Chapter 4  Students and Student Services

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a snapshot of a key member of the Howard University family — the University’s *raison d’etre*: its student body. The demographic data presented in this discussion reveals not only the depth but also the true breadth and diversity of the unique Howard University student population. The chapter also provides a critical appraisal of the many services that the University provides to students in the broad areas of enrollment management (extending from recruitment and admissions to registration, orientation, and financial aid processing); student housing and health care; academic counseling and support; governance and leadership opportunities; social and recreational activities; and retention and postgraduate support. These analyses are based upon Howard University and national trend data from the past 10 academic years ending in spring 1998 and, where appropriate, are projected for the next several years.

PROFILE OF THE STUDENT BODY

Howard University’s student body—one level, so incredibly diverse in its gender, ethnicity, national origin, academic pursuits, and potential—has remained, on another level, predominantly undergraduate, African American, and female over the past 10 years. Paralleling national trends in higher education, the University’s total enrollment has been declining since 1989, when its enrollment reached an all-time high of 12,773; by 1998, this number had dropped 12 percent to 11,231 (see Figure 4.1).

International diversity has been present at Howard University throughout its 132-year history (see Figure 4.1). Students come to Howard from all 50 states and more than 115 countries. In 1998 U.S. citizens comprised 84 percent of the Howard student body.
compared to 80 percent in 1989). Foreign-born or “international” students comprised 11 percent (compared to 16 percent in 1989), while students in this category with permanent-resident visas comprised 5 percent (compared to 4 percent in 1989). The significant decline in the number of international students enrolling at the University from 1992 to 1997 can largely be attributed to a federally mandated surcharge imposed on international students during that period. Upon the lifting of that surcharge in 1997, international enrollments have begun to rebound.

Students at Howard are enrolled in a variety of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs. As shown in Figure 4.2, even though the undergraduate student population has decreased over the past 10 years, undergraduates remain the largest portion of the population. In 1990, undergraduates represented 76.5 percent of the total student enrollment compared to 64 percent in 1998; however, the graduate student population has been steadily increasing, from 15.4 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 1998. Enrollment in the University’s professional schools has remained at capacity over the past 10 years, with these academic units’ enrollments holding steady at about 13 percent of the total student population.
These enrollment trends — the reduction in the number of undergraduates, the increase in the number of graduate students, and steady enrollments in the professional schools—reflect Howard University’s consistent progress toward the attainment of a key goal set forth in its Strategic Framework for Action. That goal is to realize a shift in the composition of Howard’s student body by increasing the ratio of graduate students to undergraduates, with a projected cap in enrollment at 12,000 students. As Figure 4.2 indicates, the University is approaching its goal. Indeed, if the enrollments projected through 2002 are met, Howard’s graduate student population will increase to 25 percent, while undergraduates will account for only 62 percent of the student population, with the remaining 13 percent enrolled in professional programs.

Historically, transfer students have represented a very small portion (less than three percent) of Howard’s student population. Like undergraduate enrollments, the number of transfer students also has been declining at the University. In 1994, a total of 921 students transferred to Howard, compared to 690 in 1997. Most of the recent transfers have involved students at the freshman rather than the junior level when most
transfers ordinarily occur, given that many students plan their academic careers to include a two-year degree from a junior college with a subsequent transfer to a four-year institution. Strategies and activities are presently being developed to attract greater numbers of qualified junior-college students to Howard, notably through formal articulation agreements with community colleges both in the region and in other parts of the country.

Female students represent 60 percent of the total student population at Howard. This gender imbalance is particularly evident among the University’s undergraduate population, although women also outnumber men in the graduate and professional schools (see Figure 4.3). This trend is consistent with patterns reported for African American students nationally.

Interestingly, the international student population at Howard has a more even balance between males and females. As shown in Figure 4.4, the number of international male students is slightly greater than the number of international females.

Figure 4.3. Enrollment by Academic Status and Gender

![Figure 4.3](image_url)
Of special concern to the University is the small number of U.S.-born males, particularly African American males, enrolled at Howard. The University is aware of and concerned about this pattern, and is working diligently to address it through targeted recruitment efforts at all levels.

**ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT**

The University’s Office of Enrollment Management is responsible for the recruitment, admission, registration, and financial aid processing of undergraduate students and postgraduate students in some departments, with coordination of orientation activities shared with units. However, many professional schools (e.g., medicine, law, and dentistry) provide specialized enrollment management services to their students. (Details about these services are provided in the annual reports and catalogues of these schools.)
Recruitment and Admissions

Howard University seeks to attract to its campus students of high academic potential from around the nation and throughout the world. Its student recruitment efforts are presently guided by an “early action” plan known as “Plan 18.” This plan involves a team of recruiters from the Office of Enrollment Management as well as faculty, staff, and administrators. Plan 18’s application package includes a well-defined set of procedures for completing the package. In accordance with this plan, potential students are identified and contacted 18 months prior to their high school graduation. This point is widely considered to be the most critical decision-making period for college-bound students.

A rigorous assessment of Plan 18 has not been done. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that Plan 18 has improved recruitment substantially. The best evidence for the positive impact of Plan 18 is that the average SAT score of the freshman class has increased each year beginning with fall 1996. In fall 1998 there was a significant increase in SAT scores.

Generally, recruitment and admissions information about academic opportunities, admissions requirements, and University contacts are sent to prospective students toward the end of their junior year of high school. Teams of Howard recruiters attend numerous high school college fairs around the country throughout the year, and visit with several high school counselors to promote the educational opportunities available at the University. The teams distribute brochures, pamphlets, and other promotional materials describing Howard’s various program requirements, highlighting the University’s commitment to producing leaders, and detailing the accomplishments of its faculty,
students, and alumni. Prospective students may also contact the University through its
toll-free information number (1-800-HOWARD-U) or by logging on to the University’s
web site at http://www.howard.edu to request information about Howard or to send
information about themselves to Enrollment Management staff.

The direct participation of Howard University alumni in recruitment activities has
increased markedly under President Swygert’s leadership. In many cases, this trend
illustrates renewed faith of alumni in alma mater and their shared commitment to its goals
and objectives. Anecdotally, in interviews with Self-study staff, Enrollment Management
personnel noted a decrease in the number of calls from alumni requesting assistance in
admitting prospective students with marginal academic qualifications, and an increase in
calls from alumni referring the most academically prepared students to the University.
Efforts to more greatly involve alumni in this and other ways have been enhanced by the
March 1996 publication of a completely revised and expanded Alumni Recruitment
Handbook. This handbook, which has been regularly updated since, has proven to be a
most valuable recruitment tool. It is distributed to alumni at training sessions and
recruitment receptions held during the University’s away football games and at other
alumni events.

These and other recruitment developments reveal that interest in Howard
University is at an all-time high. Confirmation of this is evidenced by the dramatic
increases in the number of requests received from prospective students, parents, and high
school counselors for application material and campus tours. As noted by the Office of
Enrollment Management, by mid-January 1999, a total of 61,103 application requests had
been processed for fall 1999 enrollment. This is approximately 50 percent more requests
than processed during the same time period for fall 1998. Enrollment Management staff have maintained that some of this interest can be attributed to the greatly improved package of application materials, which were completely revised and redesigned. The remaining credit, they contend, should go to the overall success of Plan 18.

Howard University utilizes a highly selective admissions process to promote the identification of students who meet the criteria of academic excellence. Though individual colleges and schools have different requirements for admission to their programs, all prospective students must demonstrate consistent academic growth and achievement, along with strong personal motivation and cocurricular involvement, throughout their high school years. Table 4.1 summarizes the minimum admission requirements for each college and school at Howard University.

An application for admission to Howard must include an official secondary school transcript (or, in exceptional circumstances, a GED certificate); results from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) and, in some cases, from the SAT II; and the requisite application fee. All students who have not attended the University for one or more semesters must reapply for admission. Transfer and international students have special admissions requirements. Transfer students are accepted based on evidence of good academic standing at all institutions previously attended; transfer students on probation or who have been suspended for their current or previous institution(s) are not eligible for admission. Foreign-born students from non-English-speaking countries must have successfully passed the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Some Howard University colleges and schools require the TOEFL from all international applicants.
Table 4.1. Minimum Undergraduate Admission Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College/School/Division</th>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allied Health Sciences</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Design</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>30 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>15 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>15 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>15 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, Architecture, and Computer Sciences</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>15 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon acceptance to the University, all international students must submit an Immigration Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20).

Howard University students are encouraged to explore academic opportunities and new environments within the United States and abroad through the Domestic and International Exchange Program (DIEP). To be accepted into this program, students must have good academic standing and obtain the approval of their academic advisor and the dean of their respective college/school.

Table 4.2 provides a synopsis of the responses to 1999 Self-Study Student Survey items related to the University’s admissions process. As shown in this table, most Howard students viewed the admissions process as “adequate.”

