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2. Howard University Mechanical Engineering Alumna Aprille J. Ericsson Nominated to Be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology

# Howard University Mechanical Engineering Alumna Aprille J.

# Ericsson Nominated to Be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Science and Technology

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January 10, 2024

Aprille Ericsson, Ph.D.

From [The Dig](#):

Howard University alumna Aprille J. Ericsson (MEng '90; Ph.D. '95) has been nominated by United States President Joseph Biden to serve as the assistant secretary of defense for science and technology. Ericsson, the first African American woman to receive a doctoral degree in mechanical engineering from Howard University, will be confirmed in a hearing beginning January 23.

The appointment is in response to the establishment of three new assistant secretary of defense positions by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). According to the DOD, the assistant secretaries of defense are under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Heidi Shyu. Ericsson will serve as a principal advisor to the under secretary for her respective area. The assistant secretaries are tasked with helping to improve the nation's capability and concepts and maintaining a technological edge.

"Reflecting on my 30 plus years at NASA, I am grateful for the honor and privilege of doing what I love," said Ericsson. "Today, I humbly step forward, committed to pivoting my diplomatic talents, academic networks, technical knowledge, and experience to grow our workforce in service of the Department of Defense."

Ericsson is the new business lead in the Instrument Systems and Technology Division for NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, home to the nation's largest concentration of scientists, engineers and technologists dedicated to Earth and space science. Ericsson has served at NASA for more than 30 years in a variety of leadership positions to include chief technologist, program executive for Earth science, business executive for space science as well as leading new business strategy for the center. Ericsson has a depth of experience in astrophysics, heliophysics, planetary and earth science with a portfolio including missions such as the James Webb Space Telescope, ICESat-1 and 2, and lunar orbiters.

"I am equipped to identify technology gaps, safeguard our innovative technologies, balance risk, and rapidly transition novel systems to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians. In this complex and rapidly-evolving security environment, if confirmed, my vision aims to boost our technical advantages by shepherding our critical and emerging technologies, strengthen our industrial manufacturing base and protect our technology," Ericsson continued.

Ericsson has held multiple adjunct faculty appointments at universities and serves on several boards. She is also co-founder and advisor to the

nonprofit STEM youth Dynamic Mathematical Visionaries National Society of Black Engineers Jr. Chapter in Washington, D.C. In these roles, Ericsson has been a tireless champion for the advancement of women and people of color in the STEM fields.

Ericsson is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and honors including being named one of the top 50 minority women working in science and engineering by the National Technical Association and recognized among the top 20 “Most Powerful Women Engineers” by Business Insider. Her awards include the Washington Award from the Western Society of Engineers, Tau Beta Pi (Engineering Honor Society) Alumni of Distinction Award and the 2022 American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Ralph Coates Roe Medal awardee, the highest award bestowed by ASME.

Notably cited for being the first African American woman to receive a mechanical engineering doctoral degree from Howard University, the first person of color to receive the Washington Award from the Western Society of Engineers, and the first African American civil servant to receive an engineering doctoral degree at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Ericsson has also received an honorary doctor of science degree from Rutgers University, for which she was cited for her plethora of accomplishments, including prestigious awards for her engineering, education and leadership work.

## Categories

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