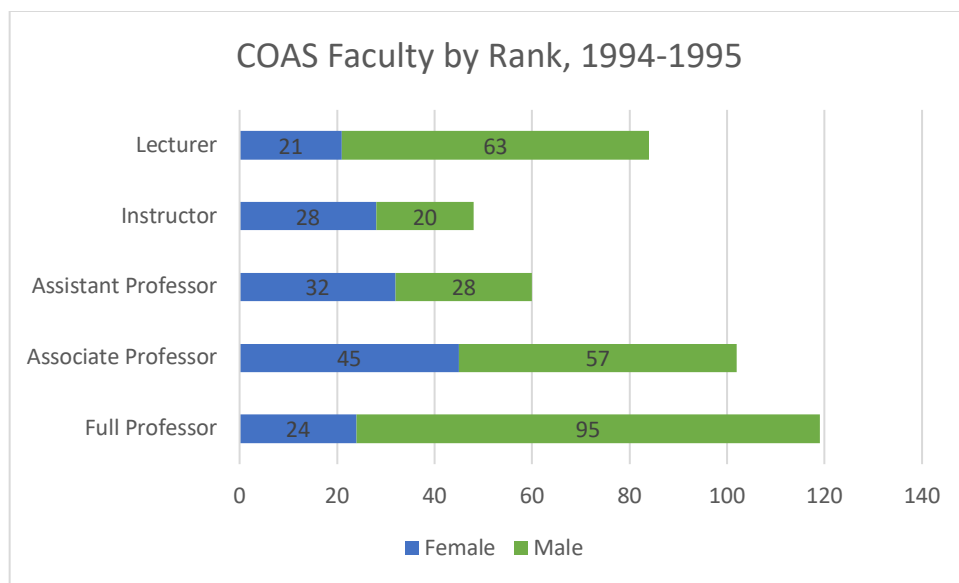


Figure 6 COAS Faculty by Rank 1994-1995

GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

Women's roles in leadership in COAS have been few and far between compared to men. The college has had at least 17 deans and only one has been a woman, according to available data dating back to when the college was first established. Wendy Glasgow Winters became the first female dean of COAS in 1987. Winters, who earned her PhD in sociology from Yale University in 1975, had replaced Robert Owens, who retired after 15 years as dean of COAS. Winters' span as dean was much shorter than many of the men who previously held the post. By 1992, Winters stepped down and was listed in university records as an associate professor in Howard's Sociology-Anthropology Department. It was not until nearly 30 years later when COAS saw another woman fill the COAS dean position, but Dr. Edna Greene Medford only served in an interim capacity, from 2018-19. While only one woman has held the COAS deanship, more women have held the position of associate dean in the college.

Women appear to have begun holding these associate positions more frequently within the COAS Deans' Office starting in the 1980s. As of 2022, there were two women serving as associate deans alongside two men holding the same position.

Across COAS at the departmental level, women began gaining greater representation as department chairs in the latter part of the 20th century, notably beginning under Dean Owens. In 1972, there were at least six women who headed academic departments. Up until then, there were frequently only a couple women serving as department heads each school year. Among the early women chairs were Marie Taylor, who chaired the Botany Department after accepting a position as an assistant botany professor in the 1940s. Her career at Howard lasted until 1976. Most department chair positions held by women during this earlier period were confined to the physical education for women and home economics departments.

Elsie Lewis, who earned a PhD in history from the University of Chicago in 1946, served as the first female head of Howard's History Department from 1964-1969. She took over for historian Rayford Logan who had chaired the department for two decades. Lewis joined the department in 1956. During her time as chair, she created "a good foundation for greater differentiation in courses available to graduate students" and "oversaw the total revision of undergraduate courses," giving students a broader selection (Render, 2022).

There were several other COAS women faculty who had emerged as heads of departments following years of teaching within the college. This included women like Theodora Boyd (Romance Languages), Lorraine Williams (History), and Marjay Anderson (Botany). Williams had started as an associate professor of social science about a decade prior to becoming chair of the history department in 1970. She oversaw the department during one of its "busiest and most productive" periods (Winston, 1998). Anderson was an instructor in 1971 and an assistant professor by 1979 before heading COAS' Comprehensive Sciences Department. She held the latter position for 25 years. Women continued to fill chair positions that men had long dominated as people like Carrie Cowherd became co-chair of the Classics Department and Marguerite Barnett headed the Political Science Department. Barnett, who later became the first female president of the University of Houston, left her position at Howard in 1980 after just four years. Cowherd had an extensive career at Howard, with records showing her serving as interim chair of the Classics Department as late as 2015.

Recent years have seen COAS achieve near gender parity at the level of department chair among the college's four divisions, a significant shift from earlier decades. As shown in table 5, there were 10 women and 13 men leading the college's 23 departments and programs in 2022. Women's leadership in COAS over the years has been defined in part by long-term dedication to educating students in the arts and sciences. Women have demonstrated their commitments through decades of service, juggling both administrative and professorial

duties, making decisions regarding curricula to enhance student learning, among a host of other responsibilities.

