



Getty

STAY HERE

Marriott Is Setting Up a Hospitality Leadership Program at Howard University

With a \$20 million endowment, the hotel chain's foundation is setting up a pipeline of executive talent from the historically Black university.

BY MEREDITH CAREY

February 26, 2021

As the travel industry has worked to **address the lack of diversity** and be more inclusive across its C-suites, staffs, and guests over the last year, Marriott International is setting the groundwork for systematic change in the future. The hotel chain's family foundation

announced the creation of the Marriott-Sorenson Center for Hospitality Leadership at Howard University in **Washington, D.C.**, thanks to a \$20 million endowment.

Named in honor of Marriott CEO Arne Sorenson, who died of cancer in early February, the endowment will create a curriculum to train the next generation of hospitality and travel industry executives from within the historically Black university's business school.

“This innovative program will foster leadership excellence and help drive greater inclusion at the most senior levels of the hospitality industry,” said J.W. “Bill” Marriott, Jr., Marriott International's executive chairman and chairman of the board, in **an announcement**. “Arne’s passion for creating a culture of opportunity brought real change in the executive ranks of our company. But work remains to be done. Our industry needs a pipeline of diverse leadership talent and that’s exactly what this Center will achieve.”



Have the Travel Industry's Inclusivity Efforts Made a Difference?

[VIEW STORY](#)

“Although the lodging and hotel industry is staffed mainly by workers of color, racial and ethnic minorities remain inequitably dispersed throughout the lodging workforce,” working primarily in entry-level and lower-wage positions, the NAACP reported in its **2019**

Opportunity and Diversity Report Card for the hotel and lodging industry. The center will work to change that, focusing on specifically developing future executives, the foundation announced. **Hilton** established a hospitality leadership school at DePaul University in Illinois, which the Marriott family foundation also contributes to.

The center will directly connect recruiters in “an industry that is on the edge of change” with “the already promising talents and passions of [Howard's] business students,” said university president Wayne A. I. Frederick in the same statement. “This program will be a game changer for Howard University students and the hospitality industry by designing unique educational opportunities that meet the future demands of the industry,” he said.

Marriott International will also be making a one-time \$1 million donation to the newly created **Arne M. Sorenson Hospitality Fund** at Howard, meant to “support the programmatic and career development elements” at the center, and is encouraging others in the hospitality space to contribute and participate as well.

While the logistics of the curriculum are being worked out, it's no doubt that the program's instructors will be among travel's top leaders. As part of the center's creation, **Marriott** and Howard are working together to create a council of “corporate hospitality executives, industry practitioners, association leaders and academics,” who will serve as both curriculum developers, lecturers, and mentors for the program, which will feature both classroom and experiential learning opportunities, the foundation said in its announcement.

EXPLORE HOTELS
