

Department of Athletics

BLACK WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE



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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 Department of Athletics¹

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ABSTRACT

For years, there have been significant inequalities against women in college athletics ranging from lack of access to being recruited to sexual harassment. This phenomenon has affected both college athletes and athletic administrators as well. Many Black women in leadership capacities within athletic administration have been marginalized and perceived as beneficiaries of preferential treatment. This leads us to wonder if women, specifically Black women, have an equitable place to reside within the bounds of intercollegiate athletics. While we seek this answer, examining and highlighting the institutions that continue to make spaces for Black women leaders within athletics—specifically, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) is equally important. This study provides a historical analysis that centers on the importance of highlighting the stories and experiences of Black women who left their mark upon Howard University Athletics. As evident in this analysis, when these women became leaders within Howard Athletics, their stories magnified some of the historical barriers. Black women have always faced within the labor force, education, and athletics.

INTRODUCTION

For years, women have faced significant inequalities in college athletics, ranging from lack of access to recruitment to sexual harassment. This phenomenon has affected both athletes and athletic administrators. According to Hendrickson et al. (2013, p. 149),

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gender discrimination within higher education was magnified among college athletic programs, which ultimately called for judicial intervention. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was established to protect people from discrimination based on sex, holding federally funded educational programs and activities to a level of accountability (U.S. DOE Office of Civil Rights, 2021).

Sports, more specifically intercollegiate athletics, positioned itself as a direct replica of society (Sammons, 1994) and, for many institutions, their “front porch” (Bass et al., 2015). The shortcomings of both gender and racial equity within society at large are not only present within intercollegiate athletics but oftentimes exacerbated within this White male-dominated industry. McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017) noted that many Black women in leadership capacities within athletic administration have been both marginalized and perceived as beneficiaries of preferential treatment. In many ways, this has led to resentment and a ferocious pressure to “to prove themselves on a consistent basis, to know their job well with minimal or no help or guidance, to avoid making mistakes, and to take on countless tasks and roles to prove their worth” (Abney & Richey, 1991; Benton, 1999; McDowell and Carter-Francique, 2017, p. 395; Nelson, 1999). This raises the question of whether women, and more specifically Black women, truly have an equitable place in intercollegiate athletics.

It is equally important to examine and highlight the institutions that historically continue to make spaces for Black women leaders in athletics—specifically, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). A study by the Global Sport Institute at Arizona State University (Brooks, 2021) on athletic director (AD) hiring practices illustrates both their marginalization in athletics and the limitations to their ascent to leadership roles. This chapter is a contemporary exploration of the leadership and contributions of Black women in athletics at Howard University.

DESCRIPTION

The world of intercollegiate athletics as it pertains to HBCUs was seen as more than just an opportunity for Black students to participate in an extracurricular activity. Athletics were considered an outlet to cultivate community and support one another during trying times and drove both entertainment and economic growth for the Black community (Cooper et al., 2014; Miller, 1995; Wiggins, 2000; Wiggins & Miller, 2003). Before 1956, HBCUs were not recognized as athletic competitors and had limited to no access to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which primarily oversaw all aspects related to college athletics (Cavil, 2015). HBCUs created conferences of their own. The first was the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, founded in 1912. The Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference and the Southwestern Athletic Conference followed in 1913 and 1920, respectively (Cavil, 2015). Last was the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) in 1970; Howard is an original founding member and remains in the conference (MEAC, 2017).

The Howard Athletic Department houses 19 sports that compete in two different conferences. Six sports (swimming and diving, men's golf program, men's/women's soccer, and women's lacrosse) compete for the North-Eastern Athletic Conference (North-Eastern Athletic Conference, 2020). The other 13 are in the MEAC Conference (men's/women's basketball, men's/women's cross country, football, men's golf, men's/women's tennis, women's bowling, men's/women's track and field, women's softball, and women's volleyball; MEAC, 2017). The Athletic Department Mission Statement states:

The Howard University Department of Intercollegiate Athletics seeks to attract and cultivate student athletes who reflect Howard's core mission to develop leaders who will change the world. Our student athletes pursue excellence in the classroom, on the field of play and in the community. Our coaches and administrators reinforce these values by instilling the importance of leadership, integrity, discipline, sportsmanship and teamwork. (Howard University, 2013).

