



College of Arts and Sciences

2026

—

2031

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031



ONE COAS, ONE WORLD

SHAPING THE FUTURE THROUGH EXCELLENCE, DISCOVERY, AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Strategic Plan

2026 – 2031

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College of
Arts and Sciences

I. REMARKS FROM THE DEAN

The College of Arts and Sciences is ever conscious of its rich legacy as the flagship College and its uniquely prominent role in supporting Howard University in its ambitious pursuits. While tectonic plates are shifting in American and global society, all should know that research, programs of study, co-curricular activities, and mentorship in the College of Arts and Sciences will also evolve commensurately to maintain rigor and relevance as it prepares students for ethical leadership in their professional careers and in their lives as active citizens. All COAS students will have foundational knowledge of data science, AI, climate change, and the paramountcy of advancing democracy to make decent and just societies possible. Against this backdrop of change and opportunity, serving the College takes on even greater significance. It is the honor of a lifetime for me to serve as Dean of this amazing College that comprises approximately 30% of the brilliant students and faculty of the iconic Howard University.

Upon my appointment as Dean in 2019, I proceeded with organizing a broad task force to develop a 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. That was one of the smartest decisions I could have made at the outset of my Deanship. Our first five-year plan was not just ideas on paper, but instead an animating body of ideas that helped us establish a bold vision and broadly guided the steps to achieve many of our ambitious goals.

Among the wins that accrued from our first five-year plan were the establishment of the Department of Earth, Environment, and Equity, as well as the three B.S. and one B.A. degree programs it administers. Additional achievements included a B.S. degree program in Data Science, a new B.A. degree program in Leadership Studies for a degree-completion population, a robust Board of Visitors, the first ever seven-figure gift to the College, and an expanded pursuit of external funding. The plan also fostered and facilitated extensive study abroad participation by students in preparation for leadership of global society and provided outsized support to the University, which experienced a 40% increase in student enrollment, where students were disproportionately educated in COAS, among other big outcomes. That said, like nearly all ambitious 5-year strategic plans, we didn't accomplish all of our 2020-2025 goals. Our efforts came up short in the area of establishing research centers of excellence. Though we made some gains in those areas of research, we underestimated the challenges with attracting requisite funding to fully establish such research centers. The challenges will be just as significant during the 2026–2031 period, but this time we will proceed with the benefit of experience.

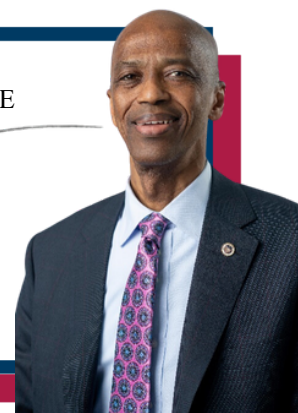
We are convinced that our next journey in pursuit of big goals will be even more successful as a result of this new 2026-2031 Strategic Plan. I want to thank our Co-chairs, Drs. Fred Knight and Anika Simpson, and all members of the task force, as well as all students, faculty, staff, and alumni who participated in listening sessions, focus group discussions, and surveys, for helping us capture the zeitgeist, concerns, and ambitions of COAS stakeholders. Over the next five years, the College of Arts and Sciences will help Howard University mightily in executing its strategic plan, and when Howard succeeds, the world is in a better place.

“We are convinced that our next journey in pursuit of big goals will be even more successful as a result of this new 2026–2031 Strategic Plan.”

EXCELLENCE IN TRUTH AND SERVICE



RUBIN PATTERSON, PH.D.
DEAN, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



II. MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Mission:

Howard University, a culturally diverse, comprehensive, research intensive and historically Black private university, provides an educational experience of exceptional quality at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels to students of high academic standing and potential, with particular emphasis upon educational opportunities for Black students. Moreover, the University is dedicated to attracting and sustaining a cadre of faculty who are, through their teaching, research and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates and to the discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world. With an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community.

