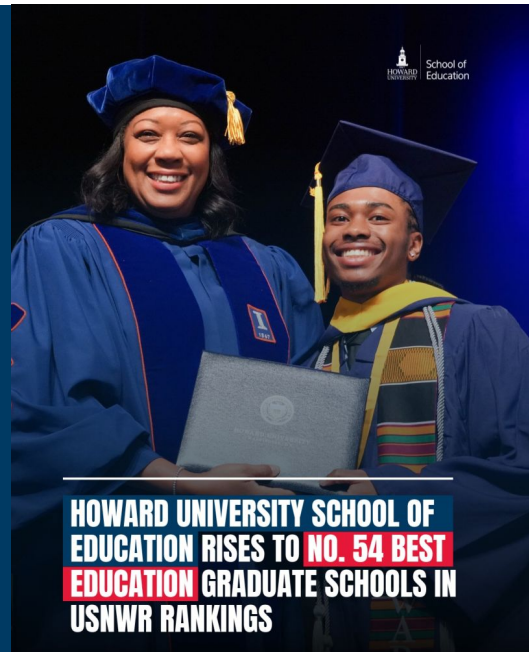


ELPS Department Newsletter

Celebrating Excellence:
Highlights and
Achievements from Spring
& Summer 2025



Welcome ELPS Community

In the spring and summer of 2025, so many in our ELPS community accomplished so much! From publications and presentations to awards and recognition, our faculty, students, and alumni continue to shine as hardworking scholars who inspire us all. The ELPS community is truly remarkable, characterized by dedication, innovation, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

This newsletter celebrates the accomplishments of our community, highlighting the impact it is making across education and beyond. We are proud to share these stories and know that they represent only a glimpse of the brilliance within the ELPS department.

As we look ahead, we eagerly anticipate the new milestones and breakthroughs that are in store for our community. Together, we are building a legacy of scholarship, leadership, and success that uplifts us all.

Nelson Pham & Jody Dixon
2024-2025 Graduate Assistants
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Howard University School of Education | Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
2565 Georgia Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

IN THIS ISSUE

Spring 2025 Events

A reflection on all the events that happened during the Spring 2025 semester!

Upcoming Fall 2025 Events

A look into events that is happening this Fall 2025 semester! Keep an eye out for more

information!

Student Recognition

Join us in celebrating the outstanding accomplishments of our students, whose hard work and dedication continue to inspire us all.

Faculty Recognitions

Read about the incredible achievements of our faculty, whose dedication to excellence and innovation makes a lasting impact.

Alumni Highlights

Celebrate the successes of our alumni as they continue to make meaningful contributions in their fields and communities.



ELPS Department Virtual Event Calendar Spring 2025

Exploring Non-Academic Careers and Building Collaborative Professional Identities

February 05, 2025 | 01-02 PM EST

RSVP: <https://tinyurl.com/ye8btt3h>

Writing a Successful Academic Conference Proposal

February 26, 2025 | 12-01 PM EST

RSVP: <https://tinyurl.com/54tre5zb>

Navigating Howard University: Departments, Resources, and Opportunities

March 12, 2025 | 12-01 PM EST

RSVP: <https://tinyurl.com/bbmbr6m4>

Making the Transition from Howard Student to Employee

March 24, 2025 | 12-01 PM EST

RSVP: <https://tinyurl.com/yrsue35b>



Upcoming Fall 2025 Events

HELP Students: The Comprehensive Exam form is due to HELPS Coordinator, Dr. Sosanya Jones, by **Friday, November 7, 2025.**

2025 Howard University Homecoming- School of Education Open House

October 23, 2025 | 4-5:30 PM EST

Location: School of Education- Miner Building

RSVP: <https://forms.office.com/r/UPXuSidCaC>

46th Charles H. Thompson Lecture- Colloquium

Keynote Speaker: David Stovall, Ph.D

November 5, 2025 | 5-6:00 PM EST

Location: School of Education- Miner Building



STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

We are proud to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our students, whose dedication, creativity, and resilience continue to inspire us. Each milestone they reach reflects their hard work and commitment to excellence. Let's take a moment to recognize their efforts—a simple shout-out can ignite their passion and drive them toward even greater heights. Together, we can create an environment where every accomplishment is celebrated, empowering our students to pursue their dreams with confidence and enthusiasm.

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

NEW APPOINTMENT!