The department works hard to ensure the mission is carried out. It has six units: facility and operations; support services, which houses compliance and academics; budget and finance; media relations and sports information; sports performance, which has athletic trainers and medical staff; and sports and conditioning. The department is home to 18 women, with roles including senior administration, support staff, and coaches that span the six units. More recently, the hire of Janice Pettyjohn as director of On-Campus Recruitment and Assistant Director of Football Operations marks the first time that a woman has served in a full-time role on Howard's football staff (Grove, 2022). Athletics works hard to ensure that student athletes' experiences are marked by growth, development, and safety.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The foundational underpinnings of Howard's athletic presence began shortly after the university's founding through the organization and execution of the Military Department in 1869. Beheshtin (1979) noted that before that, members of university leadership did not consider physical education a priority, given that the initial purpose was to be a "university for the education of youth in the liberal arts and sciences" (p. 21). Although varsity athletic teams were not yet orchestrated, an emphasis was placed on physical soundness, military tactics, and objects, such as swords, that were tailored specifically for male students only (Howard University, 1869). The short-lived department primarily focused on recruiting physically qualified young men, which ultimately led to the growing exclusion of young female students, even if they were fully capable. It was not until 1918, during class suspension in response to the influenza epidemic, that a battalion designed and organized distinctly for women was created and provided space to participate in similar activities (Howard University, 1917); it was discontinued once classes resumed.

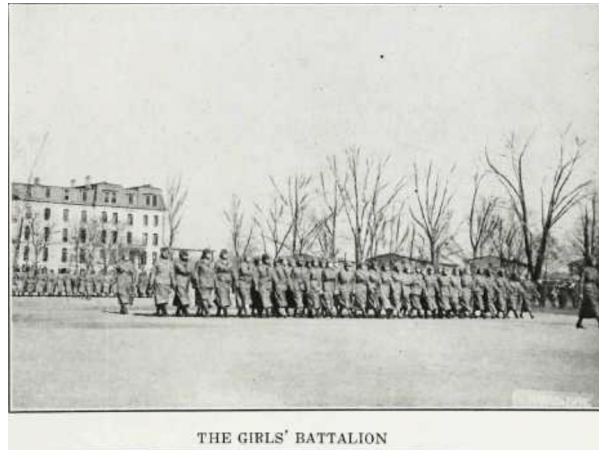


Figure 1 The Academy Final, "The Girls Battalion", 1919 Source: Howard University

As noted by Chambers (1986), although the men continued to engage in the physical military exercises, the popular recreational activity during that time for Howard women was croquet, typically played on the grounds because women lacked an inclusive space designated to serve them along with men. However, the board of trustees expressed its desire to secure a gymnasium that would allow all students, including women, to have a haven to establish a physical culture and accommodate recreational activity and exercise (Howard University, 1873).

The Military Department was eliminated in 1874, which ultimately created a need for structured physical activity on campus, especially for women. Women needed more than simply being able to *work out*; they needed assistance with the overall health and wellness of the “New Woman” (Costa & Guthrie, 1994; Gage-Mercado, 2012, p. 15) entering the fold of postsecondary education. In the post-Civil Rights era, Black women’s pursuit of higher education was considered a method of political activism (Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2015). They became schoolteachers, community leaders, and activists and used their platform and education to develop and uplift the entire Black community despite having limited support (Collins, 2000). According to (Gage-Mercado, 2012, p. 16), many believed that “the pressures of academic life could damage a woman’s health.” This also included academic life in institutions that traditionally nurtured Black women, such as HBCUs, because “sexism and paternalism among men of their race have resulted in the relegation of black women to the roles of nurturer and helpmate” (Perkins, 1983, p. 26).

A healthy outlet was necessary, and in 1891, Irene C. Tyler was credited as being responsible for the physical education instruction of Howard women. It consisted of walking and nonstrenuous outdoor activity. In 1892, it evolved to competing in sports, such as basketball and volleyball; however, the concept of “femininity” and society norms eventually brought female sports competition to a halt (Gage-Mercado, 2012). “...Any sport that required rigorous competition, or a great amount of exertion that caused



Figure 2 Lucy Diggs Slowe Source: Howard University

excessive sweating [was] ruled out due to their competitive nature and deemed inappropriate” (Gage-Mercado, 2012, p. 18). According to Seymour (1991), this shift was initiated by Anita J. Turner, “one of the pioneers in the physical education profession” (Coursey, 2013, p. 71-72). Turner was one of the first African American women to procure a certificate in Physical Training; she attended the Dudley Sargent School of Physical Training at Harvard University. Harvard was considered the premier institution for physical education, and Turner was greatly

influenced by it, as evidenced in her efforts with the women at Howard.

