

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

ELPS NEWSLETTER

FALL 2025 EDITION

Welcome to ELPS: Fall 2025-Spring 2026 Highlights



During the Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 semesters, the ELPS community continued to achieve impressive milestones. From publications and presentations to awards and recognitions, our faculty, students, and alumni exemplify dedication, excellence, and leadership across education and beyond.

This newsletter highlights these accomplishments and the impact of our collective work. As we look ahead, we remain excited for the continued growth, innovation, and success that define the ELPS community.

UNDERGRADUATE ASSISTANT
KAYLA FAULK

ELPS NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

GRADUATING STUDENTS

Join us in congratulating our students completing their respective programs.

STUDENT RECOGNITION

Celebrating the achievements of our students.

PROGRAM NEWS

A preview of events planned for the Spring 2026 semester. Be on the lookout for more information and updates.

FACULTY RECOGNITION

Highlighting the accomplishments of our faculty, whose excellence and innovation create lasting impact.

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

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

GRADUATING ELPS STUDENTS

Zakiyyah Ali

Hissah Nasser Alsubaie

Lucia Y. Cuomo

Taylor Annetta Diggs

Asia Elizabeth Goode

Rebekah Bell Jackson

Jamēla Tressie Joseph

Sean Christopher Walker

GRADUATING HELPS STUDENTS

Randy Jevonte' Bumpers

Alexis Cristina Dotson

Arsene Frederic

Alexus Sharice Anne Laster

Isaiah Lucas

Walter Shavaris Servance

Britt Marie Spears-Rhymes

Jessica Stamp

Qyana M. Stewart

Melissa Joy-Marie Tucker

STUDENT RECOGNITION

This section highlights the achievements of our students and the dedication, creativity, and resilience behind each milestone. Recognizing these accomplishments helps foster confidence, motivation, and continued growth within the ELPS & HELPS community.

Education Leadership and Policy Studies

SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL DEFENSE



This year, Jamēla Joseph successfully presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Los Angeles, California. In a paper session titled “Exclusion by Design: American K–12 Parasitic Syndrome and the Racialized Economics of Teacher Tenure,” she introduced her original theoretical framework, American K–12 Parasitic Syndrome, which examines how teacher tenure policies and labor structures have historically marginalized Black educators.



Britt Spears-Rhymes received The Walter and Theodora Daniel Endowed Educational Research Fund Award to support her dissertation study titled “Reclaiming Knowledge: Institutionalizing Black Epistemologies and Decolonizing Curriculum at HBCUs.” This fund was established by Dr. Walter G. Daniel to support research that advances the understanding of African American education.

The award recognizes sound research ideas that disseminate valuable information within the academic community. Britt Spears-Rhymes also reached candidacy in Fall 2025!

Congratulations to Wualanda L. Thenstead, a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership & Policy Studies program for successfully completing her proposal defense and achieving candidacy. Wualanda is also a 2024 graduate of the Howard University Urban Superintendents Academy. Her research interests include mentoring and sponsorship of Black Women Principals.



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS



Congratulations to Nelson Pham on this outstanding achievement!

Nelson has been selected for induction into the prestigious Bouchet Graduate Honor Society (BGHS), recognizing excellence in research, leadership, mentorship, and community impact. This honor reflects a strong commitment to scholarship and service, continuing the legacy of Dr. Edward Alexander Bouchet. Nelson will be formally inducted at ceremonies held at Yale University and Howard University.



Congratulations to Phillip Copeland on this outstanding achievement!

Phillip has been selected as a 2026 David L. Clark Scholar, a national honor from UCEA and AERA. This recognition is awarded annually to a select group of outstanding doctoral students in educational leadership and policy. His qualitative research examines the educational experiences of juvenile justice-involved youth in Washington, D.C., focusing on factors that disrupt their schooling and the support needed for successful transitions out of care.



Congratulations to Tatianna Duperier on this outstanding achievement!

Tatianna received the Florida State University Black Alumni Association's Rising Star Award, recognizing her professional accomplishments, mentorship, and commitment to advancing equity and student success in higher education. Tatianna continues to center her research and leadership on empowering Black women and first-generation scholars.



Congratulations to Melissa Tucker on this feature!

We are thrilled to share that Melissa is featured in the February 2026 Graduate School Sway for her inspiring journey and leadership. The profile highlights her background—from growing up in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Houston to her thoughtful work on education and community systems and how those experiences continue to shape her contributions here at Howard.

Read the full feature here:

[THE SWAY](#)

PRESENTATIONS



Congratulations to Sean Miller on this outstanding achievement!

Sean's research, "The Impacts of Virginia's African American History and Studies Courses on African American Students," has been accepted for presentation at the 2026 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. He will present as part of the Research-in-Progress Roundtable Series, contributing meaningful scholarship to ongoing conversations in education research. Congratulations, Sean!

Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies

NEW APPOINTMENTS!

HELPS doctoral student Tanzania Cooper has been appointed as a Student Success Advisor at Trinity Washington University, where she supports students on academic probation in regaining good standing and building pathways to success.

Drawing from her own experiences overcoming academic probation as an undergraduate, Tanzania brings both professional expertise and lived experience to her role.



She holds an MBA from Southern New Hampshire University and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies at Howard University, exemplifying her commitment to equity-centered student success.



Chevonne Mansfield, third-year Ph.D. HELPS student and Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director at Howard University, was nominated to serve on Howard University's Middle States Standard IV Self-Study Committee for reaccreditation, focused on the student learning experience. This two-year commitment will help the institution produce a final report in furtherance of Howard University's achievement of reaffirmation of accreditation. The overall institutional reaccreditation project is chaired by Dean Rubin Patterson and co-chaired by Associate Provost Daphne Bernard.

PROGRAM NEWS

Program news highlights the initiatives, accomplishments, and ongoing efforts that reflect the strength and growth of the ELPS & HELPS community. Sharing these updates keeps our community informed, connected, and inspired by the collective progress we continue to make.

Call for Participants: HBCU & PBI Study!

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
And
Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs)
Internal Resilience and External Threats Study

PERIL at American University and researchers at Howard University study current campus climate at HBCUs/PBIs, and how to increase campus resilience.



WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

- 1 Complete survey (link in QR code)
- 2 Participate in a focus group, one-on-one interview or written response

★ We are raffling off \$25 gift cards for 10 people who participate in the focus group, interview or written response!

QUESTIONS/MORE INFORMATION

✉ perilresearch@american.edu

TAKE SURVEY HERE



Researchers at American University's PERIL Lab are seeking participants for a study on campus experiences, including safety and misinformation. Participants can complete a short survey, join a focus group or interview, or share written responses. Findings will help support stronger, more resilient campus communities.

Interested? Use the QR Code to participate.

Students Gain Firsthand Insight into Federal Policy Supporting HBCUs



Students recently had the opportunity to sit in as Raphael Warnock and Katie Britt introduced a bipartisan bill to streamline federal grant access for HBCUs.

The legislation aims to simplify the funding process and expand research opportunities for HBCU institutions.

Experiences like this give students firsthand exposure to how policy directly impacts higher education.

The Ed.D. Pinning Ceremony honoring candidates' achievements and commitment to leadership in education.



The Ph.D. White Coat Ceremony recognizing doctoral candidates as they enter the next stage of their academic journey.



Featured is a snapshot from the inaugural HBCU Institute at Morgan State University, held during the ACPA Conference, showcasing panelists from the first HELPS cohort.



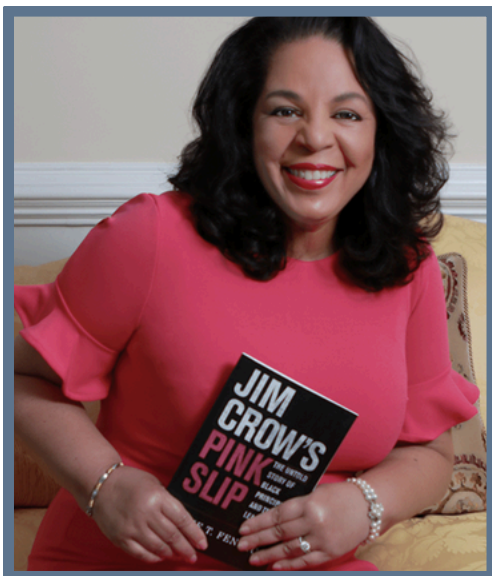
FACULTY RECOGNITION

Our faculty's dedication and commitment to excellence continue to shape the future of education in meaningful ways. Through impactful scholarship, innovative research, and mentorship, they create spaces where students are challenged, supported, and inspired to grow. Their work not only advances knowledge in the field, but also strengthens our academic community and the broader educational landscape. As we reflect on their accomplishments, we celebrate the lasting influence they have on our students and the example they set for future leaders in education.

Dr. McCauley continues to advance education policy and leadership through scholarship and national service. He published “Principles for Determining the Costs of Professional Development for School Leaders” in the *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership* and has a forthcoming piece in the *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies* on how large urban districts use federal funding to improve underperforming schools. He has served on a K–12 advocacy panel at the National Urban League, co-chaired a national task force on Knowledge Mobilization and Engagement, contributed to a federal policy report, and was named to the EdFund Advisory Board. He also had two papers accepted to the AERA annual meeting, advancing research on federal resource allocation and school improvement strategies.