Congratulations to **Tribuana Jones** on her new roles as the **Teaching Fellow** for **COAS Freshman Seminar** and as a **Research Assistant** on the "Advocating While Black and Protecting Students' Civil Rights" program with Dr. Wiley! In addition to this significant achievement, Sean was also featured as a subject in the book *Promoting Student Attention: How to Understand, Assess, and Create Conditions for Attention* by Dr. Robin Wisniewski, published by ASCD.

Congratulations - Graduating Doctors!

We are thrilled to celebrate the following students with their Ed.D. degrees!

Khiana Nicole Clemons

B.A., Howard University, 2016

M.Ed., Howard University, 2018

Dissertation Title: Elevating Equity - An Exploratory Inquiry of Promising Approaches to Mental Health Supports in Predominantly Black Elementary School Communities.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Kathryn E. Wiley

Courtney Alyssa-Robin Gibbs

B.A., Clark Atlanta University, 2009

M.P.A., California State University Long Beach, 2011

Dissertation Title: Fostering a Community of Support: A Qualitative Study of the Experiences of School-Community Partners Implementing Social-Emotional Learning Programs in Secondary Schools within The District of Columbia Public Schools.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Carlas McCauley

Desmond D. Goodloe

B.S., Howard University, 2015

M.A., Howard University, 2019

Dissertation Title: Building Success in Elementary Charter Schools - How School Leaders Support Inexperienced and Non-Certified Teachers With Evidence-Based Practices for Students of Color and Low-Income Environments.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Shawn Joseph

Nicoisa A. Jones

B.A., Ithaca College, 2009

M.S., University of Rochester, 2010

Dissertation Title: Novice Charter School Principal Preparation and In-Service Training to Educate Black Students.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Shawn Joseph

Melissa Annette Russell

B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2003

M.S., Southern Illinois University, 2009

Dissertation Title: Post-COVID-19: An Investigation of Professional Development for Urban Middle School Principals.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Shawn Joseph

Royce Sinclair Sarpy

B.A., Texas Tech University, 2011

M.Ed., Texas State University, 2015

Dissertation Title: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Teacher Perspectives of the Impact of Punitive Disciplinary Practices on Black Boys in Five No-Excuses Charter Schools Across New York City.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Carlas McCauley

Jamila Sara Stewart

B.S., George Washington University, 2005

M.P.H., Howard University, 2006

Dissertation Title: A Phenomenological Study Exploring How Black Women Superintendents Perceive Their Use of Networks and Mentorships.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Shawn Joseph

Publications





Congratulations to **Jamela Joseph**, whose book chapter, "Not Colorblind by Design: Disaggregating Educational Policy through the Lens of Black Womanhood," has been accepted for inclusion in "Visibilizing Research About the Educational Experiences of Black Women and Girls" (edited by Louque & Gray).

In this chapter, Joseph introduces her original theoretical framework, American Parasitic Syndrome (APS), which reveals how U.S. education policy functions as a racialized tool of labor extraction and emotional disposability, particularly targeting Black women educators. Grounded in Critical Race Theory and Racial Capitalism, APS exposes the ways bureaucratic language and colorblind rhetoric mask systemic exploitation. With this contribution, Joseph positions herself as a bold new voice shaping the study of policy, power, and justice in education.



Congratulations to **Dr. Wiley** and ELPS student **Joshua Middleton**, who celebrated the publication of a systematic literature review in the Review of Educational Research.

Wiley, K., & Middleton, J.* (2025). "Uses of history" in research on racialized school discipline. Review of Educational Research. Online first.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654325132659>

Presentations

Congratulations, Nailah Harvey!

Nailah Harvey, a third-year Ed.D. student in the ELPS program, presented her research during the



2025 Howard University Research Month Symposium. Her work explores high school ELA teachers' preparedness in teaching writing instruction and its impact on Black high school students' writing literacy. Additionally, she has continued to serve ELPS students for another semester as the Communications Director for the Graduate Student Advisory Council.



Congratulations, Jamēla Joseph!

Jamēla Joseph presented her research on American K–12 Parasitic Syndrome: Examining the Systemic Exploitation of Black Women Educators Through a Structural-Historical Lens during the Black Women's Studies Association's 2nd Annual Symposium and as part of Howard University's Research Month. Her work centers Black feminist thought and critical race theory to analyze the intersecting racial and gendered labor inequities faced by Black women educators in the U.S. K–12 education system.

Congratulations, Mya Evans!

