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NEWS

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February 18, 2002

For Immediate Release:

MISS BLACK EIU 2002 PAGEANT SET FOR FEB. 23

CHARLESTON – Eastern Illinois University's annual Miss Black EIU Pageant will take place at 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23, in the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union's Grand Ballroom.

This year's pageant marks the end of the reign of Ashonda Simmons, a junior African-American studies major from Chicago.

Tickets for this year's pageant are available from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Friday, Feb. 22, at the University Union box office (West Wing, 2nd floor). Tickets are \$8 in advance, \$12 at the door.

Contestants for the title of Miss Black EIU 2002 are as follows:

- ◆ **Cassandra D. Cherry**, a sophomore accounting major (Spanish minor) and daughter of Clora Cherry of Cahokia;
- ◆ **Kia Che'Vaughn Gowder**, a junior psychology major (African-American studies minor) and daughter of Don and LaConna Gowder of Hazel Crest;
- ◆ **Bithyah C. Graham**, a junior family and consumer sciences major (business administration minor) and daughter of MayRine Graham of Chicago;

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Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

- ◆ **Tiffany Marie Lacy**, a sophomore speech communication major (English minor) from Belleville and daughter of Lisa Lacy of Cahokia; and
- ◆ **Kimberly Lynette Searcy**, a sophomore speech communication (television broadcasting) major and daughter of Gilbert and Cora Drean of Cahokia.

All five contestants will be judged in creative expression, talent, African garment and evening gown competitions, as well as their response to an impromptu question.

Since its inception in 1971, the Miss Black EIU Pageant has become one of Eastern's largest cultural events, paying tribute to African-American women at EIU while instilling a sense of pride, appreciation and cultural awareness in their heritage.

Contestants compete for scholarships, prizes and special awards, in addition to special recognition awards for Miss Congeniality, Miss Togetherness, Miss Enterprise, Miss Ebony and Miss Scholarship.

The public also is invited to attend the Miss Black EIU Coronation Dance, to be held in the University Ballroom immediately following the pageant. Admission is free with the purchase of a pageant ticket or \$3 at the door.

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Editors' Note: Photos of contestants (both group and individual) can be found at <http://www.eiu.edu/~pubaff/blackmiss.htm>, or contact the EIU Office of Media Relations to have one or more of the digital photos e-mailed to your newspaper.