

The Howard Relationship

A strong, long-standing relationship between KPMG and Howard University has enriched both institutions, says Barron Harvey, dean of the university's School of Business.



BARRON HARVEY
DEAN, HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

"KPMG is very involved here — you can see the firm's presence all over the campus. If KPMG just wrote a check, Howard's School of Business would not be the school it is today."

Howard, based in Washington, D.C., is one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Harvey has been at Howard's business school for 24 years, the last 15 as dean.

"Over the past decade, KPMG has been one of the two most involved public accounting firms on campus," Harvey says. "Our relationship enables us to provide a more qualitative education to our students and faculty. KPMG benefits through its recruiting efforts here, attracting more and better educated minorities — African-Americans in particular."

KPMG sponsors the school's Executive Leadership Honors Program, which pro-

vides students with leadership training, mentoring, and a business case competition. The firm also provides scholarships, works with the Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society at the school, schedules field visits, and supports the National Association of Black Accountants, Inc. on campus.

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To help students learn about the latest developments in the world of accounting, KPMG shares some of its most recent business cases with the school.

"KPMG doesn't just help us update our classes," Harvey says. "It also helps us develop new classes that capture the latest trends in the business world."

An instrumental figure in developing both the firm's relationship with the school, and the school itself, is Frank Ross, who retired from KPMG five years ago as Midatlantic Area managing partner for Assurance and managing partner of the Washington, D.C., office.

Ross began to work with the School of Business in 1979, when he took over Howard's account. The following year, he began teaching at the school. Upon retiring from KPMG, Ross accepted Harvey's offer to be visiting professor and director at the business school's Center for Accounting Education. The center seeks to increase the number and retention

Frank Ross: Pioneer

rate of minorities within the accounting profession, and to raise the number of minority CPAs. A small number of “stakeholders,” including KPMG, sponsor the center.

“Frank is a trailblazer,” Harvey says. “He has taught here for 26 years and is one of our most popular teachers. Frank is not just an asset to Howard but also to the profession.”

One of Ross’s many achievements at the school occurred in 2002, when the KPMG Foundation helped create the KPMG Frank Ross Professorship, underwriting it with a \$650,000 endowment. Harvey is the first recipient of the professorship, which he calls “one of the highlights of my career.”

Harvey says, “KPMG understands our mission and our goals. The firm is helping our school give our students a strong academic foundation along with the essential life skills they need to enter the profession and successfully progress through the rest of their lives.”

Harvey recalls how Tim Flynn, KPMG chairman and CEO, came to Chicago some years ago to address a professional development program the school was sponsoring. “The students were so impressed with Tim’s enthusiasm, what he had to say, and his interest in them. They came away saying, ‘He really wants us to be successful.’”

In December 1969, nine African-American accountants met in Frank Ross’s living room in New York and created the National Association of Black Accountants, Inc. (NABA).

Three years earlier, Ross had joined Peat Marwick, a forerunner of KPMG, as the firm’s second black accountant. The major accounting firms had, for the first time, cracked open their doors to African-Americans. Ross believed, once inside, he should help open the doors wider.

Helping to found NABA — he also served as its first president — was an important step. He took many more at KPMG, until he retired in 2003, and at Howard University’s School of Business, where he has taught since 1980.

“There were no role models in accounting when I grew up,” Ross says. He had to navigate his own way.

In 1979, Ross transferred to the Washington, D.C., office, where he would eventually rise to managing partner and become a member of KPMG’s board of directors and chairman of the board for the KPMG Foundation.

In Washington, D.C., Ross became partner on the Howard University account, and he began to cultivate the relationship between the firm and one of the nation’s foremost Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Through Ross’s guidance, Howard and KPMG fostered several programs over the years for top students. In 1980, Ross accepted a pro bono adjunct faculty position to teach auditing at Howard’s School of Business.

After retiring from KPMG, Ross took over as director of the school’s Center for Accounting Education. “My goal,” he says, “was to re-establish the center so it focuses on helping African-Americans to enter and remain in the accounting profession, to become CPAs as soon as possible, and to help their upward mobility.”

At the end of Ross’s autobiography, *Quiet Guys Can Do Great Things, Too*, he wrote, “The greatest contribution any of us can make to mankind is to find a way to make a difference, to leave this world a better place than we found it. We do that by touching another human being in some significant way.”



FRANK ROSS

DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ACCOUNTING EDUCATION
HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS