

Don Sevener  
Talking Points  
Illinois Committee on Black Concerns  
in Higher Education  
September 24, 2010

Good morning.

First, I want to extend very sincere regrets from Chairwoman Carrie Hightman, who had planned to be here this morning, but has been unexpectedly and unavoidably called away.

I am not only pinch-hitting for Carrie, but also for Judy Erwin, who had also accepted your invitation to speak this morning, before illnesses in her family led her to take retirement from her position, and the Board of Higher Education honored me with appointment at its interim executive director.

So . . . I'm delighted to be here, and honored to be pinch hitting behind Carrie Hightman and Judy Erwin.

I would like to thank the Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education for organizing this conference, and for focusing attention on the vital topic before us today.

Second, I wish to thank the Committee, and members of the Legislative Black Caucus for your contributions to our efforts to move the needle on increasing diversity throughout higher education from enrollment and graduation rates to employment and campus climate.

Third, I offer a challenge to the Committee and the Black Caucus to be our partners in the implementation of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success*. The *Public Agenda* – we have provided copies of it to you today – is our blueprint for guiding higher education for the next decade.

*The Illinois Public Agenda* documents a **prosperity gap** that relates directly to large and widening disparities in educational attainments – by race/ethnicity, by income, and by geographic region. I want to return to the Public Agenda in a few moments, particularly as it relates to our efforts to bring greater diversity to higher education and erase the persistent and insidious achievement gap affecting students of color, but first let me provide a snapshot of what diversity looks like at colleges and universities.

As you would imagine, it's a mixture of good news and bad.

First, the good news.

- The numbers of students and faculty from underrepresented groups participating in higher education are up. Between 1998 and 2008:

- Overall enrollment increased 25%, but enrollment rose 46% for underrepresented groups; up 75% for Hispanic students and 45% for Black students.
- While the total number of certificates and degrees increased 45%, the number of certificates and degrees conferred for underrepresented groups increased 71%; up 97% for Hispanics and 69% for Blacks.
- The number of minority faculty on campus went up by 43%.
- Public institutions reported spending over \$197 million on programs serving underrepresented students, faculty, and staff in FY 2008.
  - The programs include scholarships and fellowships, counseling and advising, and student support services such as tutoring and skills development, higher education recruitment, and retention activities.
  - The state provides a third (\$67 million) of the annual funds expended for these programs.

Okay, that's the good news. Here's what the other side of the coin looks like, viewed from the perspective of the leaky educational pipeline:

- Illinois has one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation—only 11 state have greater disparity between whites and minority adults with an associates degree or higher.
- While 84 of every 100 white students graduate from high school, just 6 in 10 Hispanics and barely more than half of

- Black students leave high school with a diploma. An astonishing six out of ten black males are high school dropouts.
- And, while the faculty numbers are up, students may still have little interaction with faculty of similar race/ethnicity on Illinois campuses.
    - For example, in the Fall of 2008, when 14.8% of the students were Black, 5.4% of the faculty were Black.
    - 8.8% of the students were Hispanic, 3.2% of the faculty were Hispanic.
    - By contrast, 5.6% of the students were Asian, and 8.9% of the faculty was Asian.
  - Not surprising, spending patterns are revealing the impact of the lean budget times for higher education. Between 2007 and 2008, the dollars budgeted for programs serving underrepresented groups dropped for the first time, from \$202 million in 2007 to \$197 million in 2008, with a 5.3% decrease occurring at the public universities.

So, it is understood that we all have much to do to close the gaps I have detailed here. And all of you in this room are helping to do that work.

Here are some things we are doing, in response to recommendations in the *Illinois Public Agenda*:

The Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois initiative—known as DFI—is directly administered through our offices, with the assistance of the DFI Board, led by Jerry Blakemore, and staffed by Arthur Sutton. The goal

of this program is to increase the number of minority, full-time, tenure-track faculty and students at Illinois colleges and universities. Since its inception in 1994, there have been 900 DFI graduates. The current level of funding provides more than 100 minority students with full and partial fellowships. We appreciate the partnership with higher education institutions that support these DFI fellows as well as those who hire DFI graduates, keeping them in the state as professors or administrators.

**DFI Program - Awards to Fellows  
FY 2006 - FY 2011**

<u>FY</u>	<u>Fellows Funded</u>	<u>Awards to Fellows</u>
2006	152	\$2,715,695
2007	184	\$2,487,700
2008	161	\$2,421,398
2009	153	\$2,517,134
2010	136	\$1,604,000
2011	129	\$1,600,000
Totals:	915	<u>\$13,345,927</u>

- IBHE, along with ICCB and ISBE, are working to improve college readiness by aligning a rigorous k-12 curriculum with college and workplace competencies.
- We are engaging our colleges of education in discussions about policy changes necessary to strengthen teacher and school leader quality, especially in high-need schools.
- ISAC has developed the ISACorps, which is providing near-peer mentoring, and implementing college information campaigns to improve college readiness and lower the achievement gap.
- ICCB is working with community colleges to establish strong partnerships with high schools for early identification of correction

of gaps in knowledge and skills, which in turn will reduce the need for remediation classes. The College and Career Readiness Act is providing models for successful replication.

- In addition, in order to improve accountability for student success, work is well underway for establishing a P-20 longitudinal data system so that students will not be lost along the educational pipeline.

Closing the attainment gap is no longer just a moral imperative; it can be ignored only at the economic peril of Illinois. We all know that the value of a college degree pays big dividends not only for individuals but also for our society.

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- Candidates may receive up to \$25,000 for college expenses in the form of loans
- Candidates also may receive transportation assistance, tutoring, technology assistance and, if necessary, child care support.
- Teacher candidates have an average age of 39 years
- Half of the teacher candidates have an annual household income of less than \$30,000
- Most teacher candidates are employed full time.

<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Pct</u>
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2	0.51%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	1.03%
Black or African American	199	51.16%
Hispanic	118	30.33%
White	53	13.62%
Multiracial/Ethnic	3	0.77%
Unknown	10	2.57%
Total	389	

Thank you for inviting me to spend this time with you. I look forward to continuing our partnership towards the vision of one Illinois, where all residents have affordable access to high-quality education and are successful in their pursuit of better opportunities.