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**HOWARD**  
**UNIVERSITY**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT**

## SUMMARY

Spring 2024

# LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

**Dear Howard University Community,**

Since launching the Howard Forward strategic plan under the leadership of President Emeritus Dr. Wayne A.I. Frederick in 2019, we have witnessed a transformation of our campus. Over the years, we improved the University's quality of education, expanded our research capacity and partnerships, invested in community support programs, and enhanced our administrative systems and facilities to meet the needs of our growing student body. As we mark five years since the implementation of the strategic plan, we need to reflect on our journey, acknowledge what worked, and assess how we can continue to improve as we plan for the future.

To facilitate this reflection, the Office of the Chief Strategy Officer executed a comprehensive retrospective assessment of Howard Forward. This process involved online surveys, in-person workshops, and qualitative interviews with a broad cross-section of students, staff, and faculty.

The feedback we received from the community on how to center diverse perspectives at Howard throughout the strategic plan formulation and execution process has been invaluable. Between this assessment and my Bison Engagement Tour, we now have a better understanding of the strengths of Howard Forward, and we are poised to commit to operational transformation, aggressively pursue innovation and continue to strive for academic excellence in our next strategic plan. As we continue to work towards realizing our goal of Howard at maximum strength, we are committed to addressing areas of improvement to broader University issues, including enhancing stakeholder communication, further improving our facilities, and bolstering administration support for students, staff, and faculty.

I look forward to continuing these conversations across campus and remain committed to fostering a culture where your voice directly impacts the future of this University.

**Warm regards,**

**Ben Vinson III, Ph.D.**  
**President, Howard University**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Howard University Strategic Plan Retrospective Assessment aims to document effective strategies, understand both challenges and successes, and inform future strategic planning.

## BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The *Howard Forward Strategic Plan* was designed to shape the University's direction between 2019 and 2024. This assessment of the plan is based on qualitative retrospective insights collected through in-depth interviews with faculty, students, staff, as well as auxiliary analysis including a campus-wide survey and staff workshops. This approach was designed to capture honest perspectives regarding the strategic plan's creation, implementation, and impact.

## HOWARD FORWARD SUCCESSES

The Howard Forward Strategic Plan has significantly transformed Howard University, focusing on enhancing academic excellence, inspiring new knowledge, serving the community, improving efficiency, and achieving financial stability. Key achievements include Howard's rise among top research institutions and HBCUs, a notable increase in scholarship funding and financial aid, and a surge in undergraduate applicants. The university has exceeded its research funding goals, becoming the first HBCU to partner with the Pentagon for a \$90 million research contract, marking significant progress in research and development. Community service efforts include extensive healthcare services, support for Black entrepreneurship and affordable housing, alongside high participation in service programs. Operationally, Howard is investing \$785 million in campus renovations and new academic centers. Financial milestones include a substantial increase in assets and endowment, significant donations, and positive credit ratings, underscoring Howard's fiscal health and strategic success.

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment revealed a strong sense of pride and community among Howard stakeholders, with recognition of the University's unique mission and history. While the Plan was applauded for its high-level objectives, calls for greater transparency, addressing institutional infrastructure concerns (both physical and operational) and more tailored stakeholder engagement were prevalent. Recommendations from stakeholders include prioritizing key infrastructure and operational needs so that they do not dilute Howard's identity, embracing Howard's uniqueness as a premier higher education institution, enhancing stakeholder engagement to meet students, faculty and staff where they are and expanding narratives of excellence to include all facets of academic life.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

The retrospective assessment underscores the positive impacts of the Howard Forward plan while identifying areas for strategic refinement. As Howard embarks on this next chapter, inclusive participation, innovative engagement, and a dynamic communication strategy are recommended to accelerate momentum and foster a unified vision for the University's future

# BACKGROUND

This document serves as a retrospective assessment of the Howard Forward strategic planning process, its implementation since 2019, and its overall impact on the Howard University community. This assessment is intended to serve as a qualitative evaluation, offering insights that can inform future strategic initiatives at Howard University.

