

# Howard's president steps down after months of internal debate

HOWARD FROM A1

ton Post. He said the university had made progress on an ambitious agenda in a challenging economic time. "We're focused, we're back on track and the momentum is building."

Ribeau declined to discuss what the university will pay to buy out his contract. He earned \$759,340 in total compensation in the fiscal year that ended in June 2012, according to the university's federal tax return.

The announcement, several weeks into the fall term, took some on campus by surprise.

"I was quite astonished," said Lorenzo Morris, a political science professor who chairs the Faculty Senate. He called Ribeau a "solid president" but said the transition could prove positive as the university shows that it is taking "a new direction in leadership."

But several older students and alumni who milled around the campus's famed yard Tuesday evening said they saw Ribeau's resignation coming.

Tia Parchman, 20, a junior from Inglewood, Calif., said she hoped a change at the top will help fix long-standing administrative problems. "This may be a good thing for Howard," she said of Ribeau's retirement. "Hopefully somebody can come in and improve" relations with students. "Oftentimes, our requests are ignored."

The board appointed Wayne A.I. Frederick, 42, Howard's provost since June 2012, as interim president. Frederick, a professor of surgery and a cancer specialist

at Howard's College of Medicine, holds three Howard degrees.

The announcement of Ribeau's exit came nearly four months after a rupture between the board's two top leaders emerged, sending shock waves through the university community.

In a letter to trustees in April, disclosed in a June 7 published report, board Vice Chairwoman Renee Higginbotham-Brooks warned that Howard "is in genuine trouble." The Texas lawyer, a Howard graduate, cited concerns about fundraising, university hospital expenses and student enrollment, calling Ribeau's job performance "lackluster."

Board Chairman Addison Barry Rand, who is chief executive of AARP, replied June 10 that Howard "remains academically, financially and operationally strong." He said the vice chairwoman's letter had painted "an unduly alarming picture of the university's condition."

The board rift put intense pressure on Ribeau and his administration.

Amid the turmoil, university officials have sought to reassure students, faculty and alumni. They described a cut this year of about 75 staff positions, including dozens of layoffs, as part of a retrenchment to improve efficiency. They pointed out that construction is underway on two new student residence halls on Fourth Street NW and an interdisciplinary research building on Georgia Avenue NW. Officials said the school's endowment stood at \$525 million in May, recovering from a steep drop after the 2008 national financial crisis.

Last week, the university welcomed its second-largest freshman class in 15 years and said that enrollment had risen 3 percent to more than 10,330, partially recovering from the previous plunge.

But the university's image took a double blow last month.

First, its ranking on the U.S. News & World Report list of national universities continued a several-year slide, falling 22 places, to 142nd. As recently as the 2009-10 school year, Howard stood at 96th. Critics say the U.S. News rankings are arbitrary and misleading, but they remain influential as a gauge of prestige.

Second, Howard's credit rating was downgraded on Sept. 24, from A3 to Baa1, in a pessimistic report from Wall Street analysts. Moody's Investors Service cited "weak" fundraising, a university hospital with a "remarkably weak profile," student enrollment fluctuations, deep federal budget cuts and questions about whether management can follow through on plans to cut costs.

Such developments raised alarms among loyalists of a school that the Fiske guidebook calls "the flagship university of black America."

"We're very upset," said Marrel Foushee of Chapel Hill, N.C. He said he earned a bachelor's degree from Howard in 1974 and a master's in 1977. "It's terrible. The university is putting out propaganda. The real question from alumni is, what's the real truth?"

Howard occupies a central place in the constellation of historically black colleges and universities. Founded in 1867 under a federal charter, the university



JUANA ARIAS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Students, staff and faculty members protest on the Howard University campus last week, demanding that the Board of Trustees make more responsible decisions about the school's direction.

counts the 19th-century abolitionist and social reformer Frederick Douglass among its early trustees and the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall among its alumni.

With schools of law, medicine and dentistry, Howard is a leading producer of advanced degrees for African Americans. The private institution also has a rare level of public support.

