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### 03/02/1992 - Melting Pot Now a Kaleidoscope

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

"MELTING POT" NOW A KALEIDOSCOPE

CHARLESTON, IL--Cultural diversity is good for America and is America today, according to Blandina Cardenas Ramirez, Director of the Office of Minorities in Higher Education of the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C.

Ramirez was at Eastern Illinois University recently as the second speaker in the University's new lecture series, "One Nation: Many Voices."

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"The melting pot' concept of American society has been replaced with the reality that America today is really a 'kaleidoscope of cultures,'" Ramirez told media representatives at a press conference prior to her evening lecture, "and cultural diversity is good for our country."

She noted as economic conditions continue to shrink the "well-to-do" middle-class, the low-income population continues to increase. Today, according to Ramirez, some 40 percent of minorities are classified in the "low-income" category. This means the older, wealthier population is being replaced by one that is younger, poorer, and more culturally diverse.

She said university professors must learn to deal with this diversity and outlined three criteria to increase minority participation in higher education.

First, she said universities must have high expectations from their minority students. Secondly, the students must come to the university with a strong preparation. And thirdly, the university must provide a support system that responds and provides cultural acclamation. These criteria, she said, can lead to higher achievement for the increasing minority population.

Asked which of the presidential candidates offers the most support for this "culturally diverse" society, Ramirez said that currently none of the candidates are addressing the situation. But overall, she is encouraged by the realization that change must come. She says society is transforming by its continuing pursuit of inclusion, that is society is increasingly including and accepting differences in race, gender, and nationality of its population.

"We truly live in a 'global community'" she said, "and cultural diversity is not limited to the boundaries of the United States."

The lecture series, sponsored by Eastern's Cultural Diversity Professorship Committee and the Women's Studies Council, is designed to celebrate the contributions different groups have made to the mosaic of American society.

In her current position, Ramirez is responsible for monitoring federal policy and problematic activities which affect the population of minorities in higher education. She is now serving her fifth year of a six year term. She is also now serving her fifth year of a six year term on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.