## NOTABLE HOWARD FORWARD ACHIEVEMENTS

The Howard Forward Strategic Plan drove a culture of continuous improvement that transformed many aspects of our University. Over the years, we've refocused our goals to align with five strategic priorities: Enhancing Academic Excellence, Inspiring New Knowledge, Serving the Community, Improving Efficiency and Effectiveness, and Achieving Financial Sustainability. Notable accomplishments across these strategic pillars include:

### Enhancing Academic Excellence

- In recent years, the University set ambitious goals and invested heavily to build on its strong record of academic excellence. Today, Howard University is among the elite research institutions and HBCUs in the nation.
- To further enhance academic excellence, Howard created the Office of General Education, bringing together faculty and stakeholders to develop a cutting-edge undergraduate curriculum that reflects the University's history and mission, ensuring that our graduates have the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.
- From 2012 to 2022, the average per-student financial aid package increased by more than 20 percent. In total, Howard has more than doubled its scholarship funding since 2013. In addition, the University bolstered need and merit-based funding by nearly 23 percent as of 2023 through innovative programs like the GRACE Grant, which increases access and ensures a Howard University education is affordable for all students.
- Howard's graduation rate rose from 53 percent for the Class of 2019 to 62 percent for the Class of 2023. Retention rates at Howard have also continued to climb from 86 percent in Fall 2018 to 90 percent in Fall 2022, reflecting Howard's ongoing commitment to student achievement and support.
- Thanks to all of the improvements across our academic support systems and institutional services, Howard's undergraduate applicant pool for the class of 2028 increased to nearly 37,000 applicants.

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### Inspiring New Knowledge

- In 2018, Howard set the ambitious goal of raising \$100 million for research by 2024. Howard surpassed that goal two years early, raising \$122 million in grant and contract funding for research, a record sum for any HBCU.
- In January 2023, Howard became the first HBCU contracted by the Pentagon to establish a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC). The five-year \$90 million contract is not only a major financial achievement for the University but also a groundbreaking step forward as the first UARC sponsored by the Air Force. The UARC offers students opportunities to gain hands-on experience in research and development related to military technology.
- Howard is on track to return to R1 research university classification, a distinction no other HBCU has obtained. Our work to transform Howard into a cutting-edge research institution will further enhance our depth and diversity of scholarship.

### Serving the Community

- Howard University has a rich history of addressing challenges affecting the Black community. From providing essential healthcare services to driving educational innovation and supporting crucial housing needs, Howard University is dedicated to serving our community and the wider world.
- Our work to instill a passion for service has been embraced by the Howard community. Last year, more than 1,500 Howard University first-year students participated in Day of Service. In February 2024, Howard celebrated the 30th anniversary of its Alternative Spring Break program, which received a record 2,100 applicants.
- Howard has maintained strong partnerships with foundations and philanthropic organizations to advance the University's mission of service, including its collaboration with the PNC Foundation, which provides resources and support for Black entrepreneurship and small business development across the country, and our collaboration with Amazon Housing Equity Fund aimed at bringing affordable housing options to the D.C. community.
- Howard University's incoming class of 2028 reflects the rich diversity of the U.S. and the global diaspora, with students from 49 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, five U.S. territories, and 62 countries.
- Under the guidance of the Strategic Plan, the Howard University Hospital continued to be an anchor in the community, strengthening relationships with a number of local constituencies and organizations including Shaw Main Street, Lower Georgia Avenue Main Street, Florida Ave Baptist Church, LeDroit Park Civic Association, Georgia Avenue Thrive, District Bridges, Uniting Our Youth, and Pleasant Plains Civic Association.

### Improving Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Under the strategic plan, the University committed to reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative and operational systems in an effort to improve the quality of the Howard experience for students, staff, and faculty.

- Implemented Bison Hub, which encompasses finance, human resources, procurement, and payroll. It also streamlines many student processes, including Recruiting and Admissions, Academic Advising, Registration, Curriculum, Financial Aid, and Student Finance. Bison Hub utilizes Workday, which offers the Howard University community enhanced access to information and efficient processes. This platform also promotes paper conservation. Significant improvements have been made to automate processes, and over time, these improvements will continue to contribute to a positive customer experience at Howard University.
- We have taken substantial steps in enhancing student housing by closing on a \$316 million tax-exempt bond transaction. This strategic financial move is part of a broader investment plan to renovate and upgrade several key student housing facilities, including Charles R. Drew Hall, George W. Cook Hall and Harriet Tubman Quadrangle.