**New Student Orientation**

Howard’s new student orientation program is designed to introduce new students to the University community, encourage the establishment of good working relations
Table 4.2. Students’ Responses to Items Related to Admissions  
(as a percent of students surveyed, N=2,859)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Excellent to Very Good</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Very Poor to Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUALITY OF: University’s response to your request for admission information</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information received from your college/school prior to submitting admission application</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequacy of orientation program</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

between students and faculty, and acquaint new students with University services. This orientation experience extends throughout students’ first year, and is administered by the University’s Division of Student Affairs. The Office of the Dean for Student Life and Activities assists orientation coordinators in scheduling the activities of the various University units involved, including the offices of the Provost and Enrollment Management, and the Division of Business and Fiscal Affairs. Additional assistance comes from the Campus Pals organization, a group of approximately 50 undergraduate student volunteers who serve as peer assistants and mentors to incoming students.

New students receive information on orientation, advisement, registration, and fees. Upon arrival, each new entrant is issued an orientation packet, which includes a student handbook (*The Hbook*) and additional information on University units, services, and procedures. One of the highlights of new students’ first weekend on campus is the welcome and pinning ceremony. This event commences with a formal welcome address from the University president as well as remarks from other University administrators and student leaders. Each new entrant receives an official Howard University lapel pin,
which is pinned on by a member of the faculty, staff, or administration. The students then take *The Howard University Pledge*, written by two former student leaders, symbolizing their commitment to Howard University and to academic excellence, and their acceptance of the challenges associated with becoming a Howard student.

Other special assemblies are held throughout orientation weekend for both the new entrants and their parents. Senior administrators meet with parents to discuss issues of particular parental concern. Forums are sponsored to discuss issues of importance to students such as date rape, sexual harassment, and stress management. Student workshops on developing academic survival skills are held. Additionally, a series of “first-year experience” seminars was implemented at the onset of academic year 1998-99. These seminars are designed to enhance the transition, retention, and academic excellence of students.

**Registration**

The University’s Office of Enrollment Management is the coordinating office of all units including non-Enrollment Management units (e.g., Cashiers, Financial Services, Residence Life, Parking, Security, Scheduling and Transportation) that are involved in registration activities.

In spring 1995, satisfaction with registration at the University was perceived by many to be at an all-time low. Students, faculty and administrators alike were operating without well-defined, standard procedures, and deadlines were not honored. To improve the registration process, in spring 1996, Enrollment Management introduced two new briefing documents — a *Registration/Late Registration Manual* and a series entitled “NewsBrief.” Registration/Late Registration Manuals are prepared for fall, spring and
summer school registration periods. The “NewsBrief,” a series of registration updates is published in The Hilltop, the University’s student newspaper. Also, Enrollment Management initiated a series of forums and town meetings at which students could share their concerns and learn more about University registration procedures. It also instituted weekly meetings with students, representatives from other administrative offices, and faculty and staff from the colleges and schools to discuss the registration process and related issues.

Prior to the beginning of the fall 1996 semester, the Office’s first Enrollment Management Parent Newsletter was mailed to the parents of prospective students. This newsletter provided parents with important information regarding deadlines, registration procedures, and registration-related issues. It was soon followed by a newsletter directed toward and addressed to new entrants only. This two-pronged, parents-first approach was adopted in accord with research indicating that if parents have more knowledge about the registration process, they can more effectively transmit this information to their sons and daughters.

This self-study investigation revealed that one of the major problems plaguing registration efforts and planning at Howard University is its reliance on antiquated, independent, and nonrelational databases. This has meant that students are often forced to hand-carry information from one office to another to complete their registration and/or update their individual course-taking records. However, with the installation in 1999 of the BANNER New Student Information System, interdepartmental communication in the registration process will improved considerably. BANNER is a fully integrated, relational, on-line system for managing a full range of student-related institutional
records and processes, including registration. Although several modules are still in production, implementation of the BANNER system is proceeding and will be fully operational by fall 1999.

**Financial Aid**

Two divisions of the University ensure that students with financial need have access to financial aid: (1) the Office of Financial Aid and Student Employment, a unit within the Office of Enrollment Management; and (2) the Office of Student Financial Services. The Office of Financial Aid and Student Employment processes critical information to assess students’ eligibility to receive federal aid, scholarships, and University-based funds. This office also administers the Federal Work-Study (FWS) program and the Howard University Student Employment Program (HUSEP). The Office of Student Financial Services administers the disbursement of funds to students, maintains the accuracy of student accounts, and provides timely disbursement of student funds in compliance with federal regulations. Additionally, it is responsible for providing students with financial counseling about educational expenses.

