



### ***Search for Vice President of Development & Alumni Relations***

**WASHINGTON, DC**

#### **THE SEARCH**

Howard University seeks an experienced and aspirational Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations to partner with its new president and continue the institutions remarkable fundraising trajectory over the last few years. This is a rare opportunity for a highly motivated and driven development professional to build off of the recent successes of Howard's development and alumni relations team at a time when the mission and aspirations of Howard University are more important than ever. Joining the University at a time where it has great momentum, the Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations will effectively articulate the case for support to donors, prospective donors, and colleagues across the University and substantially increase philanthropic capacity.

Howard University welcomed Dr. Ben Vinson III as president in 2023. President Vinson joins Howard at a time when it is planning for its future following great successes in fundraising, research and student enrollment and achievement. Howard is unique in higher education as the only private, comprehensive, research-intensive, predominantly African American university in the country. Howard's legacy of educating future African American leaders across the nation and around the globe is exceptional.

The Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations reports to President Vinson and is a member of the executive leadership team. Responsible for providing vision and strategic leadership for all aspects of University and medical center fundraising, the Vice President will oversee a staff of 31 within the Division of Development and Alumni Relations. As the lead fundraiser for the University, the Vice President will personally manage a select portfolio of major gift prospects and donors and will directly and personally participate in the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of principal/major gifts donors.

The Vice President will be a strategic and creative thinker, a persuasive communicator, and an excellent team player eager to work collaboratively with academic and governing leadership and colleagues across campus. The Vice President will actively embrace and develop a keen understanding of the Howard community, engaging and inspiring all constituencies in ways that respect and honor the distinctive history, culture and mission of Howard. The Vice President and their team will build a cohesive, integrated advancement program to meaningfully engage alumni, increase philanthropic capacity, and raise the standing and reputation of the University nationally and globally.

Ideal candidates will have at least 10 years of executive leadership and management experience in advancement, preferably in higher education; a keen understanding of fundraising best practices; a proven ability to personally cultivate and steward high-level donors and close principal gifts; a clear, proven record of building an efficient, effective, and innovative development program in a complex university setting; and meaningful campaign experience.

Howard University has retained the search firm Isaacson, Miller for this important recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## HOWARD UNIVERSITY

For over 150 years, Howard University has been committed to the context of its founding — an unwavering quest to balance the scales for the disenfranchised and promote an America devoid of inequalities. Howard was founded in 1867, in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, when Congress and President Andrew Johnson approved its charter, creating a university to serve free Blacks and newly freed slaves. It was supported initially by the Freedmen's Bureau and subsequently, as is the case now, by a special appropriation from Congress. It became a scholarly home for America's Black middle class and has produced more Black engineers, physicians, lawyers, ministers, business leaders, educators, and community leaders than any other institution.

Howard University's profile is marked by combining excellence, leadership, service, truth, and access. The University's motto, *Veritas et Utilitas*, Truth and Service, represents a key part of its identity. Students, faculty, and staff are involved in local, national, and global service efforts to create awareness and provide solutions to improve the quality of life in communities. Howard prepares its students to advance social justice and preserve human liberty. The University has an active alumni base and a distinguished reputation among its many constituencies. Today, alumni hold prominent positions in Fortune 500 companies, the U.S. government, Hollywood studios, and fields and industries in all major sectors.

Howard's central role in developing the Civil Rights movement is reflected in the education of many of its outstanding leaders such as Andrew Young, Thurgood Marshall, Pauli Murray, and Vernon Jordan. Howard continues to serve as the "Mecca," the destination for young, ambitious, and intellectually curious students and for the faculty who inspire and guide them. Its success in educating members of the African Diaspora is unparalleled.

## Academics

With almost 1,200 full time and adjunct faculty and an enrollment of approximately 11,000 students in its undergraduate, graduate, professional, and joint degree programs, spanning more than 120 areas of study, Howard is dedicated to educating students from diverse backgrounds. Since its founding, Howard has awarded more than 120,000 degrees and certificates in the arts, sciences, and humanities, and more on-campus African-American Ph.D. recipients than any other university in the United States. Howard's 14 schools and colleges are: the College of Arts and Sciences; School of Business; Cathy Hughes School of Communications; the College of Dentistry; School of Divinity; School of Education; College of Engineering

and Architecture; Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts; Graduate School; School of Law; College of Medicine; College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences; College of Pharmacy; and School of Social Work. Howard is a leader across many academic fields and disciplines. The National Science Foundation has ranked Howard as the top producer of African-American undergraduates who earn PhDs in natural sciences and entering medical schools in the United States. The University also boasts nationally ranked programs in social work, teaching, business, and communications.