Core Values:

Excellence, leadership, service, and truth. Howard's aim is to forward the development of scholars and professionals who drive change, and engage in scholarship that provides solutions to contemporary global problems, particularly ones impacting the African Diaspora.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Mission:

In accordance with the mission of Howard University, the College of Arts and Sciences provides its students with an undergraduate education grounded in the quest for intellectual freedom, social justice, artistic expression and pursuit of knowledge. The programs of the College seek to encourage the development of critical and creative thinking in scholarly modes. Solutions to human, scientific and social problems are achievable through the liberal, natural, and social sciences, and the rich variety of programs offered across the College's divisions reflects the diversity of society-at-large. With diverse curricula and degree programs, an emphasis on synthesis of knowledge and a sense of responsibility to the global community, the College provides a haven and source of nurture to culturally diverse students of all academic pursuits. The College fulfills its mission by:

- Improving the quality of teaching, research, and service through vigorous recruitment, support, and retention of the best students, faculty, and staff;
- Strengthening its efforts to create and synthesize knowledge for the betterment of humankind;
- Continuing to improve programs that prepare students for purposeful lives, responsible citizenship, and leadership in a rapidly changing world;
- Nurturing mutually beneficial relationships with the community, governmental agencies, alumni, and the public and private sectors; and
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative services that support the College's mission.

Vision:

In addition to providing instruction that enhances critical-thinking in core courses to all undergraduate students at the University, with particular emphasis on the African diasporic experience, the College provides students with deep exposure to great thinkers, societies, cultures, and sciences to make sense of, succeed in, and help transform our world for the betterment of humanity.



III. PROGRESS ON THE 2020–2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Priority 1: Establish a Vibrant and Purposeful Board of Visitors

A 10-member Board of Visitors was established in 2022, bringing together distinguished alumni and university friends with expertise spanning business, education, medicine, foreign affairs, and technology. The Board convenes twice annually, operates through focused subcommittees—including one supporting Study Abroad and another dedicated to the Male Recruitment, Retention, and Graduation Initiative—and actively advances College priorities through advocacy, insight, and engagement. Members are also providing philanthropic support, with some working to finalize seven-figure donations through partnerships with the University’s Development team.



Strategic Priority 3: Establish Interdisciplinary Research Centers of Excellence

COAS made significant strides in building an interdisciplinary research infrastructure. The Department of Earth, Environment, and Equity (E3) was established with five newly recruited faculty focused on environmental sustainability and justice. The Howard University Center for an Equitable and Sustainable Society, supported by the Hewlett Foundation, was founded to address racial and economic inequity through multidisciplinary inquiry. The COAS Artificial Intelligence Research and Course Development Awards seeded faculty projects across the College, resulting in new AI-focused courses and publications. The College also expanded its global research reach through partnerships with the University of Johannesburg and Stellenbosch University, and by supporting Humanities and Social Science faculty participation in Howard’s DoD-sponsored university-affiliated research center (UARC).



Strategic Priority 2: Modernize Academic Programs

Between 2020 and 2025, COAS increased the number of tenure-line faculty by 89, appointed new department chairs in seven departments, and assisted with overhauling General Education requirements to better align with contemporary learning goals. The College expanded its academic portfolio significantly by launching new degree programs in Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Atmospheric Science, Data Science, and an online Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Studies, and adding minors in Applied Data Science and Analytics and Hip-Hop Studies. The establishment of the Department of Earth, Environment, and Equity (E3) anchored this interdisciplinary growth. Simultaneously, major facility renovations were initiated in Just Hall, the Chemistry Building, Thirfield Hall, and Locke Hall to modernize instructional and research spaces.