Congress has long approved special appropriations for Howard that far exceed federal funding for other historically black institutions. Howard's line items in the federal budget have totaled as much as \$234 million a year, or more than a quarter of the university's annual spending plan in recent years. This year, that sum was cut to \$222 million under the

federal budget sequester, and it is unclear whether it will return to the previous level. University officials say the impact will hit hard.

Ribeau, a communications scholar who came to Howard after 13 years as president of Bowling Green State University in Ohio, pushed to overhaul Howard's academic offerings. He engineered a phaseout of certain programs, such as a bachelor's degree in fashion merchandising, in an effort to concentrate on core fields such as science, technology, engineering and math.

Ribeau also sought to streamline administration in a drive for efficiency and cost controls. He cited a string of balanced budgets as evidence of progress.

In June, Howard's academic deans charged that "fiscal mis-

management is doing irreparable harm" to the university — a charge Ribeau strongly denied.

The deans urged the dismissal of Howard's chief financial officer, Robert M. Tarola, who is an independent contractor. They alleged that the university was making staff cuts based on "inaccurate, misleading" data, and they raised questions about why PricewaterhouseCoopers this year terminated its work for Howard after serving as its external auditor for seven years. In October 2012, the firm reported "certain deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting" at Howard that it considered "material weaknesses."

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Michael Livingston contributed to this report.

## Ribeau well-liked at Howard even amid concerns over school's direction

BY NICK ANDERSON

Howard University's 16th president, Sidney A. Ribeau, seemed to have little trouble winning friends on campus even as questions arose about whether the school was adrift under his five-year stewardship.

On Friday, Ribeau and university trustees donned academic gowns to welcome the Class of 2017 in a convocation in Cramton Auditorium. Outside, a couple of dozen professors, students and staff members gathered for a demonstration to voice concern about the condition of the school they call the Mecca.

But there was no ire directed at Ribeau.

"I don't have a beef with the president," said Daryl P. Domning, an anatomy professor. "He's been more open than his predecessors in dealing with the faculty. A reasonable guy. I don't think he's the source of the problems. It's the Board of Trustees."

Cameron Clarkson, 21, a senior from Minnesota, said students wanted more dialogue with the board and the administration. "We're not looking to

have anybody fired," he said. Of Ribeau, Clarkson said: "He's a good man. He's dedicated to his job. You can tell he genuinely cares."

On Tuesday, Ribeau announced that he is retiring after what has been a difficult few years, with ups and downs in student enrollment, administrative turnover, an open dispute on the Board of Trustees and a decline in the U.S. News & World Report national rankings.

But Ribeau's tenure also spans a trying time throughout higher education — a financial crisis, a recession and an uneven economic recovery that have tested colleges and universities everywhere.

"I feel good about this time right now at Howard, the tough times we've managed," Ribeau told The Post. "I need not talk to you about the horizon of higher education, how tough it is. We've come together, and we're pointed in the right direction."

Ribeau, 65, was named president in May 2008, after 13 years at the helm of Bowling Green State University in Ohio. A native of Detroit, Ribeau holds master's and doctoral degrees in commu-



MARK GAIL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Howard University President Sidney A. Ribeau announced that he is retiring.

nications from the University of Illinois. He is married and a father of three.

Ribeau began his term in August 2008 with a mandate to renew Howard, academically and administratively.

One of his major accomplishments was an overhaul of How-

ard's academic offerings, a plan approved in 2011 to phase out weak programs so the university could concentrate on its strengths. Out were bachelor's degrees in anthropology, classical civilization and fashion merchandising. In were investments in science, technology, engineering, math and other fields. Ribeau sought to deepen scholarship in subjects such as the African diaspora, health disparities, internationalism and urban education.

Such restructuring is no easy feat for any institution in which tenured faculty guard the traditions of departments and schools.

Ribeau also sought to revamp administration and improve financial controls. Those efforts, including a round of staff layoffs in June, drew mixed reviews. Supporters said budgets have been balanced, year after year, and that independent audits have confirmed progress in putting the university's financial affairs in order.