## Research

In 2025, Howard University achieved R1 Carnegie Classification. It is currently the only HBCU to receive this distinction. As a leader in the evolution of next generation HBCUs, Howard is dedicated to ensuring that the benefits of discovery and progress reach all communities, including those historically overlooked and underrepresented. Through pioneering solutions and the strategic use of emerging technologies, Howard seeks to shape a future where knowledge drives inclusive prosperity and lasting impact.

In 2023, Howard had \$85 million in research expenditures. Multiple Howard research centers are hubs through which to concentrate research activities at other HBCUs throughout the country. These centers include the IBM-HBCU Quantum Center, the Research Institute for Tactical Autonomy, and the PNC National Center for Entrepreneurship. The University is one of only six institutions worldwide selected as academic partners of the Center for Power Optimization of Electro-Thermal Systems, conducting groundbreaking research in power density to make electric mobility more practical and efficient. Howard's Moorland-Spangarn Research Center (MSRC) is the nation's largest and most comprehensive repository of books, documents, and artifacts on the global Black experience.

## Student and Campus Life

Over the last decade, Howard University has seen a strong increase in student enrollment, a surge attributable to improved strategic enrollment management efforts and strengthened brand management and recognition. Howard currently enrolls students from 49 states and territories, with the majority from Maryland, New York, California, Virginia, and Georgia. The University matriculated students from over 25 countries, with the top five representing Nigeria, Jamaica, Nepal, Ghana, and Ethiopia.

Howard University students discover their strengths in a nurturing community that affirms their identity and enhances intellectual curiosity. Howard graduates have always been able to rely on the loyalties of the alumni network and its dense connections of families and social organizations. The pandemic provided an opportunity for the Howard community to further reflect on the institution's impact and to explore how to continue to fulfill its missions of education, research, and service, especially in under resourced communities.

Howard is home to over 200 registered student organizations, including all nine of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organizations—five of which were founded at the University. Students are trained as leaders on campus and prepared for a lifetime of civic engagement through their participation in various organizations.

## Strategic Planning

In 2018, the University's Board of Trustees adopted the *Howard Forward* strategic plan for 2019-2024. The plan set out five key pillars to position the Howard University for the future:

1. Enhance Academic Excellence
2. Inspire New Knowledge
3. Serve the Community
4. Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness
5. Achieve Financial Sustainability

With the plan's conclusion, the University community is proud of what it has been able to achieve as a collective across the five pillars. Today, the University stands on strong foundations as it begins to engage the larger Howard community on developing its next set of strategic goals.

More information about *Howard Forward* can be found at <https://strategicplan.howard.edu/howard-forward-report-0>.

Information about current strategic planning efforts can be found at <https://strategicplan.howard.edu/>.

## Current Leadership

Dr. Ben Vinson III started his tenure as Howard University's president in 2023. As president, he is tasked with inspiring, innovating, and strategically leading the Howard community. President Vinson was most recently provost and executive vice president at Case Western Reserve University. During his tenure, Dr. Vinson spearheaded the university's "Think Big" strategic planning initiative, which received national attention for its innovative and inclusive planning process. He was co-principal investigator of the Humanities in Leadership Learning Series (HILLS) program, funded by a \$2 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to promote leadership development and diversity in the humanities. He previously served on the faculties of Barnard College and Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Vinson also served in academic leadership positions at Johns Hopkins University and as Dean of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences at the George Washington University.

He is the immediate past chairman of the board of the National Humanities Center and a member of the board of the National Humanities Alliance. He is a member of the Academy of Arts and Science's Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship and currently chairs its subcommittee on higher education. Dr. Vinson served on the Association of American Universities' (AAU) Advisory Board for Racial Equity in Higher Education and is a former member of the AAU subcommittee on faculty advancement and tenure.