Financial aid at Howard University consists of federal, University, and private sector assistance in the form of scholarships, loans, grants, and part-time employment. Seventy-five percent of Howard students rely on federal funds to finance their education, primarily through U.S. Department of Education Student Financial Assistance (SFA) programs (i.e., federal Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, Perkins Loans, PLUS loans, Consolidation Loans, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work Study initiatives). Since 1995, the University has consolidated its federal financial
aid application process and now uses one application, the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)* form for this purpose.

In 1991, the University’s Board of Trustees, upon the recommendation of the undergraduate student trustee, established the Howard University Independence Fund (HUIF). Since then, all students have been assessed a mandatory $15 fee per semester to support this program. These funds are deposited into the University general endowment fund, and the interest income generated is used to provide need-based loans and support programs aimed at enhancing the quality of life for students at Howard University. Contributions raised from HUIF student fees were matched by the federal government during the first seven years of the Fund’s existence.

Financial aid at the graduate level is administered largely by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and most often takes the form of graduate assistantships, teaching assistantships, trustee tuition scholarships, and grant packages provided by the Graduate School and graduate faculty. Graduate stipends typically range from $8,000 to $9,500, depending on the source of the funds with some larger stipends available through research grants. However, as the University attracts more of the best and brightest students to its graduate and professional programs, the number and size of student stipends will have to be increased in order for the University to remain competitive with its peer institutions. The University has begun to move in this direction with the recently established Frederick Douglass Scholars Program, which provides tuition and fees, a $15,000 stipend and a maximum research supplement of $1,500 to outstanding students pursuing the Ph.D. degree.
Students’ responses to Self-Study Student Survey items pertaining to financial aid indicate that 31 percent of sampled students rated the University’s financial aid capacity (including the availability of funds, the level of awards, and the financial aid administration process) as “adequate.” Almost 24 percent rated the University “excellent” to “very good” in this regard. Table 4.3 summarizes these results.

Table 4.3. Students’ Responses to Items Related to Financial Aid
(as a percent of students surveyed, N=2,859)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Excellent to Very Good</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Poor to Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUALITY OF:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application process</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for obtaining financial aid information</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of financial aid awards</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of financial support provided by University scholarships for graduate/professional study</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of University scholarships for graduate/professional study</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness of University scholarships for graduate/professional study</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOUSING

The Office of Residence Life, a unit of the Division of Student Affairs, oversees activities related to University housing. The University currently maintains six residence halls exclusively for women (five within the Tubman Quadrangle and one in the new Bethune Annex), two halls exclusively for men (Drew and Carver Halls), and three coeducational residence halls (Meridian Hill, Cook and Slowe Halls). Additional apartment-style housing is available in the Howard Plaza Towers complex. The East tower houses undergraduate honors students, and graduate and professional students as well as a few student families. Lastly, the Benjamin E. Mays Hall is a small, residential
facility for graduate/professional students, especially seminarians, located on the east (Divinity School) campus. All of the University’s residence halls are located on the main campus with the exception of the Meridian Hill, Carver, Mays, and Slowe facilities. Shuttle bus service is provided between these satellite halls and the three campuses as well between the main campus and subway stations located near the main campus.

Students who live in University residence halls have an excellent opportunity to participate fully in campus life and activities. Since fall 1992, entering students have been required to reside in University housing for their first two years, as space is available. Exceptions are made for married students, those 21 years and older, students whose permanent residence is within 25 miles of campus, international and transfer students, and students living with relatives.

The self-study student survey included a series of questions aimed at ascertaining student views on issues related to housing. The responses to those items reflect a wide range of attitudes toward the facilities and services offered by the Office of Residence Life. As shown in Table 4.4, the majority of students rated the University as “adequate” to “excellent” on housing-related issues.

Table 4.4. Students’ Responses to Items Related to Residence Life
(as a percent of students surveyed; N=2,859)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of On-Campus Halls</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Satellite Halls</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Housing</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Managers</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial Services</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral Services</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

Effective academic advisement is essential to student progress. It prepares them for academic success and for leadership opportunities after graduation. Thus, the role of the academic advisor is much more than providing assistance to students in selecting and scheduling classes. His or her responsibilities include assisting students with goal setting and career planning, providing them with academic and personal support, and offering general guidance to facilitate their overall growth.

