

New Howard President Focuses on Changes for Upcoming Academic Year

Contributed by Jessica Lewis -- Black College Wire
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Sidney Ribeau says infrastructure, technology are key issues

As Howard transitions into a new presidential administration, students look forward to the tenure of Sidney Ribeau, Ph.D. with open expectations.

Some students hope Ribeau will concentrate on maintaining and improving academics, building relationships with students, university infrastructure and technology during his tenure.

Many at the university believe that its academic strengths will carry over into the upcoming administration if Ribeau, the 16th president, is able to build relationships within the university.

Harold Gray, director of the Center of Professional Development in the School of Business, believes that maintaining the level of company recruitment on campus will depend on Dr. Sidney Ribeau and his relationships with students.

"When you have a good relationship with the students, that makes the difference in the way the university is being perceived," Gray said.

Some students believe that under Ribeau's lead, the research component of the university should have mandatory programs for undergraduate students to engage in research.

"[I] would like Howard University to implement programs [that] expect undergraduate students to engage in active research on the Undergraduate level, as opposed to an optional program," said Edward Williams, a senior international business major. He suggested that a research course with a pass or fail grading system should be added to students' graduation schemes.

Maintaining Accessibility with Students

Students like Howard University Student Association (HUSA) Vice President Kellen Moore hope Ribeau will embrace the positive aspects of H. Patrick Swygert's administration and maintain a level of visibility on campus.

"Swygert used to walk around campus. I would hope that Dr. Ribeau would also be a president [who is visible] around campus," Moore said. "I think it would really send a message to our student body."

Moore continued, "Hopefully this president will be one that is receptive to our inputs, one that seeks students' input. He is the one that is really going to be making the decisions."

Some see Ribeau's background as a possible foreshadow of what his relationship with the student body may be.

"He comes with a very good record of academic achievement," Gray said. "And it seems as though at his previous school, Bowling Green State University, the students really appreciated him."

Solidifying Infrastructure

Moore, who would like the new administration to focus on infrastructure, said, "When we have classes that are hot, stuffy, dirty, or whatever the problem may be, it is going to hamper the academic experience."

Larry Strickland, coach of the men's tennis team, believes infrastructural issues translate to the athletic department in addition to academic facilities. He is concerned that Howard's athletic facilities have long been outdated.

"The concern of infrastructure is threefold when you speak of athletics," he said. "First we must attract top student-athletes therefore our facilities must measure up to our competition."

Strickland continued, "Once we get the top student-athletes we must have adequate training facilities to practice, develop and rehabilitate our athletes." The final aspect of Strickland's concern applies to Howard in a broader sense. "We then need adequate facilities to showcase our teams," he said.

"I have seen and heard of many plans that never came to fruition," Strickland added. "I do realize that our new president cannot reverse years of neglect overnight, but the longer we wait the greater this task will become."

Moore also wishes to see improvements outside of the classroom to supplement the knowledge learned inside. He believes that an "emphasis on community involvement and awareness of things that are happening in the African-American community" initiated by a combined effort of HUSA and Ribeau will help rebuild infrastructure.

As a springboard for the collaboration, HUSA President Nicholas Owen has initiated a tour between students and Ribeau. "We just want to show him what we go through every day here at Howard University," Owen said. "We want to make sure he knows what he is getting into. He needs to know that there are a lot of issues and concerns that he needs to address."

Emphasis on Technology

In addition to academics, some believe that Ribeau should give attention to the advancement of technology across campus.

"Dr. Ribeau had a big emphasis on technology at Bowling Green State University," Moore said. "Let's get Howard on that level; we want to see technology where it should be. We want to see more reliable Internet service on our campus."

Gray shared similar sentiments, saying students should always have cutting edge technology at their disposal.

Amid the desired advancements and improvement to the university, many hope that Ribeau will work to preserve its legacy.

"I would simultaneously challenge him to make the previous 141 years of Howard University's history a mere stepping stone to the greatness that comes forth during his tenure and in the future," Williams said.

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Jessica Lewis writes for The Hilltop, the Howard University student newspaper, which originally published this article.