### **Achieving Financial Sustainability**

- In the last decade, Howard balanced its budget and has achieved great strides toward financial sustainability. Howard continues to work to ensure that its current and future students have the resources they need to succeed on and off campus.
- Central to this goal is a \$785 million effort to accelerate renovations and construct the first new academic centers on campus since 1984. The Master Plan will revitalize Howard's campus and ensure that our facilities are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and resources to prepare our students for the workplaces and challenges of the future.
- From FY21 to FY22, the University's total assets grew from \$2.1 billion to \$2.6 billion, a 23.8% increase.
- Increased alumni contributions, federal appropriations, and academic awards at Howard have significantly strengthened the University's financial health, with a total of \$60.4 million in gifts raised in 2023. Noteworthy contributions include a \$20 million donation from Carrie Walton Penner and Greg Penner to support the GRACE Grant endowment fund and a \$12 million unrestricted gift from MacKenzie Scott for the College of Medicine, which will be directed towards the establishment of a new innovations center.
- Last year, Howard's endowment rose to \$809 million and is on track to soon surpass \$1 billion.
- Credit rating agencies have taken notice of Howard's significant strides toward greater fiscal health. Both Fitch and S&P Global Ratings agencies have revised their ratings outlooks recognizing the "exceptional strategy Howard University has executed over multiple years to increase its financial strength."



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## ASSESSMENT PURPOSE

The Howard Forward plan has been positioned by the University as a signature document influencing its teaching, research and public service trajectory between 2019 and 2024. The purpose of this assessment is to:

- **Document what worked:** The assessment's first task was to identify and document effective strategies and practices employed during the creation of the Howard Forward plan leading up to its release in 2019. This involves an exploration of the collaborative efforts, innovative thinking, and strategic foresight that characterized the planning phase.
- **Understand successes and challenges:** The subsequent implementation of the Howard Forward plan has been marked by accomplishment, the achievement of specific metrics, and adaptation. By documenting the successes achieved and challenges faced, the assessment aims to provide an understanding of the plan's impact and how the Howard University community adapted to these challenges.
- **Inform future planning:** Ultimately, the insights garnered from this retrospective assessment are intended to serve as a foundational resource for the next stage of strategic planning at Howard University. The assessment will contribute to a forward-looking strategy that builds upon the achievements and learnings of Howard Forward and its implementation process.

## SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The assessment covers campus activities between 2018 and Spring 2024. In focusing on the creation process, implementation, and outreach components of the Howard Forward plan, it sought to capture the essence of the plan's ambitions and its real-world application:

- **Timeframe:** The assessment encompasses a review of strategic activities and initiatives undertaken from the inception of the plan in 2018 through to Spring 2024, providing a window into the evolutionary process of strategic planning at Howard University.
- **Focus area:** Rather than concentrating solely on quantitative metrics, the assessment places a premium on the qualitative aspects of the planning process, the implementation phase and the outreach efforts undertaken to engage the wider campus community.
- **All-inclusive conversations:** To garner authentic insights, comprehensive conversations were held during the Spring 2024 semester with a select group of faculty, students, and staff. These discussions were instrumental in capturing the diverse perspectives and experiences of the Howard University community.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this assessment was chosen to align with the objective of gaining deep, underlying insights into the Howard Forward planning process:



- **Qualitative interviews:** Recognizing the directional value of qualitative data, the Assessment conducted in-depth interviews to capture the thoughts and perspectives of those closely involved with or affected by the Howard Forward plan.
- **Objective:** The primary objective was to unearth the underlying insights that quantitative data alone could not provide, enabling a richer, more textured understanding of the planning and implementation process.
- **Sample size and format:** A small sample size was chosen to facilitate in-depth conversations, allowing for a thorough exploration of individual experiences and perspectives. Thirty-five interviews ranged in length from 30-60 minutes and were conducted virtually and in-person between January 30, 2024 and April 30, 2024.
- **Online Survey:** A community-wide survey with 300 student, faculty and staff respondents and two workshops with staff and campus leadership supplemented the interviews.
- **Directional feedback:** The qualitative nature of this methodology, based on comprehensive oral conversations, provided valuable directional feedback, enabling interviewees to probe into the reasoning behind certain perspectives and decisions.
- **Limitations:** The feedback obtained is indicative and not definitive. The insights derived from these conversations offer a directional guide rather than an exhaustive analysis, serving as a lens to analyze the broader strategic planning landscape at Howard University.

