



**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contacts: Lisa Todorovich
434.243.4096; ltodorovich@virginia.edu
Kim Curtis
434.243.2985; kcurtis@virginia.edu
<http://www.millercenter.org>

Higher Education Policy Expert Blenda Wilson Named Compton Visiting Scholar at the Miller Center

SEPT. 11, 2007 — The Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia has named Blenda J. Wilson, Ph.D., a Compton Visiting Scholar. During her one-year appointment beginning in Fall 2007, Dr. Wilson will work with the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges to develop and implement a Miller Center conference on higher education governance, and will plan future events and initiatives on education. She will also have the opportunity to interact with University of Virginia faculty and students who are involved with national education issues.

A nationally known speaker on higher education policy issues, Dr. Wilson served as the first President and Chief Executive Officer of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (1999–2006). The Foundation, established in 1998, is New England’s largest public charity dedicated to improving academic achievement for underserved communities. During her seven years as its president, the Foundation distributed more than \$80 million in grants to educational institutions and non-profit organizations to improve access to college. Dr. Wilson is a former chair of the American Association of Higher Education and was the first woman to chair the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, where she served on the board of directors from 2003 to 2006.

“Dr. Blenda Wilson’s impressive track record on complicated issues of education policy is an extraordinary resource for the Miller Center and the University of Virginia,” said Miller Center Director Gerald L. Baliles. “Her experience, practical approach, and creativity with regard to these matters will allow us to explore new spheres of governance. We are delighted that she has agreed to join us, and look forward to the work that the higher education conference will produce.”

In Spring 2008, the Miller Center will cosponsor a meeting with the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges about broad national purposes of higher education. A select audience of current and former governors, legislators, trustees, and college executives will examine how higher education contributes to the values of American democracy and its economy. The participants will explore how these and other important contributions of higher education are, and can be, addressed through new models of governance and leadership, and how governance and leadership can address

specific concerns – such as costs, transparency, and quality – that ensure the public’s trust and investment.

“The global ‘knowledge economy’ mandates that virtually all Americans should have some form of postsecondary educational attainment,” said Dr. Wilson. “The leaders of public higher education and the governance mechanisms that shape public policy must rise to that challenge.”

During Dr. Wilson’s tenure as President of California State University, Northridge (1992–1999), she enacted a strategic plan to better serve the populations of the San Fernando Valley, and led the University’s recovery from the 1994 Northridge earthquake. In 1988, she became Chancellor of the University of Michigan, Dearborn – the first woman to head a four-year higher education institution in the state – and was widely recognized for her outreach to Dearborn’s Arab-American community and Detroit’s African-American community. Before that, she was Executive Director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, serving in the governor’s cabinet and advocating for more efficiently organizing higher education in the state in a plan that became law in 1985.

Dr. Wilson was the first vice president for effective sector management at Independent Sector (1982–1984), a nonpartisan coalition of approximately 600 organizations that leads, strengthens, and mobilizes the charitable community. She served as Senior Associate Dean at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education (1972–1982), and began her career in higher education administration at Rutgers University in 1969.

She has received honorary doctorate degrees from more than 25 colleges and universities, including Cedar Crest College, Rutgers University, The University of Massachusetts, Brandeis University and Boston College. Dr. Wilson currently serves on the Boards of Trustees of Boston College and Union Theological Seminary, the Board of Directors of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the Board of Directors of HERS (Higher Education Resource Services), and the boards of Boston After School and Beyond, Boston College, and Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses. She is a Director of Medco Health Solutions.

Dr. Wilson earned a bachelor's degree in English and secondary education at Cedar Crest College, a master's in education at Seton Hall University, and a Ph.D. in higher education administration at Boston College.

Founded in 1975, the Miller Center of Public Affairs is a leading nonpartisan public policy institution that aims to fulfill Jefferson’s public service mission by serving as a national meeting place for engaged citizens, scholars, students, media representatives and government officials to research, reflect, and report on issues of national importance to the governance of the United States, with special attention to the central role and history of the presidency.

<http://www.millercenter.org>

#####