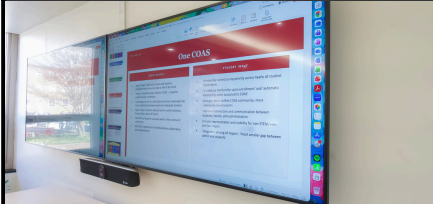


Strategic Priority 4: Formalize Domestic and International Experiential Learning

An innovative Study Abroad Program was launched with four “890 Courses” around Spring Break and during Summer Sessions. Spring 2024 piloted four courses, growing to ten the following year and scaling to twenty courses in countries throughout the world in 2026. The College aims to offer 30 such courses by 2030, which marks extraordinary growth in global learning. A post-trip survey found that 98% of student participants described their experience as life-changing and career-shaping. To reduce financial barriers, the College awarded students with \$1,000 Globalization Scholarships. The annual COAS Passport Drive further supports student readiness for international engagement, laying the groundwork for the experiential learning infrastructure that will accelerate under the 2026–2031 plan. Rather than being at odds, studying abroad is also closely aligned with addressing America’s deep-seated problems, as students return home with new ideas shaped by observing how other societies address challenges and a greater appreciation for global teamwork.

IV. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The 2026–2031 COAS Strategic Plan emerged from a collaborative and community-driven process that engaged all constituencies within the College. The Strategic Planning Task Force visited academic departments, held town halls and focus group meetings, and conducted surveys guided by a single question: **“What ambitious but achievable goals should COAS aim to reach between now and 2031?”**

	<p>Department Visits:</p> <p>Pairs of faculty or staff from the COAS Strategic Planning Task Force completed visits with departments, including Afro-American Studies; Earth, Environment, and Equity; Health, Human Performance and Sports Management; History; Philosophy; Political Science; Psychology; and World Languages and Cultures.</p>
	<p>Student Town Hall:</p> <p>The Task Force organized a Student Town Hall that was led in part by student representatives who engaged peers through activities and questionnaires. Students created collages and vision boards representing their “Dream COAS” and responded to questions about potential pillars such as Centers of Excellence. Feedback revealed a strong desire for greater community within COAS, more collaboration between the Arts and the Sciences, increased pride and college unity, increased opportunities to partner with faculty on research projects, and events such as a student research showcase.</p>
	<p>COAS Dean’s Administrative Team Focus Group:</p> <p>The Dean's administrative team discussed how the College can build upon the gains of the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan. Key areas of deliberation included COAS institutional identity, the cultivation of a unified college community, and strategies for advancing interdisciplinary collaboration across divisions.</p>
	<p>Stakeholder Survey:</p> <p>A survey was tailored for staff, faculty, and students. Each version asked respondents to share their opinions on expanding experiential learning opportunities, increasing revenue-generating activities, and building centers of excellence, with short examples provided for each goal. The survey also asked open-ended questions about their vision for COAS and their current experience at the College.</p>
	<p>COAS Staff Focus Group:</p> <p>Staff members provided substantive input on the College's operational priorities, with particular attention to administrative efficiency, resource stewardship, and the importance of creating meaningful pathways for professional growth and development across all staff roles.</p>
	<p>Faculty Town Hall Virtual Meeting:</p> <p>The virtual Faculty Town Hall offered a college-wide forum to examine themes that emerged consistently across department visits. Discussion centered on faculty advancement and promotion, the need for robust institutional support for grantsmanship and research development, and a desire for greater collaboration across the College. Faculty also identified compelling areas of convergence around the development of interdisciplinary Centers of Excellence.</p>
	<p>All-COAS Virtual Preview Meeting:</p> <p>A final college-wide virtual meeting was held to preview the task force’s findings and the five emerging pillars, and to solicit feedback from the full COAS community before the plan was finalized.</p>

2025–2026 COAS STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

Role	Humanities	Natural Sciences / Social Sciences
Co-Chairs	Anika Simpson <i>Philosophy</i>	Frederick Knight <i>History</i>
Professors	Alla Tovares <i>English</i>	Katharine Gurski <i>Mathematics</i> Ezer Kang <i>Psychology</i>
Associate Professors	Leonard Muaka <i>World Languages and Cultures</i>	Lemir Teron <i>Earth, Environment and Equity</i>
Assistant Professors	Ja’La Wourman <i>English</i>	Gagandeep Kaur <i>Chemistry</i>
Lecturer	Sipho Sithole <i>World Languages and Cultures</i>	
Staff	Binta Chauncey Kea Jones	
Students	Maleek Colvin Kiera Hale Nahdia Parks	



V. COAS STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES



To begin the planning process, the Dean proposed three foundational pillars—Centers of Excellence, Experiential Learning, and Financial Sustainability—which were then brought to the full COAS community for input. Constituent feedback shaped the specific initiatives and focus areas within each of those three pillars, grounding them in the actual needs and priorities of faculty, staff, and students. That same feedback surfaced two additional themes so consistent across every engagement channel that they became pillars in their own right.