Physical Education was introduced to the university’s curriculum in 1911; however, it had more of a theoretical foundation and was primarily led by men. Athletics for women were not a high priority, so sports served as their physical training exercises. The one sport that received traction and was deemed gender appropriate was tennis. It became a favorite and introduced the athletic prowess of the first female dean of Women, Lucy Diggs Slowe (Gage-Mercado, 2012).

Diggs Slowe was an accomplished student at Howard 1904–1908, a founding member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (1908), and valedictorian of her graduating class. She also served as the president of the Women’s Tennis Club and won the first American Tennis Association (ATA) Championship in 1917. “To be certain that her prowess on the tennis court was not commemorated by a single event, she won 17 tennis cups” (Rasheed, 2009, p. 39). The ATA was founded in 1916 by the Black community due to exclusion from White spaces and is the oldest African American sports organization in the United States. Slowe was not only an exceptional athlete but also a trailblazer; she became the first female African American national champion in any sport (Gage-Mercado, 2012). Her win was not exclusively an individual achievement but also served as a significant contribution to all the Black female athletes who would come after her at Howard and globally. After Slowe’s athletic career concluded, she returned to Howard in 1922 as the dean of Women until her death in 1937. She encouraged Howard women to continue her legacy in multiple facets without restraint or apology. This eventually led to female students housed in Miner Hall creating the Girls Athletic Association, encouraged the sport of tennis, and provided the necessary resources to do so.

By 1922, the university's curriculum structure shifted slightly, and as a result, the Department of Physical Education for Men and the Department of Physical Education for Women were formed (Beheshtin, 1979). It Howard acquired its first female director, Beatrice Warfield, an alumna of Brown University Women’s College. According to the



Figure 3 Women of Howard University in a Swedish Calisthenics Drill 1943 Source: Howard University

Howard catalogue (1922), the distinction between the departments was a direct reflection of the shifting attitudes regarding physical education at Howard and its importance. The Women's Physical Education classes consisted of activities such as calisthenics, tennis, basketball, baseball, and hiking.

In 1925, Professor Maryrose Allen was designated as the director of the Department of Physical Education for Women and remained in this role until her retirement in 1967. She made a critical philosophical contribution, the

“Philosophy of Beauty.” She believed women needed their own foundation when it came to physical education instead of being expected to fulfill a modified men’s program. Allen believed women did not enjoy the nature of physical education for this very reason and emphasized that every woman is beautiful and “every woman is most fulfilled through nourishing the mental, physical and spiritual being” (Gage-Mercado, 2012, p. 26). Allen and her staff made it their duty to meet their female students where they were developmentally and helped cultivate growth from the inside out. It was believed that Howard women participated in physical activities under her guidance more than any other period in the university’s history. Although this was an immense victory for female students, Allen’s views on competitive sports unfortunately aligned with the times, such as that athletics would make women masculine or that “women as a class cannot stand the prolonged mental or physical strain as well as a man do” (Gage-Mercado, 2012, p. 28; Sargent, 1912). This was a popular perspective within the physical education community, which eventually infiltrated the fabric of intercollegiate competition. This undoubtedly had an impact on the exposure and athletic experiences of Howard women for many years, until Title IX. Before that, Howard did not possess any intercollegiate athletic programs for women, although they were heavily involved in intramural sports. In the same year as Title IX, interest in formalized women’s sports at Howard increased rapidly. Dr. Doris Corbett would pioneer this endeavor for nearly a year (Gage-Mercado, 2012).

