**ABSTRACT AND BRIEF HISTORY  
OF THE**

**ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY PROJECT**

ABSTRACT

The Assessment of Educational Equity Project conducts and supports educational research and scholarly activity which focuses on the diverse needs of a diverse student population. The project establishes and maintains a repository of studies, reports and other information and materials needed to review and assess policies and practices which address the educational experiences of that diverse student population. The overall goal of the Assessment of Educational Equity Project is to generate, amass, assess and disseminate information that can be used to accomplish continual improvement in retention and graduation rates and otherwise enhance education participation and employment among members of underrepresented groups -- racial and ethnic minorities, females and people with handicapping conditions. The Project, functioning within the Center for Higher Education at Illinois State University, and enabled by support from the Chancellor's Office of the Illinois Board of Regents and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, seeks funding in the amount of four hundred and fifty thousand dollars ($450,000) annually for a period of three years to achieve the following goals:

* to design, conduct and support research and other scholarly activities related to the

equitable delivery of educational services;

* to establish a repository of studies, reports, and other information and materials needed to design, implement and assess policies and procedures which address educational equity and which enhance postsecondary recruitment and retention efforts;
* to disseminate information and materials that can be used to improve retention and

graduation rates, and otherwise assure that equity in the delivery of postsecondary education services is a priority and constant topic on the agendas of all education policy-making bodies; and

* to design and implement a structure for inter-generational transfer of knowledge, skills

and information, including personal interaction and the documentation of exemplary

biographical and historical occurrences.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

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Since the late 1960s, various strategies have been initiated and intensified to address the adverse conditions that have characterized the experience of members of underrepresented groups in education. Still, many of the adverse conditions persist, with limited progress, in Illinois and nationwide. Tensions between racial groups have re-ignited and heightened in recent years to cause problems of growing magnitude in educational settings and to inhibit progress toward creating campus climates which are necessary in order that members of underrepresented groups enjoy full educational and employment benefits. Sexual harassment cases have increased in number and the volume of litigation. Services for the disabled fall considerably short of the requirements of the American Disabilities Act.

During the spring of 1984, the Subcommittee on Minority Concerns of the Illinois Senate Committee on Higher Education was established to assess the educational progress of historically disadvantaged groups in Illinois. Both committees were chaired by Senator Richard Newhouse. An early conclusion of the Subcommittee was that a concerted effort would be required on the part of all segments of the educational community, the business community, and as the legislative and executive branches of state government, to bridge gaps caused by barriers which have limited the educational access and success of racial minorities.

One of the recommendations of the Subcommittee was that Illinois colleges and universities should facilitate and sponsor research activities which focus on:

1. identifying causes for the disproportionate representation of minorities in postsecondary education; and
2. Identifying successful strategies and programs throughout the educational system which foster and enhance the participation and status of minorities.

Subsequently, legislation was enacted by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by then Governor James Thompson which set in motion statewide, multidimensional and collaborative efforts to enhance minority participation in education. Significant among these legislative initiatives were Public Act 84-726, sponsored by Senator Emil Jones and Representative Carol Moseley-Braun; Public Act 84-785, sponsored by Senator Richard Newhouse and Representative Carol Moseley-Braun; Public Act 85-283 sponsored by Senator Miguel del Valle and Representative Ben Martinez; and various resolutions. These legislative initiatives and concerns about minority participation in postsecondary education heightened the impetus for the completion of a proposal for developing survey instruments (inventories) and processes that would be effective for assessing the status of minorities in education.

The "Assessment of Educational Equity" (AEE) Project was launched in December, 1987, after the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approved the proposal and awarded a grant for the development of a process and survey instruments (inventories) which could be used for assessing the educational status of members of underrepresented groups in Illinois. The project, initially titled "Assessment of the Status of Minorities in Education" (ASME), has resided, administratively, within the Center for Higher Education at Illinois State University. One of the primary objectives of this initiative has been to provide comprehensive and balanced information to policy- and decision-makers, administrators and the public, thereby assisting efforts to facilitate the goals of enhancing the quality and equality of postsecondary education.