FACULTY RECOGNITION



Dr. Fenwick was appointed by the American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust as Chair of the Rhodes Scholar Selection Committee for District 9 (VA, IN, KY), becoming the first African American to hold this prestigious position. His book, *Jim Crow's Pink Slip* (Harvard Education Press, 2022), is the centerpiece for EdTrust's Black Principal Project, which includes a dedicated website and interviews highlighting the book's historical insights. He also delivered the keynote address at the Black Male Educator Conference in Philadelphia, engaging nearly 1,500 educators on equity, leadership, and advocacy in K-12 education.

Dr. Burmicky signed a book contract with Oxford University Press to develop a model for supporting future higher education leaders through a mission-driven, equity-focused, and care-centered approach, with publication planned for 2027. She was featured in the Telemundo documentary *Wasted Talent: Universities, Latinos, and Trump* and will serve as an NSF panel reviewer in January 2027. Dr. Burmicky also contributed to the 2026 AERA Div J conference program at the University of Pennsylvania, continuing her work on equity, leadership, and systemic change in higher education.



FACULTY RECOGNITION



Congratulations to Dr. Jones, who has three forthcoming publications, including one co-authored with HELPS alumna Dr. Karen Bussey! Her recent and upcoming work appears in *Social Sciences* (MDPI), *Power and Education* (SAGE), and an edited volume titled *Short Stories for Social Research* (Routledge), exploring themes such as DEI in higher education, HBCUs and state governance, coloniality, and the use of social fiction as testimony. In addition to her publications, Dr. Jones will present two

papers at the 2026 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Los Angeles, focusing on Afrofuturism, futures thinking, and educational equity as tools for transformative praxis.



Dr. Wiley co-facilitated a session at the 2025 Annual Youth Policy Forum hosted by the Children's Defense Fund in November 2025. This national convening brings together youth leaders, advocates, and policymakers committed to advancing equitable policies that support children and families. Through her leadership and expertise, Dr. Wiley contributed to critical conversations centered on youth empowerment, policy advocacy, and systemic change. We congratulate Dr. Wiley on this impactful engagement and her continued commitment to uplifting young voices and strengthening education and social policy initiatives!

FACULTY RECOGNITION

Congratulations to Dr. Shannon R. Waite on receiving an honorable mention for the Emerging Scholar Award from Division A of the American Educational Research Association, a distinction that recognizes early-career scholars within their first five years in the professorate who have made significant contributions to the fields of educational leadership, administration, and organizational theory. Nominated by Interim Provost Williams, this recognition reflects both the impact of her scholarly work and her growing influence in advancing research and practice in education. As one of a select



group acknowledged by Division A—an academic division that annually honors excellence in research, leadership, and emerging scholarship—Dr. Waite’s achievement highlights her commitment to equity-centered inquiry and her role in shaping the future of educational leadership.



Dr. Palmer, along with Dr. Morris Thomas, Dr. Calvin Hadley, and two colleagues, signed a book contract with Routledge for *Scholar-Activism in an Era of Change: Increasing Access and Collegiate Success for Black Men in Higher Education* (2027). They also signed a second Routledge contract for the edited volume *A Nation at Risk: Examining the Consequences of the Removal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education* (late 2026), which includes a chapter by Dr. Jones. In addition, Dr. Palmer

co-authored a research brief released in December 2025 by the Center for Minority Serving Institutions, titled *Faculty on the Move: Understanding Retention and Attrition at HBCUs*. We celebrate Dr. Palmer’s continued scholarship and contributions to advancing equity and access in higher education!

ALUMNI NEWS

Congratulations Ashleigh Brown-Grieron on the publication of her first dissertation-based article, “Navigating Crisis: Graduate International Students’ Academic Experiences and Faculty Support at HBCUs During COVID-19,” in the Journal of International Students. This offers new insight into how Historically Black Colleges and Universities supported graduate international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the role of faculty mentorship and institutional responsiveness during a time of global crisis. We celebrate this meaningful contribution to international and higher education research.



Congratulations Stacey Speller on her dissertation that has been awarded first place at the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education (AABHE) National Conference—an honor that recognizes exceptional scholarship and impactful research in higher education. Her work explores HBCU–HSI institutional leadership and the racialized policy structures shaping Minority-Serving Institutions, contributing important insights to the field. This recognition reflects both the rigor of her research and its meaningful impact on advancing equity in higher education.