GENDER REPRESENTATION

After Title IX, the notion of gender representation began to garner massive attention. Corbett identified the lack of representation of women in the Athletic Department and decided to capitalize on the increasingly widespread interest in women’s sports by advocating for the marginalized female student body. Women had been historically limited to intramural sports. Corbett, who joined the Physical Education and Recreation Department in 1972, argued that “women and men can both benefit from competitive play

and that similar sporting experiences such as personal growth can be obtained by the female athletes just as their male counterparts” (Gage-Mercado, 2012, p. 45). Corbett’s theory relied heavily on the need for representation for women within the intercollegiate athletic space, which called for women’s access to sports and leadership positions within coaching and athletic administration. Although in contrast to those of her predecessors, this theory served as the foundational argument for adding women’s athletics. In late 1972, given Title IX and coupled with her theory, Corbett chaired an ad hoc committee that advocated to the university and AD Leo Miles the importance of a women’s intercollegiate athletic program. The board of trustees approved the proposal in 1973. On October 20, 1973, Corbett informed the university community that women’s sports would begin in 1974.

Although Howard now boasts a robust women’s athletic program, it is in large part due to the practical foundation and experiences of the 1973–1974 women’s basketball team. Historically, the notion of competitive women’s basketball “ran counter to a middle-class feminine ideal grounded in refinement and respectability” by former “school leaders at Howard” (Liberti, 1999, p. 567). Although not formally recognized in the 1974 edition of Howard University yearbook, “The Bison,” the 15-woman squad was identified in a memo to AD Leo Miles as Michelle Curtis, Linda Daniel, Charlene Law, Sheila McIver, Pamela McLeod, Sheila Murcheson, Sharon Murry, Leslie Norris, Camille Parker, Jennifer Pinkney, Shelly Randolph, Deris Rivers, Betty Jo Scott, Linda Spencer, and Jackie Smith (Gage-Mercado, 2012).

These women were instrumental in implementing women’s sports, but they faced strife and inequality. The team’s experiences were shared in a 2015 interview between Linda Spencer and Dr. Akilah Carter-Francique. Spencer, a 2014 Howard Athletic Hall of Fame inductee, recalled the many inequities that the inaugural team endured (Howard University, 2014). These included budgeting restrictions, lack of athletic scholarships, subpar uniforms, and limited use of facilities, such as Burr Gymnasium (Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2015; Gage-Mercado, 2012). Nevertheless, the team had a 6-3 season against opponents that included George Mason University, Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University), and the University of the District of Columbia, formally known as Federal City College (Chambers, 1986; Gage-Mercado, 2012).

The Athletic Department expanded to include women’s track and field, volleyball, and field hockey. Due to the contributions of Corbett and the women’s basketball team, Howard women are now able to compete in over 11 sports, including basketball, lacrosse, swimming and diving, soccer, and volleyball.

GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

Women in leadership positions within the Athletic Department have been ingrained in the foundation of women’s sports at Howard. The first female leader dates back to Corbett’s proposal. As a stipulation of the approval of this proposal, the board of trustees suggested that a “qualified woman be chosen to manage the program” (Gage-Mercado,

2012, p. 47). The position was the associate director of Women's Athletics but has changed to the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA). The proposal for the inclusion of the SWA position came eight years before the NCAA membership voted to universally create the SWA designation in 1981 (NCAA, 2020). The creation and inclusion of this position was intended to signify equality and would have an immense impact on leadership roles and attainability for women within the department. Notable female SWAs include Corbett, Sondra Norrell-Thomas, Shelley Davis, and Amy Olson (Gage-Mercado, 2012; Howard University, 2015a, 2018; Seidel, 2000).

Following the creation of the SWA position, representation for women spread into coaching when Howard decided to hire its first-ever full-time coach for any sport in 1980 (Gage-Mercado, 2012; MEAC, n.d.). Sanya Tyler, a Howard alumna, was hired in 1980 to lead the women's basketball program; her team earned five MEAC regular-season titles and nine MEAC Conference titles. With over 300 victories, Tyler is often referred to as MEAC's most winningest coach (Bickerstaff, 2000). Due to her accomplishments as head coach, Tyler received numerous recognitions, including eight MEAC Outstanding Coach awards and the 1994 MEAC Coach of the Year award. She was also inducted into both the Howard Sports Hall of Fame and the MEAC Hall of Fame in 1998 and 2011, respectively (MEAC, 2009, 2021). Tyler is also notable for a multimillion-dollar lawsuit that challenged the university and Athletic Department's commitment to equal gender representation based on Title IX and the Equal Pay Act. Her lawsuit gave precedent to similar lawsuits within the intercollegiate athletic space. She was awarded 2.4 million dollars (Brennan & Asher, 1993). She opened the doors for Howard to hire more female coaches, many of whom have been alumnae. As of 2021, the department has six female head and/or associate head coaches spanning 11 women's sports (Howard University, 2021).