The initial phase, development of survey instruments (inventories), was accomplished by a group of individuals who were members of the Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education

(ICBCHE), a grassroots educational advocacy organization formed in 1982. Senator Richard Newhouse and Representative Moseley-Braun were early supporters of ICBCHE and were elected to serve as ex-officio members of the Steering Committee. The persons involved in developing the inventories and their roles/responsibilities at the time from January through July, 1988 were:

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Dr. Seymour Bryson Dean of the College of Human Resources

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Ms. Francine Clark-Jones Graduate Assistant, Department of Educational Policy

University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana

Dr. Stafford Hood Program Evaluator

Illinois State Board of Education

Dr. Charles E. Morris Vice President for Administrative Services

Illinois State University

Dr. William Moseley Chairman, Department of Special Education

Western Illinois University

Mr. Ira Neal Graduate Assistant, Department of Educational

Administration and Foundations, Illinois State University

Mr. Silas Purnell Director, Ada S. McKinley Recruitment Center

Chicago, IL

Dr. Alvin Townsel Educational Consultant

Illinois State Board of Education

Dr. William Trent Associate Professor of Educational Policy

University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana

Others, including Ms. Clara Fitzpatrick, a member of the Illinois Board of Regents, Dr. James Forstall, Associate Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education, Dr. Rudolfo Garcia, Associate Vice President for Research, Chicago City-Wide College, provided valuable assistance. Drs. Morris and Trent served as Co-Directors of this phase of the initiative.

The survey instruments consist of separate inventories for undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and administrators, and for assessing institutional services and programs. The first use of the inventories was in conjunction with a workshop conducted by Dr. Morris at Danville Area Community College in August 1988. Since that time, sustained in part by additional grants from the IBHE to the Center for Higher Education at Illinois State University in fiscal years 1989-90 and 1990-91 through 1993-94, the inventories have been continuously revised and augmented to

1. assess the educational status of all underrepresented groups--minorities, women, and people with disabilities,
2. be more inclusive of issues regarding services provided by institutions,
3. present questions in a more neutral and unbiased fashion, and
4. communicate more clearly and consistently to institutions, agencies and individuals participating in the surveys.

The initial grant was sufficient only for the developmental phase of the project. Consequently, a pilot study conducted in six private Illinois baccalaureate institutions in the spring of 1989 was a subsequent, but independent, effort made possible by resources and assistance provided by Illinois State University (ISU), the participating institutions, the Federation of Illinois Independent

Colleges and Universities (FIICU), the United Campus Christian Foundation (UCCF) of Normal, Illinois, and the Illinois United Ministries in Higher Education. Dr. Donald Fouts, President of FIICU, and Rev. James Pruyne, Director of UCCF, played instrumental roles in the acquisition of these additional essential resources. They, along with UCCF interns; students, faculty, and staff from ISU; and other institutions provided essential support during this phase.

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Additional support from two institutions that have cooperated throughout the history of the project -- Western Illinois University and Illinois Wesleyan University -- has been essential to the project's survival.

Important contributions to the AEE initiative are made by persons who serve in the roles of Research Coordinator and Research Consultant. To date, these individuals have been Dr. Noreen Michael, Assistant Professor of Educational Administrations and Foundations (ISU), who served during the period 1989-1991, and Dr. Maria Canabal, Assistant Professor of Home Economics (ISU) who has been Research Coordinator since September, 1991; and Research Consultants Dr. Alvin Townsel (ISBE), Dr. Lilibeth Gumia (ISBE), and Dr. Jeanne B. Morris (ISU).

During the spring of 1990, and after further revisions, AEE/ASME inventories were administered in eight public and three private baccalaureate degree-granting Illinois institutions. Enabling assistance for this phase of the Project was provided by the Illinois Board of Regents, the Illinois Board of Governors and the participating institutions. Responses from approximately 10,700 students have been and continue to be analyzed to produce numerous studies and reports, including Master's theses and doctoral dissertations.

An AEE/ASME survey was administered using the inventories in four Illinois Community College System in the spring of 1992. The Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Community Colleges Trustees Association and the Council of Illinois Community College Presidents have encouraged and supported the Project.

