

Howard 'Blacks Out' to Raise GPAs

Contributed by Jessica Lewis -- Black College Wire
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Campus goes quiet to promote academics

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No music, no programs, no events and no distractions; everything blacked out on Howard's campus from 7 to 8:30 p.m on Oct. 14.

The Howard University Student Association (HUSA) hosted the first "Blackout Wednesday" in Douglass Hall in an effort to promote academic excellence and to raise the overall GPA of the entire campus.

"When I came to Howard, I felt that it had fallen off its legacy," said Taneesha Williams, a sophomore public relations major. "It was riding on [the legacy's] coattails." To give students a direction not centered on parties, organizations or events, HUSA asked all student organizations not to host any events this evening. In addition, honor students and societies have been asked to lend their expertise to help their fellow students. In order to make a lasting impact, HUSA will host the event once every month.

"We noticed that there weren't a lot of programs and initiatives put in place for the academic support of students," said HUSA Executive Vice President Jerome Joseph. "It's very easy to get lost in the various events and programs."

The blackout will work to reverse negative stereotypes of Howard University students. "The Black American Princess (BAP) Handbook" lists Howard's stereotype as the "black hole," where students go in and seldom come back out. HUSA Executive President Bryan Smart said approximately 49 percent of students graduate in four years.

Smart said the event serves as an acknowledgement of the fact that we are our brothers' keeper.

"It's not just HUSA; it's a communal effort," Smart said. "It's students helping students."

Williams, the coordinator of the event, said the hardest thing is getting students to respond and show up.

The resources are there for students to take advantage of, but she said at some point it is out of her hands.

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