Moody's Investors Service downgraded Howard's credit rating in September, saying that the university's revenues are under

significant pressure and that its management is in jeopardy of falling behind on a cost-containment plan.

There has been administrative flux under Ribeau. As of this week, six of the 13 academic deans listed on a university Web site are interim appointees. The chief financial officer, independent consultant Robert M. Tarola, was retained through a month-to-month contract in 2010, an unusual arrangement in higher education.

Ribeau is closely linked with board Chairman Addison Barry Rand.

A few weeks after he was named president, it was revealed that Ribeau and Rand shared a connection: Rand had once been married to Ribeau's sister, a marriage that ended many years before.

Rand, chief executive of AARP and chairman of Howard's board since 2006, said he did not bring Ribeau forward as a candidate and recused himself from the board vote to hire him. Rand recalled in July that he had fallen out of touch with Ribeau after they were no longer brothers-in-law. "I didn't even know he was a

college president," Rand told The Washington Post. Ribeau said Rand's account squared with his own recollection.

The co-chairmen of the presidential search committee, former secretary of state and retired Gen. Colin L. Powell and businessman Richard Parsons, wrote in June 2008 that Rand had disclosed the connection to the committee and that he participated in deliberations at their request. Ribeau was chosen based on "his superb qualifications," Powell and Parsons wrote.

Ribeau frequently proclaims his Christian beliefs. A university Web page notes that on Sunday mornings he gives short talks, called "Words of Faith," on Howard's WHUR-FM radio station. At the event Friday, Ribeau urged students to look inside themselves for "the God that you know" to find strength in difficult times.

"The time that you need the most to look at the inside is when the storm clouds are the greatest," Ribeau said. "Your presence today at this convocation says that there are a lot of believers right here in this room, and believers in Howard University."

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Israeli Prime Minister  
**Bibi Netanyahu**  
**DID NOT**  
**represent**

# THE JEWISH PEOPLE

at the UN  
on Tuesday Oct. 1



**CONG. YETEV LEV  
OF SATMAR**

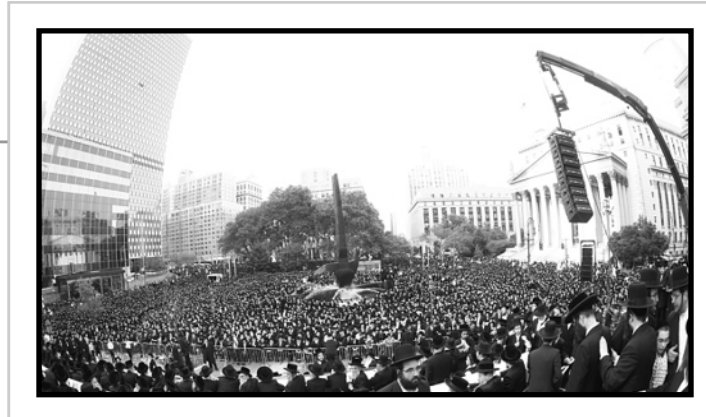
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Despite his own declarations, Bibi Netanyahu's statements have never represented world Jewry, and his rhetoric diametrically contradicts true Jewish values.

**As a matter of fact, under his leadership of the so-called "Jewish State", the very existence of Orthodox Jewry is endangered. The imminent draft of Orthodox Jewish men, at a time when the Israeli defense is experiencing budget cuts, is clearly a diabolic attempt to assimilate observant Jews into the non-religious Israeli culture.**

Furthermore, according to the Torah, G-d commanded the Jewish people not to fight wars against any other nation. The government's plan to draft the Orthodox community will force the Orthodox to violate their conscience and principles and is therefore a direct attack on their freedom of religion.

Photo of a mass demonstration against the Israeli draft plan, which took place on June 9, 2013 at Foley Square in Manhattan. The demonstration was attended by Orthodox rabbis from New York and New Jersey, and a crowd of an estimated 100,000 American Jews. This was just one of many worldwide protests held in America, Europe and the Holy Land.



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