Members of an ASME Advisory Council and special advisory committees have been instrumental in the accomplishments of AEE/ASME surveys, studies, and reports. Since 1988, Dr. Charles E. Morris has served as Director and Dr. Ira L. Neal has served as Assistant/Associate Director of the Project.

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Hispanic American enrollment in Illinois colleges and universities has increased consistently over the last decade, and African American enrollment has increased since 1989, after declining for more than a decade. Still, data compiled in the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Report on Underrepresented Groups (January 1 993) show that, as in the past, the relative proportions of these two groups begin to decrease at the high school graduation level and become progressively worse throughout the educational pipeline.

According to the 1990 census, African Americans were 14.6 percent of the Illinois population. In 1991 African Americans constituted 22.2 percent of 9th grade Illinois students, 16.5 percent of public high school graduates, and 12.2 percent of the undergraduate enrollment at Illinois four-year institutions, while they received 6.9 percent of the bachelor degrees and 3.1 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded. Hispanic Americans, who constituted 7.9 percent of the Illinois population in 1990, were 10.1 percent of the 9th grade, 6.3 percent of the high school graduates and 5.6 percent of the undergraduate enrollment. They received 2.9 percent of the bachelor's degrees and 1.6 percent of the doctorates. Completion rates for racial minority students are significantly below those of white students. The following figures show the 1992 Illinois proportions.

NOT INCLUDED

*(Source: Illinois Board of Higher Education.)*

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It is important to note that although the proportion of African American undergraduate enrollment increased from 12.2% to 12.4%, the number of African American undergraduates decreased by 0.2% from 64,555 in 1991 to 64,418 in 1992. During the same period, African American male total enrollment decreased by 0.4%. Findings from initial AEE Project surveys lead to the conclusion that institutional (campus) climate is a major determinant of:

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(1) persistence and graduation for students and

(2) quality and productive experiences for employees.

In recent years, both the country's mood regarding racial issues and the financial support of postsecondary education have been in a state of decline. Persistent problems associated with downturns in the U.S. economy present another adverse influence. The combined impact of these factors on racial and ethnic minorities and other underrepresented groups is perceived by them as a dilution of American society's commitment to educational equity. African American faculty and administrators still comprise only a minute proportion -- less than 2 percent -- of the tenured and senior staff in predominantly white colleges and universities, and enrollment of minority students in four-year institutions has fallen short of anticipated goals. Responses of African American and Hispanic American students to AEE Project surveys confirm that many of them have negative, anemic educational experiences, and that they suffer lower achievements and higher attrition than white students. Women students and faculty, though their presence and participation have improved, still perceive that a glass ceiling inhibits their advancement to upper-level teaching and management positions. Long denied equal access to facilities and programs by people with disabilities is ameliorated by the passage of the “Americans With Disabilities Act", but the slow pace of implementation is disheartening.

The increasing frequency of ugly racial and sexual harassment incidents on a number of college campuses across America has caused many institutions to be more amenable to self-examination and, in some cases, to a revitalization of institutional commitment to educational equity. However, there still exists only a limited and imprecise understanding of the factors that affect the increases and decreases in an institution's enrollment of students from underrepresented groups.

Through the years and, particularly, since 1980 in Illinois, additional legislation has been enacted to achieve the basic goal of eliminating inequities based on race, gender or disability. Significant efforts were launched in the early 1 980s when Senator Richard Newhouse chaired the Illinois Senate Committee on Higher Education and Representative Carol Moseley-Braun served as Assistant Majority Leader. The pace of progress, however, has been slow, prompting the creation of the Joint Legislative Committee on Minority Student Access by Illinois Senate Joint Resolution No. 72 in June, 1987, and its continuation by Senate Joint Resolution No. 130 on July 1, 1988. (Both resolutions were sponsored by Senator Miguel del Valle.) Other statewide committees, including the Joint Committee on Minority Student Achievement and Task Force on Minority Concerns of the Illinois Community Colleges Trustees Association, were also formed to focus on the same issues.

During the 1991 session of the 87th General Assembly, a Subcommittee on Minority Concerns in Education of the House Higher Education Committee was established by Committee Chair Representative Wyvetter Younge. The Subcommittee, Chaired by Representative Arthur Turner, held hearings during the Summer and Fall of 1991 to review and assess the progress since the early 1980s of legislative actions to enhance educational and employment opportunities for members of underrepresented groups. The existence of AEE/ASME studies and reports and the availability of AEE/ASME staff as resource personnel greatly facilitated the development of the report of this subcommittee which was submitted in January 1993.

As an outgrowth of the work of this committee, Rep. Turner introduced House Bill 0895 to create "The Underrepresented Groups Educational Research Act" (a reformulation of a recommendation of the 1984 Newhouse Subcommittee) which would have authorized the distribution of funds for research projects relating to underrepresented groups in education, including research of the type accomplished in the Assessment of Educational Equity (AEE) Project. This bill was not passed. When Rep. Turner was appointed Deputy Majority Leader of the 88th General Assembly, Rep. Younge reestablished the Subcommittee on Minorities in Education and appointed Rep. Coy Pugh as Chairman. Hearings were held in the fall of 1993 and may be continued in the spring of 1994. It is anticipated that the resources of the AEE Project will continue to provide important assistance and information to this Subcommittee.

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A principal goal of the AEE Project is to assess and report on strategies, programs and activities which address educational inequities. During an extended period of severe fiscal constraints on state appropriation spending, funding for projects like AEE has been minimal and spasmodic. This proposal seeks to place the Project on a firm funding basis sufficient, as a minimum, to accomplish goals which require two to four years for data collection and analysis. This funding would enable the continuation of the stalwart and praiseworthy efforts of former and present African American Illinois legislators to promote the reality of equal educational and employment opportunity for all Americans. Though initiated in Illinois, the project now enjoys the cooperation and participation of individuals and institutions from several states.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROJECT STAFF**

DIRECTOR

Provides overall supervision and direction including:

1. Determination of mission, goals and objectives;
2. Determination of staffing levels and selection of staff;
3. Preparation and supervision of budget;
4. Development and dissemination of publications;

serving as principal investigator and fiscal agent.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Management of daily operations;
2. Supervision of subordinate staff, including research associates, graduate assistants,

clerical staff and student workers;

1. Supervision and coordination of the acquisition, compilation and analysis of data;
2. Preparation, review and editing of studies and reports;

review of sampling design and methodology;

1. Provision of technical advice and support to database users;
2. Presentations of findings and results;
3. Collaboration in the writing of project grant proposals.

RESEARCH COORDINATOR

Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Promotion and coordination of research projects related to use of the database; -- coordination of seminars and instruction relating to the use of the database; -- collaboration in the preparation of manuscripts for publication and presentation; -- presentations of findings and results;
2. Collaboration in the writing of project grant proposals.

SENIOR RESEARCH CONSULTANT Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. providing advice on research methods, instrument development, sampling techniques,

data collection, statistical analyses and data interpretations

1. Collaboration in the preparation of manuscripts for publication and presentation;
2. Presentations of findings and results;
3. Collaboration in the writing of project grant proposals; and

serving as co-investigator.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES AND RESEARCH CONSULTANTS Perform tasks and responsibilities as assigned or designated by senior staff.

**PROJECT STAFF**

Dr. Charles E. Morris Director

Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Illinois Board of Regents

Senior Associate, Center for Higher Education

Illinois State University

Senior Associate, Center for Mathematics, Science, and Technology

Dr. Ira L. Neal Associate Director

Associate, Center for Higher Education Illinois State University

Adjunct Professor

Heartland Community College

Dr. Maria E. Canabal Research Coordinator

Associate Professor Department of Home Economics Illinois State University

Dr. Alvin H. Townsel Senior Research Consultant

Senior Consultant

Illinois State Board of Education

Dr. Lilibeth Q. Gumia Research Consultant

Assessment and Evaluation Consultant Illinois State Board of Education

Dr. Jeanne B. Morris Research Consultant

Professor and Assistant Chair

Department of Curriculum and Instruction Illinois State University

Jennifer W. Quinn Research Associate

Doctoral Candidate

Northwestern University

Graduate Research Assistants  
Undergraduate Assistants