Pillar 01 — One COAS, One World

Faculty, staff, and students expressed a desire for greater connection across departments and with the administration. The History Department described a pervasive sense of siloing; the Dean’s team noted students lacking a common sense of home in comparison to more singularly-focused professional colleges and schools; a survey by COAS reported that 87% of students want to feel a sense of community. Multiple constituencies named Howard’s global Black intellectual identity as a unifying anchor for COAS to steward.

Pillar 02 — Centers of Excellence

Departments identified specific research visions: a Center of Excellence in Neuroscience at the intersection of racial inequity; hubs for environmental justice and public history; a World Languages Center; an AI and Emerging Technology Center; and a global lab extending COAS’s reach to the African continent and the Caribbean region.

Pillar 03 — Experiential Learning

Constituents called for an expansion of study abroad, deeper DC-based internship pipelines, AI literacy in curricula, and clearer pathways to post-graduation opportunities. Howard’s position in the nation’s capital and its global reach were named as distinctive assets to leverage for experiential learning at scale.

Pillar 04 — Pathways to Success

Faculty called for clearer promotion pathways, merit rewards, and reduced administrative burden. Students needed more research mentors and improvements to academic advising. Staff reported being stretched thin. The community demanded accountability structures and operational systems that allow everyone to do their best work.

Pillar 05 — Financial Sustainability

Faculty and departments named grant expansion, alumni engagement, certificate programs, online degree models, language teaching certificates, and a central internship hub as priority revenue-generating strategies. Budget transparency and enrollment-driven decision-making emerged as shared expectations across the College.

STRATEGIC THEME · PILLAR 01

ONE COAS, ONE WORLD

Foster a unified College of Arts & Sciences identity, culture, and community **GOAL**

As Howard University's largest college, the College of Arts and Sciences attracts students from across the country and around the world to study with preeminent faculty and conduct groundbreaking research across a diverse array of disciplines. The breadth of COAS disciplines simultaneously examines the world as a single place and its unlimited diversity of places, voices, and issues. We are also a home for self-discovery, where students develop a sense of purpose along with their enhanced and sharpened intellect. Through our rigorous teaching, research, and co-curricular offerings, we reexamine foundational schools of thought, discover knowledge, and generate new ideas that help solve complex problems. Guided by the values that undergird our work, we are intrinsically driven to create a more just and vibrant world. To more fully realize these core objectives, we envision working as One COAS.

One COAS, One World represents our vision to cultivate a greater sense of connection and community within the College. We strive to nurture a culture where COAS students develop an enduring collective identity and sense of belonging that lasts for a lifetime. We also seek to build bridges across the disciplines, enabling faculty, students, and other COAS stakeholders to engage in wide-ranging conversations, in-depth study, and collective pursuits. By promoting such interpersonal and interdisciplinary engagements across the College and beyond, we will foster a dynamic environment for students, faculty, staff, and others aligned with our mission.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Hire Director of Communications
- Build a premier peer mentorship program for students
- Design and lead signature One COAS event(s) to advance a unified COAS identity and culture
- Formalize faculty mentorship as part of faculty appointment, promotion, and tenure expectations
- Convene, incentivize, and reward faculty to foster work on collaborative projects across disciplines



METRICS

- **M1:** Annual Publication of *The Flagship* starting in 2028
- **M2:** 50% increase in student-reported sense of belonging within COAS by 2031
- **M3:** Increase rate of associate professors promoted to full professor
- **M4:** Increase in number of interdisciplinary teaching, research, service, and grantsmanship

STRATEGIC THEME · PILLAR 02

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Establish COAS as a hub for interdisciplinary research and scholarly excellence

GOAL

The vision to establish Centers of Excellence reflects a conviction shared across the College: that our greatest intellectual contributions will emerge not from isolated disciplines but from the deliberate convergence of them. Across department visits, student and faculty town halls, and focus group discussions, members of the community shared an enthusiasm for research centers that will address some of the most urgent and complex challenges facing Black people and the world.