At Howard, students are encouraged to contact their academic advisors on any matter related to their course of study or to their personal progress or challenges while matriculating at the University. For this reason, every student enrolled in an undergraduate, graduate, or professional college/school at Howard University is assigned a faculty or staff advisor. Accordingly, the advisor’s signature, acknowledging his or her participation in the student’s course-selection process, is required to validate student registration cards and related forms. The University also maintains an Educational Advisory Center, where professionally trained counselors provide a variety of counseling and advisory services designed to aid students in the College of Arts and Sciences in many phases of college life.

STUDENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Howard University provides a variety of opportunities for student involvement in cocurricular activities offered and designed to enhance the academic, cultural, and social lives of students.
Student Life and Activities

The Office of Student Life and Activities within the Division of Student Affairs is responsible for enhancing the quality of life on campus for domestic and international students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Toward this end, it oversees the administering of student activity fees; and provides advisory, logistical, and technical support to all University-recognized student organizations. This office publishes the student handbook, *The Hbook*. Administrative units under the direction of this office include International Student Services, which provides support to Howard’s international community, including visa and immigration assistance; and the Armour J. Blackburn University Center, which serves as a student center and University conference center.

Student Government and Organizations

With over 150 student government and other campus organizations, student life at Howard is as diverse as its student body. Participation in student groups is seen as an integral part of the Howard University student experience, particularly for the opportunities it provides students to broaden their social circles and enhance their interpersonal communication and relational skills.

The University’s student government system was established early in its history to provide students with a legitimate voice in those decisions that affect them during their Howard years. It also allows students to participate in and witness first-hand the intricacies of governmental operation. At Howard, great emphasis is placed on providing students involved in student government with the opportunity to formulate innovative and creative approaches to campus challenges. Students can participate in student government at three levels: the University-wide student association, the undergraduate
and graduate student assemblies, and the student councils within their respective schools/colleges. Also, as discussed in Chapter 3, there are two students who serve on the Board of Trustees.

A few of the University’s most notable student organizations and their purposes are listed below. A more detailed description of these organizations is found in *The Student Handbook*.

- **The Howard University Student Association (HUSA):** HUSA was established in 1961 to provide Howard students with a vehicle for input into the University’s decision-making process. It serves as the official voice of the student body, and is charged with facilitating effective communication between student groups and other campus offices on matters of concern and interest to students. HUSA represents the entire student body, but its General Assembly is divided into two groups: the Undergraduate Student Assembly (UGSA) and the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA).

- **Greek-Letter Organizations:** Participation in social and service fraternities and sororities at the University is a significant aspect of student life. In fact, many of the founding chapters of these organizations were established at the University.

- **State Clubs:** These organizations are established to encourage social cohesiveness among students from the same geographical localities.

- **Honor Societies:** Honor societies exist within each college and school at the University to recognize and perpetuate student excellence in various disciplines.

- **International Organizations:** Numerous organizations exist at Howard to provide critical social outlets and support systems for international students.
These organizations also provide opportunities for bringing U.S. and international students together.

- **Student Religious Organizations**: These organizations provide spiritual support as well as opportunities for civic service and social interaction among Howard University students of various faith communities.

**Special Student Services**

The Office of Special Student Services manages the University’s student judicial affairs program. It also provides vital services for Howard students with disabilities. In this latter regard, the Office is responsible for ensuring the University’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal regulations designed to assist students who face special physical or health challenges. It is also responsible for student medical certifications and the distribution of handicapped parking permits.

In 1998 this Office served approximately 125 students. Unfortunately, there is no way to predict the number of students to be served in the coming year since students must self-designate themselves as disabled, and this information is generally not requested until registration. This unpredictability places an ever-increasing strain on the University’s limited budget for special student services. Additional funding for the purchase of special equipment to assist disabled students (i.e., Braille printers and talking calculators) is needed to support its continued efficiency.

**University Student Health Center**

The Student Health Center at Howard University is designed to (1) provide students with the fullest possible exposure to health education, preventive medicine, professional diagnosis, and treatment for injury and illness; (2) assure students of the
healthiest environment that the University can provide; and (3) offer students as health care experience that will prepare them to plan for, recognize, and choose the best possible health care now and in the future. The Center operates in two sites on the University’s main campus: the main health clinic and the annex or women’s clinic.

The main clinic is housed in a “temporary” facility that was built in 1970 and expected to last five years. However, after 28 years in this facility, inadequate space and infrastructure problems have severely affected the clinic’s ability to provide its services. To rectify this situation, Center staff and HUSA representatives met to determine the current and future needs of an optimum University health center. At this meeting, the students cited the importance of the following:

- a health care facility that looks inviting and that is well-maintained;
- assurance of confidentiality;
- larger examination rooms and physician’s offices;
- a central location that is convenient and accessible to students;
- increased gynecological staffing; and
- sufficient office space for administrative duties.

