Good afternoon. My name is Zelema Harris and I am President of Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois. Thank you for this opportunity to offer Parkland’s perspective on the issue of Faculty Diversity.

I applaud IBHE for embarking on its very important study of Faculty Diversity. In the time allotted, I would like to provide you with an overview of our college’s initiatives to hire and retain diverse faculty.

The Hiring Process and Campus Leadership

When I was hired in 1990 to serve as President of Parkland College, one of the first things my board requested of me was to diversify our faculty. Our trustees were well aware that our student demographics were changing, especially in terms of more minorities attending Parkland. However, the demographic makeup of our faculty did not reflect this growing diversity. The board was very concerned that no minority faculty had been hired in several years.

To address the board’s concerns, in 1991 I appointed a Committee on Access, Equity and Cultural Diversity. The Committee’s goals included the following: develop an institutional response to North Central’s policy on Access, Equity, and Diversity; evaluate Parkland’s institutional climate; and develop long-range plans for addressing issues of access, equity, and diversity.
The Committee did an outstanding job of bringing issues surrounding diversity to the awareness of our entire college community. In fact, in 1993, Parkland’s Board of Trustees, the Parkland College Association (faculty/staff senate), and the Student Government passed a resolution titled, *A Commitment to Cultural Diversity*.

In 1997, the Board of Trustees passed another resolution reaffirming its commitment to diversity and calling on the college administration to develop and implement a plan to diversify the faculty. While our awareness of cultural diversity had increased, the diversity of our faculty had not progressed to the board’s satisfaction.

Under the able leadership of our Chief Academic Officer, Executive Vice President Dale Ewen, an aggressive and focused action plan to hire diverse faculty was set in place. Initiatives such as Professors of the Future (PROF) and Diversity 2000 (which Dale will further explain during his testimony) led to the hiring of eleven diverse full-time faculty since 1995, six of whom are African-American males. Four of these diversity interns were subsequently hired in tenure-track positions. Of the 109 full-time faculty hires since 1997, eighteen have been minorities, increasing the percentage of minority full-time faculty at Parkland from 7 percent in 1997 to nearly **12% percent in 2002**.

**Retention of Diverse Faculty and Campus Climate**

We are committed to making Parkland College an inclusive, welcoming campus for everyone. We know from experience that unless diverse faculty feel welcome, they will not stay at an institution. This is why we put so much effort into mentoring new faculty and offering a variety of workshops, discussion groups, and support resources.
For example, our Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning offers a series of comprehensive multicultural workshops for faculty.

Let me give you an example of what having diverse faculty means to our students and to our colleagues. One of our more recent hires is Dr. Willie Fowler, an African-American male who teaches Political Science. Dr. Fowler often heard his faculty colleagues complain about the groups of young African-American males who typically “hung out” for hours in the College Center. His colleagues complained about the rowdiness.

Tired of the complaints, Dr. Fowler decided to take action. So he started a Chess Club that meets every day in the College Center. Dr. Fowler was able to connect with these students and offer them a positive option for socializing. The Chess Club has been a big success and is a positive activity in these young men’s lives. Now when you walk through the College Center, you see people of all ages and all races engrossed in competitive games of chess.

Another African-American male faculty member, Kevin Hales, teaches history at Parkland. Kevin has become a mentor to many students, especially young African-Americans and other minorities. Community college faculty are known for being student-centered, but Kevin stands out from the rest. Kevin actually seeks out minority students to find out how they are doing, not only in their academic work, but also in their personal lives. If they are struggling in any way, Kevin physically escorts them to an office, or a resource center that will provide them with the needed support.

Both Dr. Fowler and Mr. Hales are young African-American males who gladly accept the responsibility of serving as role models. For so many years, minority students did not have faculty with whom they could identify. That situation is changing, but it still is not
changing as fast as demographics demand. (Estimated as of the 10th day for Fall 2002, 25% of our credit-seeking student population was of diverse backgrounds, including 13% African-American).

 Minority faculty at Parkland recognize that they have a dual role: certainly, their job is to provide excellent instruction; but they also serve as mentors and advocates for students who for too long have felt as if they were invisible at most higher learning institutions.

 As a side note, a few years ago minority faculty and staff met with me to complain about their workload. I was surprised to learn that many were working weekends, evenings, and holidays to meet the demands of minority students and their parents, who often called with questions and concerns. The minority faculty and staff who met with me stated, “We need more of us to help with the workload.”

 Dr. Fowler and Mr. Hales remain at Parkland because they feel welcome and needed. They see an important role for themselves in making Parkland a greater learning college. I cannot overemphasize the importance of specific, formal and informal retention efforts to retain the diverse faculty our institutions are working so hard to recruit.

 The Supply or “Pools” for Diverse Faculty

 I can tell you that it is very hard work to recruit diverse faculty in our part of the state. To hope for any kind of success, you must start with a firm commitment from the Board. Parkland has been very fortunate in that regard.

 You also must have commitment from the faculty and the administration. Again, Parkland has been fortunate to have college leaders who have embraced the need for hiring diverse faculty.
As far as a statewide response to increasing diverse faculty in our institutions, I am greatly encouraged by the efforts of the Illinois Minority Incentive Grant and Illinois Consortium for Educational Opportunity. My suggestions would concern making it more clear to graduate students of the differences between teaching at a four-year college or university and teaching at a community college. The more aware these graduate students can be before they enter the job market, the more successful recruiting efforts will be. In a moment, Executive Vice President, Dale Ewen, will elaborate on these suggestions.

**Summary**

- Commitment to faculty diversity starts with the Board of Trustees and the CEO.
- A college-wide inclusive climate must be instilled to actively recruit diverse faculty.
- Examine institutional policies and practices and our traditional way of doing things. Keep what works; get rid of what doesn’t work
- Create programs that will facilitate the hiring and retention of diverse faculty.
- Mentor new faculty.
- Remain focused and committed to your efforts.
- Continually assess the institutional climate to ensure it is supportive of all faculty and, specifically, of diverse faculty.

To conclude, I would like to read this statement from former Parkland Trustee, Mr. John Albin. Mr. Albin is a banker and farmer who lives in a small, rural community that is quite homogeneous with little or no diversity. Yet, he understands the need to diversify our
faculty. Mr. Albin also served as Board Chair during nearly ten years of my tenure. He wrote a letter to the News-Gazette in 1997 shortly after the Board’s strongly worded resolution to diversity our faculty.

Mr. Albin wrote:

“If the United States or any other country is to survive long into the 21st century it must find a way to meld the diverse cultures of its citizens into one culture that has a basis of honesty, integrity, dignity, and real equal opportunity for all of its citizens.”

Again, I thank you for this opportunity to offer Parkland’s perspective on this matter of the highest interest.