

Board Meeting
March 7, 2013

AWARD HONORARY DEGREE, CHICAGO

Action: Award Honorary Doctorate Degree

Funding: No New Funding Required

The Senate at the Chicago campus has nominated the following person for conferral of honorary degree at Commencement exercises in May 2013. The Chancellor, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Vice President, University of Illinois, recommends approval of this nomination.

Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), has been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire professional life. Under her leadership, the CDF has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families--the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

The mission of the Children's Defense Fund is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life, and consequently, a successful passage to adulthood, with the help of caring families and communities. Mrs. Edelman, a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School, began her career in the mid-60s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Office in Jackson, Mississippi.

In 1968, she moved to Washington, D.C., as counsel for the Poor People's Campaign that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began before his death. She founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the CDF. For two years she served as the Director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and in 1973 began the Children's Defense Fund.

Mrs. Edelman served on the Board of Trustees of Spelman College which she chaired from 1976 to 1987 and was the first woman elected by alumni as a member of the Yale University Corporation on which she served from 1971 to 1977. She has received over one hundred honorary degrees and many awards including the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize, the Heinz Award, and a MacArthur Foundation Prize Fellowship.

In 2000, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, and the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award for her writings which include eight books: *Families in Peril: An Agenda for Social Change*; *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours*; *Guide My Feet: Meditations and Prayers on Loving and Working for Children*; *Stand for Children*; *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*; *Hold My Hand: Prayers for Building a Movement to Leave No Child Behind*; *I'm Your Child, God: Prayers for Our Children*; and *I Can Make a Difference: A Treasury to Inspire Our Children*.

Marian Wright Edelman's achievements complement the Chicago campus' urban mission and our focus on academic excellence, access, and success.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The President of the University concurs with this recommendation.