## PRIOR WORK

The development of this assessment spanned three phases, informed by prior and current work. The first phase was grounded in a deep understanding of the goals and objectives outlined in the "Howard Forward" Strategic Plan, which provided a foundational framework for assessing the university's strategic direction and priorities. The second phase involved critical evaluation of the Campus Climate Survey results, which provided valuable insights into the perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction levels of the university community, identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement. The final phase incorporated diverse opinions and feedback expressed during President Vinson's Bison Engagement Tour.

### Phase 1: Discovery

The engagement kicked off with a meeting to define the scope, objectives, and expectations. This initial phase was crucial for establishing the groundwork for the assessment.

Key activities included a review of previously collected data and interviews to identify initial insights and metrics for success measurement:

#### 1. **Howard Forward Strategic Plan**

The "Howard Forward" Strategic Plan (2019-2024), the subject of the assessment, aims to position Howard as a premier institution, focusing on academic excellence, leadership, community service, and efficiency. With the recent leadership transition in 2023, Howard is assessing past strategies and exploring new growth opportunities. An in-depth review of University progress under Howard

Forward's pillars was completed to develop specific lines of inquiry for subsequent interviews and research.

## **2. Climate Survey**

This report synthesized insights from Howard University stakeholders to examine the University's achievements, challenges, and the road ahead. Drawing on perspectives from alumni, faculty, students and influencers, the report underscores Howard's pivotal role in nurturing excellence and leadership. Further, the report assessed the University's strategic priorities as a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) and a premier research institution.

### **Key Findings**

- **Pride and Community:** Howard University instills a profound sense of pride and community among its alumni and students, celebrating its rich legacy while fostering Black leadership.
- **Unique Positioning:** Positioned uniquely at the nexus of the legacy and social responsibilities associated with HBCUs and leading research institutions, Howard faces the dual challenge of meeting high expectations and maintaining its distinct identity and commitment to the Black diaspora.
- **Strategic Vision Appreciated:** The "Howard Forward" plan is recognized for its clear goals, particularly around enhancing the student experience. However, transparency in the execution and outcomes, especially regarding corporate and philanthropic contributions, was deemed crucial.
- **Communication and Engagement Essential:** Consistent and inclusive communication is vital for keeping internal stakeholders informed and engaged, promoting a sense of ownership and collective effort towards the University's goals.

### **Major Themes and Strategic Recommendations**

- **Enhancing Howard's Identity:** Efforts should be made to solidify and communicate Howard's unique identity, ensuring the University is recognized not just for its legacy but for current contributions and achievements.
- **Balancing Tradition with Innovation:** While preserving its rich heritage, Howard should embrace innovation, particularly in enhancing educational delivery through technology and expanding research capabilities.
- **Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement:** Adopting a more inclusive approach to decision-making and communication will help address concerns of transparency and administrative efficiency, reinforcing trust within the Howard community.
- **Expanding Narratives of Excellence:** Beyond its notable contributions to health sciences and STEM, Howard's accomplishments across diverse fields should be highlighted, showcasing its comprehensive impact on society and culture.

## **2. President Ben Vinson's Bison Engagement Tour**

During the course of the Assessment, the University's new leadership conducted a comprehensive listening tour with campus constituents. Key themes emerged across the different units, including the need for improved operational efficiency, enhanced faculty and staff support, leveraging technology and innovative educational models, expanding research capacity and funding, and nurturing a more inclusive, supportive, and collaborative institutional culture. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted strategy that involves:

1. **Operational Efficiency and Streamlining Processes:** Implementing more efficient administrative processes, particularly in HR, finance, and research administration, to reduce the Howard run-around and improve the faculty, staff, and student experience. Investing in technology and training to fully utilize platforms like Workday and BisonHub can streamline operations and make the institution more responsive to its community's needs.
2. **Faculty and Staff Development and Support:** Enhancing support for faculty and staff through competitive compensation, professional development opportunities, and a more transparent and inclusive approach to leadership and decision-making. This includes addressing the high teaching loads and administrative burdens that hamper faculty research productivity and work-life balance.
3. **Leveraging Technology and Innovation in Education:** Expanding online and hybrid learning opportunities, strengthening the technological infrastructure to support research and learning, and embedding more experiential learning opportunities within the curriculum can enhance Howard's competitiveness and its students' preparedness for the workforce.
4. **Expanding Research Capacity and Funding:** Building a more robust research enterprise by streamlining administrative processes for grant management, increasing internal funding opportunities, and fostering interdisciplinary collaborations both within Howard and with external partners. This also involves enhancing the visibility of research achievements and fostering a culture that values and rewards research activities.
5. **Enhancing Institutional Culture and Community Engagement:** Fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and collaborative culture that values the contributions of all community members and actively engages with the broader community Howard serves. This includes addressing safety concerns, mental health support, and creating more opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to have a voice in institutional governance and decision-making.
6. **Strategic Enrollment and Marketing:** Addressing enrollment challenges through targeted recruitment strategies, leveraging Howard's unique position to attract a diverse student body interested in serving underserved communities, and enhancing the university's branding and marketing efforts to highlight its strengths and achievements.

