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## **Illinois Board of Higher Education Selects Current Year's DFI Fellows with a Goal of Increased Diversity at Illinois Colleges and Universities**

**SPRINGFIELD** – With an increased focus on equity, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is announcing the newest group of Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois (DFI) students. The DFI program provides financial assistance to underrepresented students pursuing graduate and professional degrees at Illinois public and private institutions with a goal of increasing faculty of color at Illinois higher education institutions.

“The DFI fellowship has significantly contributed to my success in graduate school where it has allowed for numerous professional development opportunities, both inside and outside of the university,” said Melissa Pergande, a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Many students echo that sentiment.

“We are thrilled to support these DFI fellows as they continue their education and prepare for a rewarding career in Illinois higher education,” said Ginger Ostro, executive director, IBHE. “When we look at equity, we also look at diversity, and this program's goal is to prepare doctoral candidates from underrepresented groups for teaching positions in our colleges and universities, or in education-related positions within state government. Not only does this create opportunity for increasing faculty of color, we know this is important to college success for more students of color.”

For fiscal year 2021, IBHE is using \$1.456 million to support 103 fellows, who were chosen from 20 participating DFI institutions across the state. Of those fellows, 65 are continuing students and 38 are new recipients. The program has served nearly 600 students since the program began in 2004.

Arthur Sutton, deputy director of diversity and outreach, said, “This is a dynamic program that encourages and supports underrepresented students to remain as faculty members in the state of Illinois. To support the program's success, we oversee various programs and activities that promote thesis and dissertation work for fellows and are in continuous communication with students and their institutional representatives about progress and achievement.”

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As a condition of the award, recipients agree to accept a teaching or staff position in an Illinois higher education institution or governing board, or an education-related position in a state agency, equal to the number of years the student was a participant in the program.

The DFI Act, enacted in 2004, authorizes the IBHE Board to appoint a DFI program board to establish policies and procedures to administer the program. IBHE staff provide the DFI program leadership and support.

### **New Fellows**

#### **Adler University**

Wuraola Sosina  
LaWanda McCraney

#### **DePaul University**

Estrella Vargas  
Jesus Solano

#### **Eastern Illinois University**

Ly'Jerrick Ward

#### **Illinois State University**

Jacqueline Jouett  
Stacey Wiggins  
Jewel Woodard

#### **Loyola University**

Fabio Duque

#### **National Louis University**

Eric Edwards

#### **Northeastern Illinois University**

Paula Sanchez-Garcia  
April Walker-Starr  
Karen Guadarrama

#### **Northern Illinois University**

Sherry Franklin  
Andrea Jackson-Sagredo

—more—

**Roosevelt University**

Christina Dupee  
Noemi Terrazas  
Maria Alvarez  
Yolanda Flowers  
Lynn Weishaupt

**Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

Bryan Cotton  
Daniel VanOverbeke

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

Jessica Brito  
Hagar Hallihan  
Jacob Reed  
Yesenia Vargas  
Aide Hernandez  
Brian Osei-Badu  
LaShawn Evans  
Derick Anderson  
Juanita Calvo  
Benjamin Brown

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

Marisol Jimenez  
Miche'le Johnson  
Melanie Marshall  
Bianca Lopez  
Brandi Smith  
Larry Washington

**Returning Fellows**

**Aurora University**

Cameron Frazier  
Amber Floyd

**Adler University**

Alexis Cameron  
Crystal Murdock  
Andrea Stiles

**Chicago State University**

Marcardo Thomas

**DePaul University**

Belinda Green  
Andrew Calderon

**Governors State University**

Monica Teixeira  
Paulette Eason-Williams  
Michelle Williams

**Illinois State University**

Caress Brown  
Rosalva Medina  
Tricia Rosado  
Jorge Sanchez  
DuJuan Smith  
Diana Soriano  
Jamillah Gilbert

**Loyola University**

Papa Adams

**National Louis University**

Rosanna Cordero

**Northern Illinois University**

Sharazadi Dyson  
Brigitte Bingham  
Susana DasNeves  
Konya Sledge  
DaShae Rodriguez-Harris

**Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

Chelesea Lewellen  
Kimberly Turner

**University of Chicago**

Alejandro Flores  
Darnell Leatherwood  
Nova Smith  
Marion Malcome  
Elizabeth Davies  
Cashell Lewis  
Sophia Rhee

**University of Illinois at Chicago**

Luz Acosta  
Anthony Pena  
Melissa Pergande  
Luz Torres  
Dwayne Williams  
Deanna Ledezma  
Glenance Green  
Daniel Magers  
Nancy Toure  
Kara Simmons  
Sarah Malone  
Rafael Moreno  
Ermus St. Louis  
Nancy Dominguez-Fret  
Ramona (Meza) Alcalá  
Letrice Beasley

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

Autumn West  
Juan Mora  
Susan Ogwal  
Tiffany Harris  
Chequita Brown  
Ronald Threadgill  
Angel Velez  
Jessica Robinson  
Marielisbet Perez  
Jacqueline Guzman  
Alishia Alexander  
Anthony Sullers  
Nathaniel Stewart  
Amari Simpson  
Zam (Kendra) Nalubega

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