Dr. Vinson earned a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College and a doctorate from Columbia University. He is an accomplished historian of Latin America, and the recipient of the 2019 Howard F. Cline Book Prize in Mexican History for his book *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico*

## **Board of Trustees**

The governance of Howard University is vested in the Board of Trustees. Howards Board represents a range of professions in communication, business, religion, law, medicine, and civic life. It is a unique constellation of African American leadership, joined by particularly eminent non-Black figures. The Board has historically been a source of great strength and partnership for presidents, making introductions to key power brokers in the country and providing paths to important interaction with Congress. Empowered by diverse perspectives and spirited debate, the Board of Trustees remains unified in its focus and is fundamentally committed to securing the University's future.

## **DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS**

Howard University's Division of Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) plays a critical role in cultivating the necessary resources to support its mission of high caliber academics, research, and student flourishing. DAR also stitches together and strengthens the community of Howard alums through continuous and thoughtful engagement well after they leave the physical confines of the campus. DAR currently has over 70 dedicated professional staff and coordinates closely with the development officers of each of Howard's academic units around donor and gift cultivation. DAR spearheads alumni engagement along with responsibility for planning and hosting important events such as commencement, homecoming, and Charter Day; among others.

The University has recently received a remarkable string of historic gifts that have positioned Howard for greater success in the future. In 2021, Mackenzie Scott, philanthropist and author, gave \$40 million to support campus infrastructure; faculty development plans; a program on social innovation and entrepreneurship; and the underwriting of the Graduation & Retention Access to Continued Excellence (GRACE) Grant. The last couple of years have seen the College of Medicine the recipient of generous gifts from Michael Bloomberg and his foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies. In 2021, the College of Medicine received \$32.8 million for scholarships and in 2024, Bloomberg Philanthropies gave a transformational \$175 million towards the College's endowment. In 2022, Howard University received the largest alumni gift when Eddie C. Brown (B.S.E.E. '61) and C. Sylvia Brown (B.S. '62) gave \$5 million to support the Graduation Retention Access to Continued Excellence (GRACE) Grant for students facing financial barriers. Under the University's recently concluded strategic plan, Howard Forward, the Division of Development and Alumni Relations received investments to improve its infrastructure and resulted in a surge of donations, peaking at over \$171 million in FY2021. The Division exceeded Howard Forward's philanthropic target goal three years ahead of schedule, experiencing significant growth in the number of alumni donors. Howard continues to outpace institutions nationally for alumni giving rates, reaching 10.9%.

## **Howard University Alumni Association**

The Howard University Alumni Association (HUAA) was formed under charter of the university; it operates under the authority of the university. HUAA exists to maintain, foster and expand the unique and special relationship between the university and its alumni; to promote the university as an institution of academic excellence; and to encourage alumni participation through volunteerism and philanthropic support. HUAA membership is open to all graduates and honorary degree recipients upon the payment of annual dues. Individual location-based alumni clubs belong to one of six geographic regions. There are also numerous affinity-based alumni clubs.

## **LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The success of the next Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations will be determined by how well they address the following leadership opportunities and challenges:

### **Guidance of Development Programs**

- Assess the fundraising potential of the university; serve as architect and builder of a strategic development program that will broaden and strengthen Howard's outreach and constituent relations activities in keeping with the mission and core values of the institution; utilize comprehensive data to inform decisions and improve productivity;
- Assess the infrastructure of development and alumni relations programming and formulate an effective strategy to improve database management and technology; reporting of philanthropic activities; gift recording, processing, and acknowledgments; pledge payments; research; and tracking of moves management;
- Maintain relationships with existing donors and systematically and strategically identify, cultivate, solicit, and steward potential new individual and institutional donors capable of making significant contributions to Howard.

### **Oversight of Alumni Relations Programs**

- Build upon existing robust programming, such as the renowned homecoming celebration, and create new initiatives that will offer alumni an opportunity to advance the mission of Howard;
- Ensure that programs and initiatives, opportunities for volunteer participation, and the goals and aspirations set by university leadership are known to the alumni body;
- Ensure the continuity of the volunteer pipeline, identifying alumni who have demonstrated interest in supporting the university, are prominent in their fields, and who may be willing to serve on panels, committees, boards or in other capacities;
- Educate academic leadership on the importance of building relationships with alumni and convey to them how these strong connections are mutually beneficial and valuable to their work and to the life of the university.

### **Management of Staff**

- Set clear direction and priorities for the division's staff; promote excellence through well-defined and measurable goals;
- Recruit, train and mentor a committed and productive staff that is well-prepared to meet the ongoing challenges and aspirations of the university;
- Foster a culture of excellence through mastery of best practices and implementation of new ideas in which effective teamwork, collaboration and innovation are expected, recognized and rewarded; lead by example regarding professionalism, mutual respect, creativity, entrepreneurship, appropriate risk-taking, and cross-organizational cooperation.

### **Engagement of University Leaders**

- Guide and support the President as chief spokesperson and fundraiser, serving as a strategic partner on cultivating and soliciting transformational gifts; ensure that the President is well briefed and prepared to serve the institution at the highest levels;
- Cultivate strong working relationships with academic deans, administrators, faculty and staff across the university; enlist them, as appropriate, in educating current and prospective donors about faculty work; ensure that development and alumni relations is seen as a collaborative, responsive partner able to professionally address both opportunities and concerns;
- Establish open communication with the board; provide information to them on the progress of fundraising efforts; provide active and meaningful engagement to board members in the development process, challenging them to participate in a greater capacity as both volunteers and donors.

### **Fundraising Duties**

- Personally cultivate and successfully solicit major and principal gift prospects from a portfolio of current and prospective donors, both individual and institutional; meet agreed-upon targets for individual and institutional support;
- Develop a keen understanding for the priorities and funding needs of Howard's individual schools and units as well as the Howard University Hospital and be able to articulate those priorities in clear and compelling terms to targeted communities;
- Travel throughout the United States and abroad, representing Howard and building relationships with donors, prospects and alumni.

## QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience improving an existing development program and securing transformative institutional and individual philanthropic support; proven success increasing the effectiveness of a development program and staff through established objectives and performance standards;
- Personal success in cultivating, soliciting and stewarding major individual and institutional donors at the five—, six— and seven—figure levels; the ability to inspire high net worth individuals, corporations, and major foundations to philanthropic leadership;
- A bold strategist with the ability and energy to elevate the stature of an alumni relations program, introduce innovative ideas, and foster incremental change while maintaining respect for the long-standing traditions of an institution
- An ability to encourage organic opportunities for collaboration across development, alumni relations and communications programs
- A problem solver with the ability to analyze information and think strategically, critically, and creatively; the ability to translate new ideas into executable and enduring programs
- The professional credibility, intellectual depth, maturity, wisdom and collaborative skills to garner the trust and confidence of the President, senior leaders, faculty, trustees, students and other key constituents
- Experience leading or closely partnering with alumni relations programs recognized for their strength of engagement and effectiveness
- Experience working with board members and volunteers—for both development and alumni relations purposes—and ensuring they are meaningfully engaged; the ability to manage complex relationships; proven collaboration and teamwork skills
- An approach to management that brings out the best in staff and yields ownership, pride, and a sense of team effort; a keen eye for operational efficiency and optimal use of resources; the ability to plan, monitor, and tightly manage a budget
- Superlative communication and interpersonal skills with a demonstrated ability to work well with people at all levels of an organization, across a diverse range of educational and social backgrounds, and to convey genuine respect for every individual
- A self-starter who uses an entrepreneurial approach to building and guiding a development program and has the ability to reach out to a broader community to promote the mission of an institution.



## **APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES AND NOMINATIONS**

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search. Inquiries, nominations, referrals and applications (current resume and statement of interest) should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/howard-university/vice-president-development-and-alumni-relations>. All communications regarding the search can be addressed to the Isaacson, Miller representatives noted below:

Jack Gorman, Partner  
Kahn Lee, Managing Associate  
Ryan Cheung, Senior Search Coordinator

***Howard University considers applicants for employment without regard to and does not discriminate based on gender, race, protected veteran status, disability, or any other legally protected status.***