Mya Evans, a dynamic dancer and educator from the Dallas–Fort Worth area, is making waves in both the classroom and the arts community. Trained in multiple dance styles and a graduate of Texas Woman's University with a B.A. in Dance, she currently teaches at the

GWC STEM Learning Center and serves as the artistic director of the school's dance company, GWC Constellations. She also leads High Caliber Divisions, a production company dedicated to reshaping representations of the African Diaspora in media.

Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies



NEW APPOINTMENT!

Congratulations to **Roniesha Hardee** on her new position as the **Assistant Director of Advising for the Center for Student Success at Trinity Washington University!** Having been with Trinity Washington since June 2023, Roniesha is eager to take on a larger leadership role and positively impact student outcomes.



NEW APPOINTMENT!

Congratulations to **Charleston Yanders** on his new position as the **Academic and Career Advisor at Howard University!** He will be advising majors in Elementary Education, Human Development, and Health Education. His goal is to support students through every step of their journey, whether it's choosing courses, preparing for licensure, exploring internships, or planning a career in education and beyond.

Congratulations - Graduating Doctors!

We are thrilled to celebrate the following students as they receive their Ph.D. degrees!

J. Elijah Bratton

B.A., Oral Roberts University, 2001

M.P.A., Regent University, 2004

M.Ed., Regent University, 2006

Dissertation Title: A Wheel in the Middle of a Wheel- A Comprehensive Case Study on High-Achieving Black Student Development through a Neo-DuBoisian Exploration of the Four-Year

Historically Black College and University Honors Community.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Melanie Carter

Ernest Evans

B.A., Indiana University Indianapolis, 2012

M.S.Ed., Indiana University Bloomington, 2014

Dissertation Title: "They Not Like Us"- A Qualitative Narrative Analysis of the Role that Race and Gender Play in the Professional Identity Development of Black Men Student Affairs Professionals.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Robert T. Palmer

Tiffany Lathan Smith

B.S., Nicholls State University, 2000

M.S., Trinity University, 2004

Dissertation Title: "It's a Small World After All": Howard University Undergraduate Research Abroad Initiative.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Jorge Burmicky

LaToya Babette Parker

B.S., Eastern Michigan University, 2009

M.S.W., Howard University, 2018

Dissertation Title: Congressional Access- Examining the Federal Lobbying of HBCU Doctoral Universities.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Jorge Burmicky

Shauntell L. Pinckney

B.A., Georgetown University, 2015

M.P.P., Georgetown University, 2019

Dissertation Title: Demographic Changes and Servingness at Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs): PBIs, Black-Serving or Black Enrolling.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Robert T. Palmer

Kathleen Marie Rzucidlo

B.A., East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, 2016

M.S., West Chester University of Pennsylvania, 2021

Dissertation Title: "There is an opportunity for bias"- Understanding the Racialized Nature of Accreditation, A Qualitative Case Study of SACSCOC and Their Relationship With HBCU Members.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Jorge Burmicky

Stacey Raina Speller

B.S., Bethune-Cookman University, 2012

M.S., Bethune-Cookman University, 2013

Dissertation Title: Somos Dos: Institutional Leaders' Sensemaking of Being a Racialized Dually Designated Historically Black College & University – Hispanic-Serving Institution (HBCU-HSI).

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Jorge Burmicky

Erick West

BB.A., California State University, 2016

M.A., California State University, 2018

Dissertation Title: The Exploration of Holistic education Connecting with social justice for Student-Athletes: An Educational Shift for the Active Student Population.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Sosanya Jones

Lyndsie A. Whitehead

B.A., Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, 2006

M.A.T., University of Pittsburgh, 2009

Dissertation Title: Examining the Enrollment Decisions and Adjustment Experiences of Sub-Saharan African Students in India.

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Sosanya Jones

Myrah Nikole Wilson

B.A. North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC, 2015

M.S. North Carolina A&T University, Greensboro, NC, 2018

Dissertation Title: In Search of Selah: Examining the Experiences of Black Women Doctoral Students at HBCUs and Their Perceptions of Program Support

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Melanie Carter

Successful Proposal Defense

We are thrilled to celebrate the following students for their recent milestones in their academic journeys:

- **John Roberts:** “Don’t Be So Traumatic in the Trenches”- Exploring the Impact of Secondary Traumatic Stress and Power Dynamics in HBCU Residence and Greek Life Professionals Handling Student Sexual Assault

Congratulations on reaching this pivotal stage!

Publications



Congratulations to Isaiah Lucas, Dr. Kathryn Wiley, and Stephanie Helms Pickett examine how anti-DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) legislation is affecting staff in identity-based student centers. Published in March 2025, the study reveals how such laws create pressure to conform, stifle advocacy, and complicate the work of supporting marginalized students. Through qualitative inquiry, the authors document how staff engage in strategies of resistance—even under institutional constraints. Their findings offer vital insight for educational leaders seeking to sustain equity work amid political backlash.



Lucas, I.* , Wiley, K., & Helms Pickett, S. (2025). Say it loud: Rhythms of resistance in a climate of compliance. *Journal of College and Character*, 26(1), 96-108.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2194587X.2024.2439592>

Congratulations, HELPS Student Isaiah Lucas, on his



publication, "Crowded but committed: Building community solutions to address student housing challenges at growing HBCUs," co-authored with Dr. Tiffany Wiggins (North Carolina Central) and ELPS faculty Dr. Kathryn Wiley.

Nelson Pham published an op-ed titled "Empowering Black Scholars in STEM: The Urgency of Mentorship and Inclusion," addressing the systemic inequities, bias, and limited access that hinder Black students in STEM. He spotlights initiatives such as HBCU STEM US, which expand opportunities through grant workshops, mentoring networks, and support hubs. The piece frames mentorship as reciprocal and essential, affirming identity, building capacity, and countering marginalization, while urging continued commitment to equity amid political challenges to DEI.



Presentations



Congratulations, Alexis Laster!

We are proud to highlight Alexis Laster for presenting her work titled "*Celebrating What Works: High-Impact Practices in the HBCU Context: Findings from Howard University.*"

We also celebrate the collaborative presentation from Alexis Laster with colleagues on "*Embracing Our Strengths: An Assets-Based Approach to Assessment for HBCU.*"



Congratulations, Tanzania Cooper!

In February, **Tanzania Cooper** served as a guest speaker for the First Gen Bison Initiative at Howard University. She shared her journey as a first-generation student, reflecting on the challenges she had overcome and the lessons she had learned along the way. The experience was transformational, offering a powerful moment of connection with fellow first-gen students, including several from her hometown of Detroit. Now, a first-generation Ph.D. student at Howard University, Tanzania, described the opportunity as a full-circle moment. Special thanks go to Dr. Fluitt for making this impactful exchange possible.



Congratulations, K. and Team!

K. Rzuicidlo had her first two conference sessions, based on her dissertation work, accepted to both the AABHE conference in Washington, D.C., and the AERA conference in Denver, Colorado. She also defended her dissertation on April 9, 2025, becoming the first of the Live 5 cohort to defend their dissertation and complete the program this year.

At AERA, she had the honor of supporting the rest of the incredible research team (**Arsene, Darieon, and Erinn**) as they presented on preliminary findings from the ECMC grant.

Since graduation, K. has continued her passion for research and accepted a role as HBCU Innovation and Research Manager

Congratulations, Dr. Jones, Dr. Carter, Randy Bumpers, and LaToya Parker

Dr. Sosanya Jones, Dr. Melanie Carter, and HELPS doctoral students Randy Bumpers and LaToya Parker presented research findings from their Bill and Melinda Gates-funded study, Examining HBCU Campus Climates, at the 2025 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting in Denver, CO.

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Our faculty's unwavering dedication and innovative spirit continue to shape the future of education. Their groundbreaking scholarship and commitment to excellence ignite a passion for learning among our students. Their profound contributions transform the educational landscape and foster an environment where knowledge flourishes and ambitions thrive. As we reflect on their accomplishments, let us celebrate their transformative impact and the inspiration they provide to future generations



Over the summer, Dr. Sosanya Jones also delivered a presentation titled *"Afrofuturism, Dreaming, & Writing Fiction: The First Step onto the Mothership"* for the Afrofuturism Speaker Series at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

Dr. Sosanya Jones was invited to attend the Lumina Foundation's Innovation & Discovery (I&D) convening, New Building



Blocks: The Power of the Regional in Improving Educational Opportunity, Strengthening Communities, and Addressing Climate and Civic Health Crises, which brought together 30–50 community practitioners, educational leaders, policy intermediaries, journalists, funders, and researchers focused on civic engagement and climate change.

Congratulations to **Dr. Jorge Burmicky**, who is a recipient of the Early Career Faculty Research Award.

This honor highlights his outstanding scholarship and unwavering dedication to advancing equity and inclusion across higher education.

Dr. Burmicky's research continues to strengthen the mission and vision of both Howard University and the School of Education. His work exemplifies innovation, purpose, and impact.



