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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

On Saturday, April 8, 2006, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the Purdue Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff will host its 31st Annual Awards Program. This year's event will feature remarks by Purdue University Provost Sally Mason, and a keynote speech by the Honorable Julia M. Carson, of the United States House of Representatives (D-IN). The Program will celebrate the academic achievements and leadership accomplishments of over 160 African American undergraduate students.

Besides the longevity of the event, the Black Caucus Awards Program is unique at Purdue because it is the only awards program sponsored directly by faculty and staff for students across all departments on the campus, awarding certificates, gifts, and special awards. Apart from graduation, this event attracts one of the largest gatherings of African American families at Purdue University. The Awards Program will take place in the Purdue Memorial Union North Ballroom, on the West Lafayette, IN campus.

All students meeting grade-point criteria will receive certificates and gifts; those earning the highest grade-point averages will receive cash prizes. One student will receive the Caucus' "Clara Bell Award," presented annually to the African American student with the best academic record in Nursing or the health sciences. The Award is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Clara Bell, a colleague from Purdue's School of Nursing. Students also will be recognized for outstanding service and leadership activities. The Caucus also will honor a "Parent of the Year," and a "Department/Unit of the Year."

Rep. Julia Carson, keynote speaker for the event, represents the 7th Congressional District of Indiana, and is the first woman and first African American ever sent to Congress from Indianapolis. Elected to the House in 1996 following 24 years of elected service in state and local government. A member of the House Financial Services Committee, Rep. Carson is well-known for sponsoring the 1999 legislation authorizing a Congressional Gold Medal for the late Civil Rights leader Rosa Parks.

Members and friends of the Purdue Black Caucus of Faculty and Staff emphasize (1) congratulations to the students for their achievement, and acknowledgement of the special challenges many of them face as students of color; (2) the obligations students have to "give back" to their families, communities, and other students; (3) involvement with African American faculty, staff, and student organizations as important predictors of student persistence/retention and success; and, (4) a warm opportunity to meet and thank the parents who sent their children to the University.