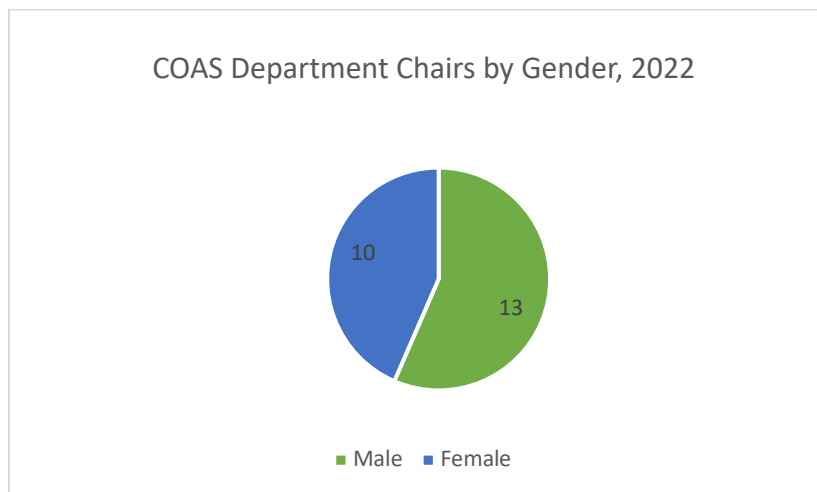


Figure 7 COAS Department Chairs by Gender, 2022

DISCUSSION

Examining gender representation among faculty and leadership positions in COAS has provided several insights into the experiences of women in Howard's oldest and largest college. First, the experiences of women have varied. Some women's careers were marked by longevity in the college, spanning several decades, while others chose to leave to pursue opportunities for advancement elsewhere. Some of those who left eventually returned, securing a higher position. Second, women have been overly represented in the arts and have had less representation in the college's sciences departments, in line with trends for women in higher education nationally. This has partly been attributed to historical institutional practices relegating women to certain positions, such as teaching and management of home affairs. Yet, Howard's reputation as being a "who's who" of top Black intellectual talent did allow for aberrations, with many Black woman "firsts" joining the faculty ranks in the sciences. Third, while Black women at Howard may have, for the most part, been able to avoid "double jeopardy" at the historically black institution, or what Francis Beale (2008) describes as dual exposure to racism and sexism, the experiences of women faculty were in fact gendered. This was mainly seen by the relegation of women to certain roles as well as in pay and rank disparities with men.

Such disparities, which certainly exist beyond COAS and Howard, remain a key challenge going forward. Women have remained overly represented among lower ranking faculty positions and underrepresented among the top positions. This lines up with national trends of higher education, which show women comprise the majority of nontenure-track lecturers and instructors, and only 44 percent of tenure-track faculty and 36 percent of full professor

positions (American Association of University Professors, 2018). Women of color are especially underrepresented among college faculty and staff. It is even more uncommon to find them in positions of leadership, as only 5 percent of college presidents are racial or ethnic minority women. While Black women reach the presidency at higher rates at HBCUs than at PWIs, they still only account for about 30 percent of HBCU presidents (Gasman et al, 2013).

The gender gaps at the faculty and administrative levels are assuredly different from trends seen among student enrollments. For the last several decades, female students have outnumbered their male counterparts in universities and colleges across the nation. At HBCUs, this gender gap has been even more pronounced. In 2019, there were nearly 141,000 Black female students compared to around 78,000 Black male students at HBCUs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). While Black females make up the overwhelming majority of HBCU student enrollment, they do not see themselves equally represented among faculty and university leadership positions. This has negative implications for the kinds of faculty involvement and encouragement that can promote student success (Perna et al., 2009).

As mentioned previously, COAS began increasing its number of women department chairs around the 1970s. And recent years have seen more women holding positions within the dean's office, excluding the dean position itself. While increased representation is a progressive step, ensuring more equitable experiences for both women and men requires much more. This includes considering women's pay and rank, as compared to their male counterparts. Historically, women faculty within the college who did get promoted were able to work their way up gradually over several years, if not decades. A key question remains as to how often and whether women are hired as full professors without first having to prove themselves over long periods of time to male superiors. Age is also a significant factor, as many of the earlier women faculty within COAS who reached full professor status did so when they were close to retirement. This has contrasted with men who tended to serve as full professors earlier in their careers. These persistent issues were likely to have negatively impacted COAS' ability to hire and retain its women faculty and staff, who instead chose to search for opportunities elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

Women have played vital roles within faculty and administrative ranks at Howard University's College of Arts and Sciences. This report provides insights into the academic contributions and career trajectories of women in the college, shedding further light on broader experiences of Black women in the arts and sciences disciplines at HBCUs. The earlier decades of COAS were marked by several "women firsts" as Howard recruited educated Black women pioneering work in various disciplines. This occurred as the masses of Black people in the U.S. were subject to systemic racial violence that excluded many of them from the halls of academia. While HBCUs, as compared to PWIs, remain an

attractive place for Black students looking to establish favorable relationships with faculty and a sense of belonging, more work can be done on the question of gender equity. Ensuring gender equity at HBCUs will go a long way in filling some of the gaps that exist. This is especially true for Black women who are underrepresented nationally among faculty and in leadership positions at academic institutions nationally in both the arts and sciences.

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