Paper presented for the:

State of Illinois
Board of Higher Education

Study on Faculty Diversity in Illinois Higher Education

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On behalf of Chancellor Walter V. Wendler, I want to express SIUC's appreciation for the leadership the state board is providing in an effort to address the important issue of faculty diversity statewide. We strongly commend IBHE, but we also want to try to impress upon everyone the belief that success in this campaign will require a partnership of administrators, politicians and university officials.

Particularly in light of recent budget cuts and the questionable support from some quarters that is being shown for affirmative action and diversity programs, public institutions of higher education find themselves forced more and more to rely upon the state for additional financial support to make the effort to increase minority faculty a win/win situation everywhere in Illinois.

It is hoped that the state will find ways to provide financial incentives to help campus administrators increase their potential to diversify the faculty, staff and student population – more money for such programs as post-doctoral fellowships, faculty recruitment programs, visiting scholar programs, and money to reward institutions through additional budgetary consideration for meeting statewide diversity goals.

Paralleling the need for adequate financial resources is the requirement for committed leadership in support of faculty diversity – leadership both from our campuses and from the state.

We need committed leadership from the state. I have already mentioned the need for financial resources, and such resources will be one measure of the kind of leadership the state shows. But the state also can lead in other ways.

The governor can continue to communicate the state’s vision on diversity to higher education policy-makers and to state lawmakers. In many respects, Governor George Ryan began this very process in April 2001 with Executive Order No. 6, the reason that we are here today.

Committed leadership and financial resources should be focused upon the third partner in the diversity campaign, our campus communities. It is there where
diversity plans must be formulated and implemented and successful recruitment strategies put into place to support them. That work will require the energy and cooperation of every member of every campus community.

Chief campus administrators must demonstrate unconditional personal and moral commitment for an inclusive environment, particularly one of racial and ethnic equity. They must be willing to admit that a problem exists and they must communicate their position to our campus communities. They must also commit financial resources to encourage and reward successful efforts toward diversity, and they must hold staff accountable for their university’s diversity success. In short, they must establish recruitment of minority faculty as a critical institutional policy and then see that this policy is implemented. At Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Chancellor Walter Wendler is committed to making a good faith effort toward hiring more graduates from the Illinois Minority Graduate Incentive Program and the Illinois Consortium for Educational Opportunity Program.

A comprehensive plan to diversify the faculty and staff in Illinois public higher education institutions must also recognize, understand and appreciate the important and critical role of faculty in the recruitment process. Generally, administrators either express or demonstrate a commitment to diversity. Faculty support, however, is mixed. Traditionally, faculty recruitment is considered a prerogative of academic departments; therefore, some administrators are extremely cautious about alienating faculty. The critical role of faculty in the recruitment process and the need to facilitate campus by-in generally and particularly faculty by-in is illustrated in the statement prepared by a dean who has been very successful in recruiting faculty of color in her college.

To quote, “Some departments have been very eager to hire minorities, considering a diverse faculty one of the important measures of excellence. Some faculty are adamant that they have the right to choose their own colleagues without interference from administrators, and some feel that any directive from the
dean to seek out minority candidates or to give preference to minority candidates interferes with that faculty right.

"Some faculty object to affirmative action on political or philosophical principles, and as I have indicated some faculty here believed that giving priority to a minority hire by borrowing was a form of racism itself.

"I am not sure one can change either of those beliefs: but if a search is conducted nationally and if strong minority candidates are found, faculty are less apt to see it as an affirmative action hire. Indeed several of the faculty hired above came about simply as the result of a search; others came about because we were able to borrow money from the Chancellor’s fund for minority hiring – and that money would not have been available to fund the position otherwise.

"Faculty are also often unconsciously seeking to replace themselves: they favor candidates whose background, educational history, methodology, and even research interests are like those of the person being replaced or of the department’s history. So sometimes it takes some effort to see the relevance or importance of bringing into the department faculty who will be quite unlike the current faculty. And faculty may be satisfied with a pool that replicates the demography of the department in its present composition, so it is important during that phase of hiring to seek minority applicants by making sure that the advertisement makes its way to promising schools and that faculty contact colleagues at other universities who may know minority candidates.”

This particular dean has been successful for a variety of reasons. First, she had a moral and personal commitment to diversity. Second, when she was hired, her vision of her faculty, staff and student population included a diverse ethnic and racial population. Third, she communicated her vision to her faculty and staff and fourth, she has used a variety of approaches to facilitate faculty buy-in, i.e. visiting scholars and borrowing against her future hires. A successful minority recruitment program will require creative leadership and commitment from administrators and support from the administration and the state of Illinois.
I also want to talk for a few moments about some of our successful minority recruitment efforts at SIUC, especially about our Minority Recruitment and Retention Loan Fund. Since that program’s inception two years ago we have added 11 new minority faculty members – six Black female faculty members, three Black males, one Asian male and one Hispanic male.

The minority recruitment and retention revolving loan fund was established in 2000 and is designed to provide incentives to encourage and support the recruitment and hiring of underrepresented minority full-time instructional faculty. Under the program, the chancellor pays 100 percent of the first-year salary costs associated with the hire. The salary subsidy decreases over the next four years, and our deans are required to repay the full amount over a four-year span.

The program, which has the support of both academic administrators and faculty, has allowed us to address this important issue during a period of declining resources and uneven support for affirmative action and diversity initiatives. The implementation of this program also has helped to create faculty buy-in for diversity and has helped to change what was a very sensitive issue from a win-lose to a win-win paradigm.

Another program that SIUC is proud to continue sponsoring is University Women’s Professional Advancement. Although its primary focus is to help support, develop and train women who currently are employed on the faculty or staff, UWPA also is designed to help attract female faculty, and members of the program staff are available to visit with female candidates during the recruitment process.

UWPA was established in 1988 and is designed to create and sponsor professional development opportunities for female faculty and staff and, when possible, to provide financial support for their professional travel. The program organizes and sponsors professional opportunities, such as mentoring opportunities with senior staff, and administrative and chair internship programs.
UWPA also offers focused workshops on such topics as grant writing, planning for promotion and tenure, and preparing for promotion and tenure review.

Several women who have participated in the internship programs have been promoted to academic chairs and other administrative positions. All participants consider the program to be a tremendous success. This model can also be used to help recruit and retain faculty and staff of color.

The statewide campaign for diverse faculties on our campuses also can be such a success, if all of us involved commit to making it happen. As partners, we can bring needed and crucial change to higher education in Illinois.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.