Subsequently, the University contracted an architectural firm to develop a floor plan for a new, single-site Student Health Center that could fit into the space currently occupied by the University’s bookstore, presently located in Tubman Quadrangle. These renovation plans were approved by in January 1998; however, delays in relocating the bookstore have prevented the renovation of this space. May 1999 is the current projected date for this work to begin.
University Counseling Center

The Howard University Counseling Center provides a full range of psychological services for the University’s student population. Professionals at this Center administer various forms of psychological assessments as well as short- and long-term psychotherapy and preventive mental health care. Some of the other services provided by the Center include: personal counseling for students experiencing emotional difficulties and personal development challenges; career counseling and planning assistance; workshops and group programs that provide opportunities for personal growth through social interaction; community outreach activities; and training and testing services (vocational, psychotherapeutic, and diagnostic).

Additionally, the University Counseling Center is an approved American Psychological Association (APA) site for the training of clinical psychology interns. Each year, Center staff select several doctoral students from a large pool of highly qualified applicants and supervise their work with Center clientele. These fledgling clinical psychologists are a valuable addition to the Center’s staff, providing vital services and receiving invaluable experience in the process.

The Center is also a regional testing site for the Educational Testing Service (ETS). In this role, its impact extends beyond the Howard University population to the broader Washington, D.C. metropolitan community. Each year, the Center administers approximately 10,000 standardized tests of academic abilities to Howard and other students. These include the Graduate Record Examination and the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Recently, ETS selected the University Counseling Center to become one of its major centers for computer-based graduate and professional school placement testing.
Renovation and procurement activities are currently under way to transform the Center into a state-of-the-art computerized testing facility.

Outreach and primary prevention are important aspects of the Counseling Center’s efforts on behalf of students. Beginning with the orientation meetings it hosts for incoming freshmen, the Center provides students with a steady stream of information and experiences aimed at promoting their overall mental health. Throughout the 1997 academic year, for example, Center staff conducted several seminars and group sessions on topics such as same-gender relationships, drug abuse, date rape, and sexual conduct. These activities were designed not only to prevent mental health challenges among Howard students, but also to enhance students’ overall personal growth and development.

Career Services Office

The Career Services Office in the Division of Student Affairs provides Howard University students with assistance in selecting and pursuing rewarding careers and in identifying employment opportunities prior to graduation. Each year this Office organizes several career fairs, at which students can apply for and consider employment possibilities with major companies and other organizations. These fairs bring together Howard University students, employers and graduate school representatives from around the country.

Center for Pre-Professional Education

The Center for Pre-Professional Education, a unit of the College of Arts and Sciences, links students, faculty, and representatives from the various professional schools at Howard in pursuit of various goals, all of which are aimed at helping pre-professional students enter and succeed in their respective professions. It offers
comprehensive review classes, reinforcement workshops, and intensive summer study programs, as well as accelerated and enrichment programs in medical and dental education for academically outstanding K-12 students.

**Intramural and Recreational Activities**

Direct participation in informal recreational programs has been shown to enrich students’ lives and enhances their collegiate growth and development in several ways. Thus, the Intramural/Recreational Activities program at Howard is designed to provide an array of sport and social outlets to complement student life. These include intramural team and individual sports (i.e., basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, lacrosse, racquetball, badminton, bowling, gymnastics, tae kwon do, golf, weightlifting), outdoor adventure trips, fitness and exercise programs, and other recreational activities. In most instances, opportunities for involvement in these activities are provided to both male and female students.

The University also participates in a wide range of intercollegiate athletic programs. Intercollegiate participation in swimming and diving, basketball, cross country track, soccer, tennis, and volleyball is available to both men and women. Football, soccer, and track are played in Greene Stadium. Basketball, volleyball, and swimming take place in facilities within the Burr Gymnasium and Recreational Complex.

**The Center for Academic Reinforcement**

The Center for Academic Reinforcement (CAR) provides a variety of academic counseling and support services to Howard University students. CAR’s mission is to assist students at risk of academic failure successfully matriculate at the University. It offers remedial courses in basic mathematics and reading, as well as academic counseling
and study and verbal skills enhancement workshops. It also provides evening and weekend peer tutoring, a four-week pre-college preparation program, and a four-day pre-orientation program. These services and program are available to all students enrolled in the University, but are particularly encouraged for students who have demonstrated an academic need or deficiency.