Dr. Morris Thomas, Former Associate Professor in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program, recently served as a featured speaker at the University of Maryland Project Management Center for Excellence's Project Management Symposium. He presented the innovative **WHOLE Experience Framework (WEF)**, a leadership model built on five key elements—Welcoming, Holistic, Open, Liberating, and Empowering.

The framework promotes sustainable, people-centered project environments that strengthen team performance and improve outcomes. Dr. Thomas's presentation offered attendees practical strategies for moving beyond technical skills to embrace a more comprehensive leadership approach that prioritizes human experience and sustainable practices.



Several distinguished ELPS faculty members were featured in CETLA's 2025 Summer Empowerment Series. **Dr. Morris Thomas**, Former Assistant Provost, Director of CETLA, and Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, hosted a session titled *"Expanding and Optimizing Research Opportunities"* on Thursday, June 19, 2025.

The session coincided with Howard University's recent R-1 designation and provided participants with insights on shaping and enhancing research agendas. Joining the discussion were **Dr. Carlos McCauley**, Associate Dean of Research & Funded Programs and Associate Professor in the School of Education, and **Dr. Melanie Carter**, Associate Provost and Director of the Center for HBCU Research, Leadership & Policy.

This interactive program provided meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing on research development. ELPS department members were encouraged to attend, as it represented an opportunity to explore new research pathways aligned with the university's enhanced research status.



Howard University reached a major milestone under the leadership of **Dr. Morris Thomas**, Former Associate Professor of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies and Assistant Provost for Digital and Online Learning. The university's Project Management Essentials course, taught by **Dr. Thomas**, was ranked 15th in Class Central's annual Top 100 Most Popular Online Courses and earned the distinction of being the #1 university-created course, a list typically dominated by corporate providers such as Google, IBM, and Microsoft.

With nearly 50,000 learners worldwide, the course's success highlights both its quality and the growing demand for Howard's digital offerings. **Dr. Thomas** credited the achievement to a collaborative effort led by the Office of Digital and Online Learning, emphasizing Howard's strategic vision to expand educational access globally.

This recognition demonstrates how innovative leadership in educational



Dr. Morris Thomas, Former Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Assistant Provost for Digital and Online Learning at Howard University, and Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, & Assessment, completed his Executive MBA from Howard University's School of Business in Fall 2024. At the School of Business Recognition Ceremony for the Class of 2025, he was honored with the EMBA Chief Executive Leadership Award, the highest distinction granted to EMBA graduates.

In recognition of his outstanding academic achievement, **Dr. Thomas** was inducted into the Beta Gamma Sigma International Business Honor Society, having completed his degree with a perfect 4.0 GPA. Beta Gamma Sigma represents the top 5% of AACSB-accredited business school programs worldwide.

This accomplishment adds to **Dr.**

technology can position Howard University as a leader in the competitive MOOC space, advancing its mission of global accessibility and academic excellence.

Thomas's distinguished record as an educational leader, expanding his expertise across both academic leadership and business management, and further strengthening his capacity to drive innovation in higher education.



Celebrating Excellence: 2025 RHSU Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings

Congratulations to **Dr. Kathryn Wiley** on your publication with HU Social Work Doctoral Student, **Shavonne Simmons**!

Wiley, K. E., Williams III, J. A., Simmons, S.* (2025). From slow reform to meaningful abolition: Exclusionary school discipline and the need for a new paradigm. *Texas Education Review*, 13(1), 215-233.
<https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/58396>

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



Congratulations, Dr. Courtney Gibbs and Dr. Shaina Thomas!

Recent ELPS alumnae Drs. **Courtney Gibbs** and **Shaina Thomas** have recently had their book chapter proposals accepted for the forthcoming *Promising Practices for District Leaders: Advancing SEL, Equity, and Belonging*. Congratulations!



Courtney is a dedicated education leader based at Ron Brown College Preparatory High School. In this role, she oversees school-community partnerships, leads family engagement initiatives, and connects students and families with vital community resources and supports. She earned her Doctorate in Education from Howard University, where her dissertation examined the experiences of school-community partners implementing SEL programs in secondary schools across DC Public Schools.

Deeply committed to equity and student well-being, she strives to create spaces where young people feel seen, supported, and empowered to pursue their purpose.

Dr. Courtney Gibbs - Connected Schools Manager,
District of Columbia Public Schools

Congratulations, Dr. Courtney Gibbs!

Recent ELPS alumna **Dr. Courtney Gibbs** was selected as part of this year's Community Schools Fellowship with the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C.

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