

We the Faculty...

Howard University

Faculty Manifesto

“RECLAIMING THE ACADEMY”

A recurring and persistent challenge of the Faculty at Howard University is its inability, despite sustained efforts, to develop a collaborative and productive relationship with the Administration. In their persistence to secure such collaboration, the Faculty is complying with the substance of language that was crafted in major institutional documents that were jointly produced by both Faculty and Administration, and subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees. As guardians of the Academy in its local setting, and as the ultimate safeguard of the integrity and quality of academic life, the Faculty of Howard University take seriously its appropriate characterization in the *Constitution of the Faculty Senate* (January, 1993) “as a partner with shared responsibility” (*Article XI, Section C.1*). The principle of shared governance, which mandates the collaborative efforts of Faculty and Administration, represents the fundamental condition, indeed, the *sine qua non* for ensuring that the best that we collectively have to offer will guide our discussions and, ultimately, our decisions for the benefit of our beloved institution and especially, those who live, learn and labor in association with Howard University.

This Faculty Manifesto is a declaration of the Faculty’s position regarding its frustrations and repeated failures to secure a collaborative working relationship with the Administration. The format of the document is four-tiered, and organized as follows:

Section A. presents specific language in both the *Howard University Faculty Handbook* (1993) and the *Constitution of the Faculty Senate* (January, 1993) that outlines the institutionally adopted commitment to a collaborative relationship between the Faculty and the Administration;

Section B. presents a representative set of inappropriate behaviors on the part of the Administration that constitute misdeeds or violations of both the spirit and intent of the specifications in cited documents in *Section A*;

Section C. presents the range of possible responses or strategies that the Faculty are prepared to embrace in order to ensure compliance on the part of all parties identified as partners in the shared governance of Howard University;

Section D. presents a challenge that grounds responsibility for the character of the Academy with the faculty.

SECTION A. INSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS THAT FRAME THE COLLABORATIVE CHARACTER OF FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION RELATIONSHIP

Article 1. Section C. of the *Constitution of the Faculty Senate*, entitled *University Faculty Partnership with the Administration and Board of Trustees*, clearly specifies the character of the relationship that must exist between the Faculty and the Administration as a “partnership,” which is to be based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for the welfare of the University. This framing concept of a partnership is further reinforced in *Section E.* of the same article entitled *University Faculty Issues Agenda*, which stipulates that on an annual basis the Faculty Senate shall prepare a University Faculty Issues Agenda which shall serve to ensure collaborative dialogue and resolution with the Administration and Trustees. To this end, in keeping with the concept of partnership, *Section E* of *Article 1* explicitly recognizes that the Faculty Issues Agenda is not restricted to the Faculty alone, but rather serves to link the Faculty with the Administration and Trustees as jointly responsible for the issues that constitute the University Faculty Issues Agenda. With respect to educational policy at the institution, *Article 1* further specifies in *Section F.* entitled *University Faculty Role in General Educational Policy* that “the University Trustees and Administration act in collaboration with the collective University Faculty, through the Senate, with regard to the development, review and revision of general educational policy; that is, policy that is applicable to more than one school or college.”

The *Constitution* in *Article XI. Section C. 8 and 9* is also clear on the collaborative character of all policies and procedures affecting more than one school or college that either the President or the Board of Trustees might initiate. That is, the Administration must seek Faculty Senate input before deciding policies and procedures that affect more than one school or college. Additionally, it is stipulated that the Faculty Senate shall be consulted whenever the Administration develops recommendations or proposals so that the Faculty Senate may assist and collaborate in their development. The language in this section specifies

that the reason for seeking Faculty input on such matters is to ensure that the “individual and collective expertise” of the Faculty is sought “before final recommendations of the President are cast.”

Finally, in *Section 1.5.1 General Institutional Governance*, the *Howard University Faculty Handbook*, which addresses the role of Faculty (1.5.1.2), states that “the faculty shares responsibility with the administration of the university in matters related to academic programs including faculty recruitment and development; faculty evaluation; program development and review; student advising; class schedule planning; and general supervision of the research, teaching, and outreach activities of the school, or college.”

In essence, both the *Constitution of the Faculty Senate* and the *Howard University Faculty Handbook* frame the relationship between the Faculty and the Administration within a discourse that converges around the concepts of partnership and collaboration in (1) University governance, and (2) the development of university-wide programs, policies and procedures.

SECTION B. INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS ON THE PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION THAT VIOLATE THE SPIRIT AND INTENT OF THE COLLABORATIVE CHARACTER OF FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION RELATIONSHIP AS OUTLINED ABOVE.

Although the final authority for the conduct of university affairs is vested in the Board of Trustees, the academic judgments, recommendations, and policies of the faculty are central to the university’s general educational policy and in determining the shape and character of the university as an educational institution (*Howard University Faculty Handbook, 2.3., Faculty Responsibility*).

Since the adoption of both the *Faculty Handbook* and the *Constitution of the Faculty Senate* in 1993, the Administration of Howard University has maintained a tradition of sustained violation of both the spirit and intent of a collaboratively working relationship with the Faculty, as specified in the cited University documents. In many ways and on many occasions, the Administration has frustrated efforts on the part of Faculty (1) to meet with the Administration, (2) to have reasonable access to documents and information; and (3) to have early and meaningful input into policies and procedures in advance of their adoption. In effect, the Administration has made it clear that they do not consider the Faculty as a valued and significant partner in matters related to the academic health and long-term welfare of Howard University. Among the many violations that can be cited as evidence of the Administration’s negative and dismissive attitude toward Faculty, the following can be referenced:

1. Violations of Shared Governance

- a. Strategic Framework for Action I and II were drafted and adopted without soliciting input from Faculty. When unsolicited input was advanced by the Faculty for consideration, the Administration did not use that input in the final form of either SFA I nor SFA II;
- b. The President’s “merit program,” established and implemented without input from the Faculty, is an egregious affront to the Faculty of Howard University. Despite repeated efforts on the part of Faculty to seek needed review and revision of the program, the Administration has staunchly refused to allow such review and revision leading toward the overhaul of such a poorly designed, highly divisive, and organizationally dysfunctional program;
- c. Although the *Faculty Handbook* provides for shared governance between Faculty and the Administration for academic programs, Faculty recruitment, Faculty evaluation, and program development, the Administration (especially involving the Deans and Provost) has continued to hire Faculty without departmental review and approval;
- d. The Administration routinely implement procedures that violate the *Faculty Handbook* with respect to the appointment of department chairs;
- e. The President and Provost routinely form committees to address matters related to the interests of the Faculty, and do not seek input from the membership recommended by the Faculty Senate, nor do they include membership from the duly elected representatives of the Faculty;
- f. The Administration has refused to work with the faculty to clarify or amend the nefarious “not withstanding” clause in the *Faculty Handbook* that grants to the Administration the right to remove any professor when “the interests of the university require it” (2.7.4.2 *Basic Principles of the Tenure System*).

2. Non-Responsiveness to Faculty Concerns

- a. The President has failed repeatedly to respond to requests from the Faculty Senate leadership for dates regarding significant University events, which has often resulted in needless delays in the conduct of Faculty Senate affairs;
- b. The Faculty Senate leadership generally and the Faculty individually have often sought to communicate with and to confer with either the President or the Provost on matters of significance. On many occasions, both University officials have assumed an attitude of social distance and non-responsiveness to such requests, despite follow-up requests in many instances;
- c. The President has never complied with the procedures related to the Grievance Hearing Commission which requires, in the event that the President declines to implement the recommendations of the Hearing Commission, that he communicate detailed reasons for his decision in writing to the chair of the Faculty Senate;
- d. The Faculty has made numerous recommendations to address the cumbersome and confusing research infrastructure of the University; however, to no avail.

3. Threat to the Quality of Academic Programs

- a. Departments have suffered losses of Faculty lines and major budget cuts without Faculty consultation, and in many instances, without Faculty knowledge;
- b. Academic programs across the University are in disarray, with many of them obligated to suffer under conditions characterized by substandard equipment and facilities;
- c. The Administration has persistently refused to implement Faculty evaluation of Deans, the Provost, and the President despite repeated requests from the Faculty.
- d. The Administration has adopted a policy of performance evaluation of the Faculty to occur at least every two years, which includes a requirement that the Administration share the evaluation with the Faculty member in a personal interview. In many instances across the schools and colleges, this is not done despite requests from the Faculty for the past four years;

4. Inadequate Management of Fiscal Resources

- a. The President has failed to identify alternative financial sources to support and sustain strong academic programs, given that the federal appropriation has remained flat;
- b. The President has failed in some instances to implement funded programs when such funds have been awarded;
- c. The President has failed to effectively and properly manage the fiscal resources of the University, and, as a result, has jeopardized the long-term fiscal health of the institution.

SECTION C. RANGE OF POSSIBLE STRATEGIES THAT THE FACULTY ARE PREPARED TO EMBRACE TO RECLAIM THE ACADEMY AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY. THE AREAS OF FOCUS WILL BE THE FOLLOWING:

- (I) The Howard University Community and Its Affiliates
 - a. Bring the issues as outlined above directly to the Faculty Senate membership at a Faculty retreat;
 - b. Continue to educate the Faculty community across the campus in order to ensure their knowledge and support;
 - c. Take our concerns and our demands in writing directly to the Board of Trustees for action;
 - d. Forward the Manifesto to the Board of Trustees, the President, and the Provost;
 - e. Disseminate the Manifesto through the *Senate Communicator*, the Faculty Senate website, and the *Hilltop*;

f. Align with the Howard University Alumni Association.

(II) The External Community

a. Inform the Middle States Accrediting Association;

b. Inform AAUP;

c. Inform all accrediting boards affiliated with the respective schools and colleges;

d. Inform the various media outlets associated with the Academy (e.g., *Faculty Voice*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*).

SECTION D. RECLAIMING THE ACADEMY

In the opening paragraph of this Faculty Manifesto, it was stated that Faculty are the guardians of the Academy in its local setting as well as the ultimate safeguard of the integrity and quality of academic life. The itemized details of the experiences that Howard Faculty have endured from the Administration, as presented in Sections A and B above, represent in many instances the incursion of administrative personnel into the academic space that properly belongs with the Faculty. Given the fundamental principle that primacy for academic programs together with the integrity and quality of those programs fall within the purview of Faculty, it is the duty of Faculty to accept partial responsibility for its tolerance of this incursion, and to recognize that if the Academy at Howard University is to be what it must be, then Faculty are challenged to recognize that by virtue of its activity or inactivity, it has wittingly or unwittingly contributed to the very violations that it condemns on the part of the Administration.

Reclaiming the Academy begins with the affirmation of the Faculty role in re-claiming its primary responsibility (1) to be the guardians of the Academy in its local setting, and (2) to recognize that direct Faculty action in all matters related to the academic life of the Institution is prerequisite to the academic health and long-term welfare of the University. By virtue of what the Faculty does or fails to do in all academic matters, the character and quality of the Academy at Howard University depend. By acknowledging primacy in the Faculty for the integrity and strength of academic programs, the Faculty re-affirms its commitment to work to “Reclaim the Academy” as properly falling within its domain and expertise, and to collaborate with the Administration “as a partner with shared responsibility” as mandated by the *Constitution of the Faculty Senate*.