To date, the University has not undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of CAR’s effectiveness and methods. However, the findings from this Self-study indicate that such an evaluation should be instituted immediately to assess whether CAR is meeting its goals and objectives. The Self-study investigation also reveals that some Howard students in need of academic reinforcement continue to view CAR and its services negatively and subsequently refuse to take advantage of those services until it is too late. University faculty have a role to play in changing students’ negative perceptions of CAR by encouraging students to focus on its positive benefits in the areas of skills improvement and problem prevention. The University provost, who is also a member of the faculty in Howard’s School of Education, has taken an especially proactive stance in support of CAR by highlighting its role in the University’s retention efforts.

Alumni Affairs

No institution of higher education can reach its highest potential without the active involvement and commitment of its alumni. Given their intimate understanding of the educational mission, needs, and goals of alma mater, a university’s alumni are uniquely qualified to advise, advocate, and recruit on its behalf. Alumni also represent an important source of financial and moral support.
Howard University views its alumni as a tremendous resource. In recent years, the University, primarily through the division of University Advancement, has focused greater attention on alumni outreach and involvement. It has increasingly engaged the Howard University Alumni Association (HUAA), a network of 90 alumni chapters based throughout the United States and the world, in fundraising and recruitment efforts. It has bolstered alumni participation in traditional University events such as Homecoming, the annual Charter Day dinner (a fundraising/alumni recognition celebration marking the University’s founding), and class reunions. It has also implemented a number of innovative programs and initiatives designed to encourage alumni to serve *alma mater* in increasingly significant ways and to help the University better serve its alumni.

Among ongoing alumni activities can be included the regional receptions hosted throughout the year by various HUAA chapters in cities where large concentrations of Howard alumni reside. President Swygert makes several trips a year to such gatherings to meet with alumni personally and share with them his vision for the future of Howard University. These receptions also provide University representatives with opportunities to update alumni on activities and developments at Howard, and to solicit their input and financial support for various University initiatives. Another notable alumni program is the Alumni Travel Program. It is an educational experience for alumni participants of all ages.

**RETENTION**

A careful examination of the graduation rates of students who entered the University from 1990 to 1993 indicates that the retention and graduation of students are major challenges that the University must address. The chart shown in Figure 4.5 reveals
that for each of the four entry years, less than 25 percent of the entrants graduated in four years; however, after five years 35 to 40 percent had graduated. This chart also identifies the large percentage (43 to 47 percent) of non-persisting students, i.e., dropouts or stopouts, for each of the entry years. Special priority has been given to improving retention and graduation at Howard over the last four years, and recent first-year retention rates exceed the national average by seven to ten points.

![Figure 4.5. Undergraduate Graduation Rates, Persistence and Non-Persistence](image)

The Howard University environment challenges students intellectually and socially. Retention is largely a function of the capacity of students to negotiate these barriers. A grant provided to the University by The Pew Charitable Trusts in 1994 served as the catalyst for many of the retention activities that now have been institutionalized as part of a University-wide effort to increase retention and graduation rates. The Retention Project at Howard University has focused on implementing strategic initiatives that provide an environment conducive to moving all undergraduates to successful graduation. Special emphasis has been placed on students who are “at risk” of completing their academic coursework. The primary goals of the retention program have
been successful student matriculation, expanded financial assistance, faculty development and implementation of a management information system to monitor the progress of students. Support services and evaluation tools are under development to measure the effect of those support services.

Two special components have been added to support the four original initiatives: a policy review component to update and modify policies and procedures that were not congruent with the retention goals; and a communication component to clarify and disseminate to students, faculty and staff information that would enhance their knowledge of procedures, processes and policies that affect retention.

Academic initiatives have focused on improving effectiveness of pre-college programs, honors programs and the midterm status reporting system. The financial component has created more effective methods of providing financial assistance to students by improving communication about financial aid resources, and by expanding work-study, cooperative education and employment opportunities. In addition, a successful effort has been made to improve significantly the delivery of services provided by the Office of Financial Aid and Student Employment. The faculty development initiative has focused on: increasing the level of faculty support to students; encouraging faculty to take on broader advising responsibilities; enhancing faculty classroom skills; and establishing a mentorship program that matches new faculty with senior professors. Faculty development workshops on effective teaching are offered at the beginning of each semester to new faculty and teaching assistants.