Our vision is grounded in a belief that our history, mission, and community make the College uniquely suited to establish Centers of Excellence that produce impactful research, advance thought leadership, serve as an unparalleled resource in the higher education landscape, and make a positive impact on the world. We envision these Centers as dynamic hubs for interdisciplinary communities of faculty, students, practitioners, and external partners. Our Centers of Excellence will be the engine that transforms this vision into enduring institutional capacity—anchoring interdisciplinary research in structures that attract research and philanthropic funding, elevate faculty scholarship, and connect students to the intellectual frontiers that will define the next generation.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Launch the COAS Catalyzing Centers (CCC) Project to establish interdisciplinary research centers across the College
- Establish interdisciplinary research centers by 2031
- Implement the new faculty-endorsed policy requiring candidates to show evidence of pursuit of external funding for successful consideration for promotion and tenure



METRICS

- **M1:** 12 seed projects completed as the development pipeline for the centers
- **M2:** 3 centers operational with minimum funding of \$1 million

STRATEGIC THEME · PILLAR 03

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Prepare students for careers and global citizenship through innovative, experiential learning

GOAL

Working within the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, students in COAS complete degrees that ground them in their academic fields, train them across disciplines, and prepare them for work beyond the academy. Upon graduation, they are well prepared for professional school, graduate school, or the workforce. Even more important, they are global citizens who are ready to assume greater responsibility for, and be stewards of the world they will inherit. Educating students to be prepared for these roles happens through our rigorous curriculum, peer-to-peer learning communities, and the work of our excellent faculty. It happens in residence halls, on the Yard, in libraries, in laboratories, during office hours, on study abroad experiences, in internships, and most significantly in our classrooms. The strategic pillar on Experiential Learning is designed to further expand the classroom beyond the traditional environment, empowering students to transform the world.

With its reputation for producing outstanding graduates, its proximity to other preeminent institutions, and its location in the nation's capital and at the crossroads of world cultures, COAS is well poised to increase opportunities for students to learn in broader environments. We will foster more applied learning and cultivate student intellectual and professional development through internships and undergraduate research. And through expanding study abroad opportunities, students will gain even greater insight into the world they will enter upon graduation.

To prepare students for the wider world, the College will also respond to changes in the higher education landscape, especially those ushered in by data science, artificial intelligence, and other transformational tools. Students will also learn the simultaneous power and fragility of democracy, and the necessity of sustaining and strengthening the critical and creative lenses of our disciplines, our commitment to professional ethics, our realization of the need to continue to grow and adapt, and our goal of ensuring that students are prepared with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that will guide their future leadership.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Expand and structure broad opportunities for students to work with faculty on their ongoing research in science labs, fieldwork projects, and writing for book and scholarly article publications
- Expand the COAS Study Abroad Program to increase student participation in global learning experiences: 30 “890 courses” per year by 2030 for 30% of COAS students to have a study abroad experience; hence our: 30 x 30 x 30 initiative
- Broaden experiential learning (embedded, place-based, project-based) — structured internship program in the nation's capital
 - Create cohort of faculty developing curriculum that integrates new and emerging technologies and democracy literacy
 - Develop department-level post-graduation tracker to ensure COAS students are prepared for job/grad school placement

METRICS

- **M1:** 5% annual increase in DC internships
- **M2:** 30 890-level courses offered, reaching 30% of COAS students by 2030
- **M3:** All departments will demonstrate literacy in democracy and appropriate use of AI and other new and emerging technologies
- **M4:** 5% annual increase in desired job/grad school placement