Although women were gaining representation in coaching and athletic administration positions, one position had never been filled by a woman. Since the addition of women's sports in 1973, the AD position has been male dominated, starting with Leo Miles. This pattern would last nearly three decades, until Norrell-Thomas was appointed interim AD in July 2000 (Howard Names Sondra Norrell-Thomas as Athletics Director, 2001). She had served as the SWA in 1974, but it was the first time in department history that a woman achieved the coveted position. Table 1 illustrates the timeline and tenure of Howard University Athletic Directors beginning in the year 1970.

The Athletic Department has had 12 ADs, 10 male and two female: Norrell-Thomas and Davis. Although both women served as interim AD, Norrell-Thomas was later promoted to AD in 2001 following the departure of Henry "Hank" Ford (Bickerstaff, 2001; Seidel, 2000). During Norrell-Thomas' tenure, the department experienced a major coaching staff revitalization with the hiring of 15 new coaches (Howard Names Sondra Norrell-Thomas as Athletics Director, 2001). Norrell-Thomas played a role in two other notable achievements that would have lasting effects on the department. In conjunction with the Division of Advancement, she worked to create a philanthropic

fund that provides “fiscal support and assistance to Howard University student athletes” (Bison Express Athletic Fund, 2018, para. 1). This unprecedented fund became known as “The Bison Express.” She also added the position of Assistant Sports Information Director and hired Romanda Noble (Alexander, 2001).

When Norrell-Thomas departed in 2006, men returned to the position of AD. It would be nearly a decade before the department would see another woman as AD. In 2015, Davis was named interim AD after the retirement of Louis “Skip” Perkins Jr. (Howard University, 2015a). Similar to Norrell-Thomas, Davis also served as SWA before being appointed as interim AD. Although her time in this role was brief, she made significant contributions in terms of modernizing the Howard Athletics brand by implementing the new logo athletics style guide; it features a new Bison logo that is still in use as of 2021 (Howard University, 2015a, 2015c).

Women such as Corbett, Tyler, Norrell-Thomas, and Davis have all pushed past the traditional barriers of gender and forged a path for upcoming female athletes, coaches, and administrators.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The findings of this historical analysis reveal the importance of highlighting the stories and experiences of Black women who left their mark upon Howard Athletics; their stories are our foundation. As evident in this analysis, when these women became leaders, their stories magnified some of the historical barriers Black women have always faced within the labor force, education, and athletics. By understanding these related issues, researchers and practitioners can begin to understand potential factors contributing to the low percentage of Black female athletic administrators in leadership in general and more specifically at Howard. We must interrogate how we are defining leadership, the sacrifices that women must inherently make to reach leadership roles in athletics, and what structures are in place to holistically support the career trajectory of Black women in college athletics.

Looking back at the Athletics Department, only two out of the 12 ADs have been women. In previous years and even now, women primarily secure roles in supportive services. It is not a matter of whether women can do the job but rather whether they will secure the opportunity. We need a critical shift from simply providing symbolic gestures for the sake of *checking a box* to authentically being equitable in our practices by providing opportunities, resources, and support for Black women in these spaces. Howard athletics has seen much improvement for women since Title IX; however, room remains for growth and change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As evidenced through this analysis, women’s representation among the senior administrative ranks in athletics was and continues to be lacking. Although this analysis

focuses specifically on the Athletic Department, the findings are relevant to intercollegiate athletic departments nationwide. Race and gender have often been barriers to access and representation; many athletic departments, including those at HBCUs, tend to have White men in leadership positions, such as head coaches, senior-level administrators, and ADs (Barefield, 2019). Despite the common practice among institutions, it is important to recognize the influence that the Black female pioneers have on HBCU athletic departments (Davis, 2021).

Despite highlighting the women of Howard Athletics in this analysis, this chapter seeks to increase representation among women in college athletics collectively. The following recommendations are provided as promising practices for increased visibility and inclusion:

Women in the Pipeline

- **Exploration:** In collaboration with women's athletic organizations, respective career services departments, and senior college athletic administrators, women interested in careers within the athletics industry will be provided with tangible career planning materials related to areas of interest.
- **Development:** Women interested in working within college athletics will be able to use job resources, such as LinkedIn, information sessions, industry panels, networking events, and career development workshops, to expose them to various careers in the multilevel athletics industry.
- **Engagement:** In collaboration with women's athletic organizations, career services departments, and senior college athletic administrators, women will be assisted with developing strategic connections with external leaders in athletics, with the intentions of forming professional relationships and mentorships.
- **Placement:** Women interested in the industry will be able to translate their various experiences (academic, cocurricular, and work related) in ways that will distinguish them from their peers to secure sustainable and equitable employment.

This pipeline will rely heavily on the investment of various stakeholders, including those in positions of power within the college athletic landscape. Although this model has been facilitated at a micro level to some degree for years, the goal should be to grow and include women across the disciplines that have historically not always been aware of the multiple entry points into athletics as women and more specifically as Black women.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the introduction, limited research has examined the leadership of Black women in athletics, especially the contributions made by specific institutional types, such as HBCUs. Therefore, this historical exploration is significant, as it addresses a void in the literature and contributes to the overall knowledge base of women in athletics at Howard. It is simply not enough to be carriers of this knowledge; every institutional stakeholder, faculty, staff, student, graduate, and community member must play a pivotal role in taking the next step for Howard women by implementing tangible and radical

change through practice. This starts by recognizing and paying homage to the pioneers who fought for representation and equality within this male-dominated industry and department. With the upcoming 50th anniversary of the inaugural women's basketball team, this is the opportune time for the Athletic Department to show its investment and commitment to women's athletics. By giving a voice to the women who came before us, we are allowing for additional glass ceilings to be permanently shattered. The hope is that this historical analysis provides Black women in athletic leadership, athletic departments, and most importantly the Howard community insight into the *herstorical* (Gage-Mercado, 2021) context needed to serve as catalysts and advocates for change.

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APPENDIX

Athletic Director (AD)	Tenure Time Period	Status
Leo Miles	1970-1986	Permanent
William Moultrie	1986-1991	Permanent
David Simmons	1991-1994	Permanent
A.B. Williamson	1994-1994	Interim
Vacant	1994-1996	N/A
Henry "Hank" Ford	1996-2000	Permanent

Sondra Norrell-Thomas	2000–2001	Interim
Sondra Norrell-Thomas	2001–2006	Permanent
Dwight Datcher	2006–2009	Permanent
Joseph Bell	2009–2009	Interim
Charles Gibbs	2009–2010	Interim
Charles Gibbs	2010–2011	Permanent
Louis “Skip” Perkins Jr.	2011–2015	Permanent
Shelley Davis	2015–2015	Interim
Kery Davis	2015–Present	Permanent

Table 1. : Howard University Athletic Directors (1970–Present)

Note. The data for Leo Miles are from Howard’s Miles Announces Retirement: Howard’s Miles to Retire June 30, by Donald Huff, 1986. The data for William Moultrie are from Moultrie Named AD by Stanley Verrett, 1986. The data for David Simmons are from Howard to Name DC lawyer AD: Simmons Gets Job Monday, by Mark Asher, 1991. The data for A.B. Williamson are from Williamson Gives Up Post at Howard, by Mark Asher, 1994. The data for Henry “Hank” Ford are from Ford to Be Howard’s New AD, by Karl Hente, 1996. The data for Sondra Norrell-Thomas are from Howard U Hires First Female AD, by Brandon Bickerstaff, 2001. The data for Joseph Bell are from Howard AD Resigns, by Royce Strahan, 2009. The data for Charles Gibbs are from Griffin Plans to Unite HU as New VP of Student Affairs, by Camille Augustin, 2010 and Gibbs Named Athletic Director, by Deontay Morris, 2010. The data for Louis “Skip” Perkins are from Howard Names Louis “Skip” Perkins as Athletics Director, by MEAC, 2010. The data for Shelley Davis are from Shelley Davis Appointed Interim AD at Howard, by Howard University, 2015. The data for Kery Davis are from Howard University Appoints Kery Davis As New Athletics Director, by Howard University, 2015.