The 1994 retention model used at Howard focused on matriculating students who were identified to be “at risk.” Students who were regarded as “at-risk” were identified
through the College Student Inventory (CSI) and pre-enrollment characteristics, such as high school performance and scores from aptitude tests such as the SAT and ACT. The College Student Inventory, administered during orientation, identified characteristics attributable to students “at risk” using a drop-out proneness scale that took into account low levels of academic motivation, social motivation, coping abilities and receptivity to institutional help. Remaining students were regarded as “at risk” based on SAT or ACT scores below the minimum required for admission. Recent efforts also have focused on increasing the number of students enrolling who meet the academic criteria necessary for success, i.e., qualifications well above the minimum required for admission. By increasing the percentage of able students who apply and enroll in the University, the institutional potential for retaining and graduating more students will be significantly improved.

A midterm grade status reporting system was implemented to identify other students considered to be “at risk” — especially first-year students — and to provide opportunities for them to improve their status while there was still time for improvement. In addition, the academic policy governing probation, suspension and readmission after academic suspension was revised in June 1998 to facilitate early identification of undergraduate students with academic difficulty, and to enable colleges and schools to intervene quickly. Implementation of this policy is an integral part of the University strategic plan to promote excellence in its academic programs and to improve retention and graduation of all students.

Intervention under the Pew retention initiative was based on software that was not compatible with the University data management system. A new retention management
system is under development to be integrated with the University’s new student data management system (BANNER). Prior to the 1994 retention project, collection of data on variables that predict college performance were not incorporated in the database. Collection of these data now enables the University to evaluate both pre-enrollment and post-enrollment performance of students and to implement retention programs that will be most effective. Proactive pre-enrollment intervention strategies, such as summer pre-college programs and pre-orientation programs, have been used to introduce students to the University and its academic requirements prior to enrollment. These strategies have been effective in providing a smooth transition for students from high school to college.

When new students arrive on campus an emphasis on academic excellence is reinforced through a variety of activities. Students who are in the Honors Program serve as peer mentors to new students. New students are provided with tutoring, advising and support from their first day of enrollment. Because of their success, peer mentoring programs have become a permanent component of the retention effort.

The Office of Financial Aid has contributed to the retention program by improving service delivery and communication. Financial aid workshops are held every semester to provide students with information about eligibility requirements for financial aid, deadlines, how to complete financial aid forms and other information that can help students identify available financial resources. This effort has significantly increased student awareness of requirements and timelines for obtaining financial assistance and student satisfaction with student financial services.

The initiative to improve retention has resulted in stronger collaborations among University units that provide critical services to students, including student affairs,
enrollment management, deans, department chairs, student services units in colleges and schools, student government leaders and the provost. These units have been working closely together to provide information to students more consistently and to identify the most effective ways to work together to provide more effective, efficient services. There also are ongoing correspondence and dialogue between the provost and deans, department chairs and faculty concerning graduation goals, retention objectives and progress, updates of activities and reminders of upcoming events, opportunities and deadlines each semester. Two new publications developed by the Office of the Provost were distributed in 1998 to the University community: *Bison Basics: Academic Success Planning Tools for Howard University Undergraduate Students, 1998-1999*, which was made available to all undergraduate students and student services professionals; and *Helping Students Succeed: A Handbook for Advisors of Howard University Undergraduate Students, 1998-1999*, which was made available to all faculty and non-faculty advisors. Both publications include information on University policies, procedures, requirements, resources, deadlines and other areas that impact retention.

The future of retention at Howard University remains bright. Initiatives are continuously implemented in conjunction with the institutionalization of many Pew Retention Project initiatives. One major initiative taken by the Office of the Provost — increasing University-wide awareness of the importance of retention — has been especially effective. Analysis of information on student progress and student satisfaction — including student midterm reports, student cumulative grades report, teaching and advising evaluations, and exit surveys — is ongoing. These analyses will enable the
University to measure the impact of all retention initiatives now implemented so that appropriate modifications can be made.

**SUMMARY OF SELF-STUDY STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS**

The self-study student survey included a series of questions to assess the quality of the services that the students received. In general, the results indicated that the responsiveness of personnel in a number of units needs improvement.

**Table 4.5. Summary of Selected Self-Study Student Survey Results**

(as a percent of students surveyed, N=2,859)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Excellent to Good</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Very Poor to Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the response of personnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(helpful, informative, courteous,</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledgeable) in the following offices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Life</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar/Records</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Financial Services/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Loan Office</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life and Activities</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning and Placement</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A list of recommendations and challenges related to students and student services issues appear in Chapter 11.