STRATEGIC THEME · PILLAR 04

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Build operational excellence through accountable systems and investment in faculty and staff

GOAL

At its core, the work of the College of Arts and Sciences is carried out by people who share a deep commitment to its mission and vision, and who understand their roles and contributions in pursuit of our institutional goals. For all of us, the College's promise depends not only on the quality of our academic programs and the depth of our intellectual commitments but also on the integrity of the systems and structures that support everything we do. When those systems function as they should, they are invisible, quietly enabling each person to contribute fully to the College's mission. When they do not, the costs are real: time and energy that might otherwise be devoted to teaching, research, and service are instead absorbed by inefficiency, ambiguity, frustration, and unmet needs.

The Pathways to Success pillar is rooted in the conviction that operational excellence is not simply a bureaucratic goal; rather, it is essential to realizing our highest aspirations. When faculty, staff, and students are supported by systems that are efficient and effective, the conditions for thriving exist at every level of the College. And when our people thrive, the results speak for themselves: faculty advance, students succeed, and COAS honors its commitments to Howard University and to the world.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Ensure reliability of operating procedures through accountability
- Invest in faculty through recruitment and retention of high-quality faculty
- Work with the President, Provost, and CFO to expand the ranks of tenure-line faculty through annual backfills and new lines
- Invest in staff professional success
- Create central online platform with policies, procedures, major schemes
- Expand use of data analytics for data-driven decisions to account for efficiency and performance, reporting to COAS

METRICS

- **M1:** Contribute to increase in 4- and 6-year graduation rates
- **M2:** Increase in faculty and staff satisfaction
- **M3:** Data collection mechanism to identify failures and highlight accountability reporting to COAS



STRATEGIC THEME · PILLAR 05

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Assisting Howard University with revenue stream growth and diversification while also adopting more ROI thinking in COAS

GOAL

As the flagship of Howard University, the College of Arts and Sciences has an outsized responsibility and impact that spans the institution. With students from several schools and colleges across the university relying on COAS to satisfy their major or liberal arts and sciences general education requirements, we play a prominent role in educating students who will carry the mantle of leadership in their professions and in civic life. As a hub of scholarship, the College also supports student and faculty research that shapes our disciplines and has a measurable societal influence. While we are led by such high ideals as the search for truth, service to humanity, a particular concern for people of the African diasporic community, and a quest for social justice, the College remains deeply committed to the practical need for financial sustainability to continue our work at the University and beyond.

As higher education faces an uncertain fiscal future, the College of Arts and Sciences must play an outsized role in supporting Howard University to solidify its impactful future. The College will carefully steward existing funds while pursuing additional sources of revenue. By telling our story and staying engaged with supporters of the College, we plan to increase philanthropic support and alumni giving. We will improve our infrastructure to better support faculty scholarship and increase research grant activity. During the Spring 2026 semester, COAS faculty endorsed for the first time the pursuit of external funding as a requirement for tenure and promotion. Howard has an institutional interest in expanding faculty grantsmanship from research, reputational, and revenue-generating perspectives. We will also generate additional revenue for the College by creating opportunities for nontraditional students to continue their education and realize their career and personal goals through degree completion programs. Together, these and other initiatives will position COAS to thrive by expanding opportunities, supporting innovation, and sustaining Howard's storied legacy of excellence, leadership, truth, and service.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Develop net revenue-generating programs/initiatives
- Strengthen alumni engagement to increase giving
- Institutionalize summer grant writing project/program
- Improve efficiency of grant spending
- Increase COAS grants portfolio (# of grants and grant award amounts)
- Increase large donations/institutional giving

METRICS

- **M1:** 10 certificate programs launched by 2031 with defined enrollment and revenue targets
- **M2:** 30% increase in alumni giving over the plan period
- **M3:** 5% year-over-year increase in COAS faculty grant submissions





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STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031



ONE COAS, ONE WORLD

SHAPING THE FUTURE THROUGH EXCELLENCE, DISCOVERY, AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP