

APPROVED
March 18, 2026

Melissa Bealon
Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #H-3
March 18, 2026

DIVERSIFYING HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY IN ILLINOIS (DFI) PROGRAM APPROVAL OF NOMINATIONS TO THE DFI PROGRAM BOARD

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item recommends the approval of the nomination of five (5) new board members to the program board of the Diversifying Faculty in Illinois Program. The DFI Program provides financial assistance to students pursuing graduate and professional degrees at eligible Illinois public universities.

The DFI Program supports the goals of IBHE's Strategic Plan, *A Thriving Illinois*, with a focus on increasing postsecondary credential and degree attainment to develop the talent that drives Illinois's economy by striving to close equity gaps for students, improve affordability, increase access, and assist with educational expenses.

The DFI Program Board brings expertise in graduate education, faculty development, and student mentoring and represents a range of Illinois higher education institutions. The DFI Program Board supports the administration of the DFI program by assisting IBHE with:

- Reviewing and recommending fellowship recipients
- Providing input on program priorities and implementation
- Supporting statewide outreach and recruitment efforts
- Advising on program policies and long-term strategy to strengthen Illinois' faculty pipeline

IBHE is required to approve the nomination of new members to the DFI Program Board.

Action Requested: The Illinois Board of Higher Education is requested to approve the appointment of the following five (11) recommended individuals to serve on the DFI Program Board, as authorized under the DFI program statute, (110 ILCS 205/9.21).

- Dr. Mona Davenport, Eastern Illinois University
- Dr. Venessa Brown, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- Dr. Lorette Oden, Western Illinois University
- Dr. Rocio Rivadeneyra, Illinois State University
- Dr. Daniel Lopez, Harold Washington College
- Dr. Myra Gaytan, University Center of Lake County
- Dr. Marlon Cummings, Governors State University
- Dr. Catherine Polydore, Eastern Illinois University
- Dr. Shaalein Lopez, Governors State University
- Dr. Markisha Woodson, Chicago State University
- Dr. Tyrone Forman, University of Illinois Chicago