By addressing these strategic areas, Howard University can build on its legacy of excellence and leadership in higher education, particularly for Black students and the broader community it serves, while navigating the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

## Phase 2: Assess

This phase focused on synthesizing stakeholder input to identify trends, insights, and areas for improvement. Its activities included:

- **Interview and Survey Design:** Development of questions aligned with Howard University's focus areas—Academic Excellence, Innovation and Knowledge, Community Service, Efficiency, and Financial Sustainability.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Conducting interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders across the identified focus areas and synthesizing the data collected to highlight trends and insights.
- **Gap Analysis:** Identification of disparities between the aspirations of the Howard Forward initiative and current indicators, presenting an opportunity to pinpoint areas for strategic improvement.

### **Phase 3: Roadmap**

The final phase was dedicated to outlining a roadmap based on the findings from the initial phases. Activities involved:

- **Report Drafting:** Synthesis of key themes, opportunities, challenges, and gaps into a draft assessment report. This included the development of a new strategic plan roadmap incorporating recommendations from the collected data.
- **Feedback Incorporation:** Refining the draft report through OCSO feedback to ensure alignment with University goals and expectations.
- **Final Presentation:** Presenting the final report and strategic roadmap to President Vinson.

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# SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

This summarizes the achievements, key themes and potential next steps for future planning at Howard University.

## WHAT'S WORKING WELL

1. **New Leadership:** The introduction of new leadership at Howard University has been received as a positive change, symbolizing a pivotal moment for the institution. Interviewees across the board - including students, faculty, and staff - view this as an opportunity for renewed focus and strategic direction, highlighting the potential for impactful advancements under fresh guidance.
2. **Campus Mission:** A compelling campus mission stands out as a key motivator for the Howard community. The unique elements that define Howard and distinguish it from other institutions have significantly contributed to a sense of pride and motivation among students, faculty, and staff alike.
3. **Campus Improvements:** Recent investments in campus projects have not gone unnoticed. These efforts are recognized as positive developments that enhance the physical environment and the overall University experience, signaling progress and attention to campus growth. However, due to the visibility of the projects, Howard Forward is sometimes viewed narrowly as a capital-focused initiative.
4. **Outreach around Initiatives:** The communications surrounding recent campus administrative initiatives reflects Howard's commitment to effective engagement. Some of these efforts, which included videos, updates and outreach, resonated with respondents as demonstrating potential tactics to consider for rallying support and participation.
5. **Appetite for Real-World Impact:** There is a strong desire among stakeholders for more real-world examples that bring the strategic plan and its pillars to life. Illustrating the tangible impacts of the plan's initiatives could powerfully affirm the strategy's relevance and success.

## KEY THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

1. **Process:** The process of creating the strategic plan, particularly the inclusiveness and methodologies employed, was a common topic of discussion. While the approach filled a strategic planning void and was building a culture of planning, some interviewees noted the need for better consultation with certain groups to ensure shared governance and comprehensive involvement.
2. **Content:** The content of the Howard Forward plan was seen as uncontroversial and generally well-received across the University. However, there were calls for the plan to stay true to Howard's unique identity and to ensure that the financial aspects of the goals align realistically with the University's capabilities.

3. **Stakeholder Communication:** The format and frequency of communication about the strategic plan were highlighted, with some feedback pointing to a need for more frequent and varied formats of updates. Ensuring that the Howard community is regularly informed and engaged with the plan's progress is crucial.
4. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Mapping the availability of data to stories of the plan's implementation and successes can bolster trust and clarity around the strategic direction.

### Student Perspective

During discussions with Howard University students about strategic planning, several key themes emerged that highlighted their concerns and aspirations. These themes included the conflation of capital planning implementation with the Howard Forward plan, improving Howard's social media use, emphasizing campus safety, and recognizing the role of transportation in the strategic plan.

#### Capital Plan or Strategic Plan?

One prominent theme that surfaced was the conflation of capital planning implementation with the Howard Forward strategic plan. Students expressed concern that the strategic plan's goals and objectives might be overshadowed by an excessive focus on physical infrastructure and capital improvements. They stressed the importance of balancing infrastructure development with the broader educational and community-focused objectives of the Howard Forward plan. For the strategic plan to succeed, students emphasized the need for clear communication and transparency in differentiating between capital planning and strategic development.

#### Social Media Opportunity

Another area identified for improvement was the use of social media as a communication tool within the strategic planning process. Students felt that social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, could be better utilized to engage the student body, provide updates, and solicit feedback. They believed that incorporating more interactive elements, such as surveys and live Q&A sessions, would foster greater student involvement and ensure that their voices and perspectives are taken into consideration. Enhancing the social media presence and engagement would not only improve communication but also foster a sense of community and ownership in the strategic planning process.



#### Campus Safety

Campus safety emerged as a significant concern among students, and they emphasized the need to highlight its role within the strategic plan. They suggested initiating ongoing discussions and forums centered around campus safety, including topics such as emergency preparedness, mental health resources, and sexual assault prevention. Students believed that by actively addressing these concerns and integrating campus safety into the strategic plan, Howard could create a safer and more supportive environment for all members of the University community.

## Transportation

Students also acknowledged the potential role of emphasizing Howard's geographic location in Washington D.C. and advocated for that uniqueness to be given due consideration within the strategic plan. To that end, students expressed a desire for transportation connectivity to existing services be seen as more than just a "perk" but a key component of connecting students to the community.

## Faculty Perspective

During conversations with Howard University faculty members about their perspectives on the Howard Forward strategic plan, several key themes emerged. These themes focused on addressing basic infrastructure concerns, nurturing a deliberate approach to shared governance, incorporating strategic plan goals into faculty performance evaluations, prioritizing remedying basic operations and infrastructure, collecting success stories, and the necessity of rebranding.

## Infrastructure

Basic infrastructure concerns related to facilities and financial processes were identified as major obstacles that impede strategic planning goals and impact morale. Faculty members expressed the need for improved infrastructure, including facilities, technology, and financial systems. They stressed that addressing these basic infrastructure concerns is crucial for creating an environment that supports teaching, research, and administrative operations, which in turn would enable the successful implementation of the strategic plan and contribute to overall morale.

Addressing the fundamentals of basic operations and infrastructure was flagged as a priority by faculty members. They emphasized the need to prioritize these core elements before embarking on more ambitious strategic initiatives. Faculty members recognized that without a solid foundation, the successful implementation of more advanced goals would be compromised. They called for attention to be given to basic operational needs, such as timely and accurate financial support, administrative processes, and maintenance of physical infrastructure.

## Progress

To foster buy-in and communicate the impact and success of the strategic plan, faculty members proposed collecting real-world stories of plan achievements. They believed that sharing these stories, both internally and externally, would demonstrate the tangible outcomes of the plan and inspire further engagement and support. Faculty members pointed out that these success stories can serve as a powerful tool for promoting the strategic plan and creating a positive narrative about the University's progress.

## Engagement

One theme that faculty members emphasized was a desire for robust and meaningful faculty engagement, ensuring that their expertise and perspectives are actively sought and considered. Faculty members wanted their input to be more than symbolic; they wanted their ideas to be taken



seriously and integrated into the strategic plan. They believed that meaningful faculty participation would lead to a stronger plan and greater buy-in from the academic community.

Another theme highlighted the importance of nurturing a deliberate approach to shared governance. Faculty members recognized that involving faculty in decision-making processes requires deliberate and intentional engagement. They called for meaningful engagement, where faculty members are actively involved in decision-making, policy development, and implementation. By fostering a culture of effective shared governance, faculty members believed that the strategic plan would have greater alignment with the goals and priorities of the academic community.

To further enhance faculty engagement with the strategic plan, faculty members suggested incorporating plan goals into faculty performance evaluations. By aligning individual faculty goals and expectations with the strategic plan, faculty members would have a vested interest in the success of the plan. This approach would enable faculty members to see the direct relevance of the plan to their day-to-day work and create a sense of ownership and accountability.

