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CONTACT: Will Kilburn 617-287-5317

UMass Boston Professor to Present Minority Leadership Study

A team of political scientists recently completed the Gender and Multi-Cultural Leadership Project, an exploration into how race and gender affects 21st century politics. They will present their findings on Wednesday, November 7 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

The principal investigators are Carol Hardy-Fanta, Director of the Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston; Christine Marie Sierra, University of New Mexico; Dianne M. Pinderhughes, University of Notre Dame; and Pei-te Lien, University of California-Santa Barbara.

The survey is, to date, the nation's most comprehensive multiracial, multi-office national survey of Black, Latino, Asian and American Indian elected officials and how they vote on key issues such as immigration, social policy, and the war in Iraq.

The researchers interviewed 1,354 officials, with slightly more than half the respondents being Black/African American, over one-third Latino/a, seven percent Asian and two percent American Indian.

Dr. Hardy-Fanta states, "At a time when we see an African American man, a Latino man, and a woman running for President, and women of color make up larger percentages of elected officials of color than white women do of white elected officials, we must redefine what we think of as leaders in the 21st century. The political landscape is changing. Focusing on white men as the norm does not capture the future of governance."

Some findings:

- Women of color make up about one-third of all elected officials of color – a substantially higher proportion than white women do of white elected officials.
- Eight in ten elected officials of color agreed with the statement, "The US should bring its troops home from Iraq as soon as possible."
- Over half of all elected officials of color oppose the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. More than four times as many teachers who are elected officials of color strongly oppose No Child Left Behind than those who strongly favor it. The survey also revealed strong opposition to NCLB among school board members of color (59 percent).
- The strongest opposition to No Child Left Behind is among state legislators of color, with more than 70 percent opposed or strongly opposed.

- The vast majority, 79 percent, of elected officials of color support Roe v. Wade.
- Asian women officials at 93 percent lead the way in supporting right to an abortion as do Black women officials at 86 percent.
- Significantly more women, 63 percent, than men, 54 percent, agreed with the statement, “By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a private decision to be made with her physician.”
- Both male and female elected officials of color showed strong support for renewal of the 2007 Extension of the Voting Rights Act.
- Strong support across racial and gender groups was expressed for the Voting Rights Act provision to send federal observers to polling places where electoral discrimination based on race or color is suspected.

Full details of the findings will be available on the Gender and Multi-Cultural Leadership Project Web site, www.gmcl.org, on November 7.

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