### Brand

Lastly, regarding rebranding, faculty members expressed that it may not be entirely necessary for future strategic planning efforts. They acknowledged the potential benefits of an updated brand image but emphasized the importance of focusing on substance. Faculty members suggested that the University should prioritize addressing the identified challenges and strengthening the core foundations before considering significant investments in rebranding efforts.

### Staff Perspective

During discussions with Howard University staff about their perspectives on the Howard Forward strategic plan, several key themes emerged. Staff highlighted their value as potential partners in advancing Howard Forward, the benefits of a prospective branding refresh, and the need for clearer guidance on high-level goals to ensure consistent direction.

### Goals

Clearer guidance on high-level goals was identified as an area of improvement to prevent uneven direction within the strategic plan. Staff members expressed that some goals and objectives outlined in the plan were too broad, leaving staff to interpret them on their own. This lack of clarity may have resulted in inconsistencies in the implementation of initiatives across different departments or units. Staff members suggested that providing more specific and measurable guidance would help ensure cohesive and aligned effort towards achieving the strategic plan's objectives. Clear direction would also help staff feel more assured in their roles and responsibilities within the plan.

### Metrics

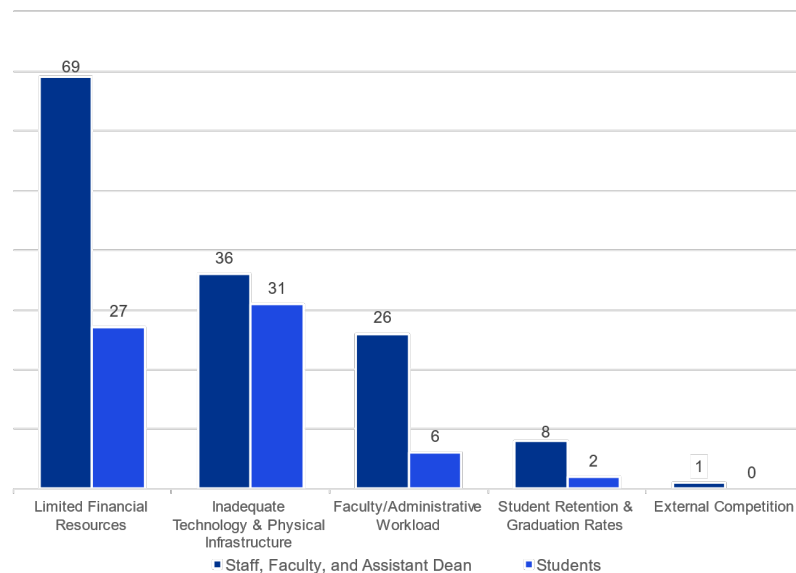
One significant theme stressed the value of staff being seen as partners rather than merely monitors of initiative progress. Staff members expressed a desire to actively contribute to the strategic plan's implementation and be involved in decision-making processes. They believed that by actively engaging staff as partners, their expertise, insights, and innovative ideas could be harnessed to drive the initiatives forward effectively. This collaborative approach would also foster a sense of ownership and commitment among staff, contributing to the overall success of the strategic plan.

## Brand

Another key theme that emerged during the discussions was the appropriateness of a branding refresh. While some staff members supported this idea, they stressed the importance of transparency and accountability in reporting the progress and results of the existing plan. Staff members emphasized the need for the University to provide regular updates on the achievements and impact of the strategic plan, demonstrating to both the internal and external community that progress is being made. Clear communication and tangible results are vital to maintain staff confidence and support for any potential rebranding efforts.

### Survey Result

What are the biggest hurdles in accomplishing the goals set out in the Howard Forward 2019-2024 strategic plan?



## NEXT STEPS

As the retrospective assessment of the Howard Forward strategic plan concludes, the University must now focus on the next phase in Howard's strategic journey. Recognizing operational excellence as an ongoing priority, our new strategic planning process will aim to identify innovative strategies for Howard to fully realize its potential. Building on insights and feedback from the community, the upcoming phase must continue to harness the collective strength and potential of the University community to address existing concerns and reimagine Howard's role and purpose in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education.

Moving forward, the engagement and input of the entire community will be crucial. The University is committed to ensuring that the upcoming strategic initiatives reflect the diverse voices and aspirations of students, faculty, and staff, thereby fostering a shared commitment to Howard's dynamic future. This is an exciting time for Howard University, and all stakeholders are invited to participate in this transformative journey, contributing to a legacy of excellence and leadership in education.