



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Illinois State University

Resolution Number 2026.10/55

Approval to Award Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters to Michelle Williams

Resolution

Whereas, Illinois State University recognizes individuals of exceptional achievement whose professional accomplishments, leadership, and service reflect the highest ideals of the University, and

Whereas, the conferral of an honorary degree represents one of the University's most distinguished forms of recognition, honoring individuals whose contributions embody the institution's core values, and

Whereas, the President of Illinois State University has recommended that alum Michelle Williams, global artist and mental health advocate, and former member of Destiny's Child, be recognized with an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.) for her exceptional contributions to and impact on society that aligns with the mission and values of Illinois State University, and

Whereas, pursuant to university policy, the recommendation has been reviewed and supported by the Honorary Degree Committee and the Academic Senate and President Tarhule, and

Whereas, Williams' career and professional accomplishments reflect a strong alignment with the University's mission to empower today's students to become tomorrow's professionals, to build resilient communities, and to advance a student-centered education, and

Whereas, through her career as a Grammy Award-winning singer, songwriter, author, actress, mental health advocate, entrepreneur, and member of recording group Destiny's Child, Williams serves as a role model to our students and an example of the value of an Illinois State University's education.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees hereby approves the awarding of the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, and

Be it further resolved that this honorary degree shall be conferred in May 2027 during the University's Commencement Ceremonies, where Williams will be formally recognized for distinguished achievement and contributions, and

Be it further resolved that the President of Illinois State University is authorized to take all actions necessary to implement this resolution and to extend an official invitation to Williams on behalf of the University.

For Office of the President use only:

Board Action on _____
Motion by _____
Second by _____
Vote _____ Yeas, _____ Nays

ATTEST: Board Action, October 23, 2026

Secretary / Chairperson

Board of Trustees
Illinois State University
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Michelle Williams is an alum and a Grammy Award-winning singer, songwriter, author, actress, mental health advocate, entrepreneur, and members of one of the most successful recording groups of all time, Destiny's Child. Widely recognized for her versatility, she has built a distinguished career spanning music, theater, television, and publishing, earning acclaim for both her artistic excellence and cultural impact.

On stage, Williams has delivered standout performances, most notably, her critically acclaimed portrayal of Roxie Hart in *Chicago* on Broadway. She currently stars as Viola Van Horn in *Death Becomes Her* on Broadway in New York, where she continues to receive strong reviews for her dynamic and commanding performance, further solidifying her presence in the theater world.

Beyond her artistic accomplishments, Williams is a leading voice in mental health advocacy. Open about her personal experience with depression, she has helped normalize conversations around mental wellness, particularly within communities where stigma has historically limited dialogue. Her memoir, *Checking In: How Getting Real About Depression Saved My Life – and Can Save Yours*, offers a candid account of her journey and serves as a resource for those navigating similar challenges. She expanded this work through her guided journal, *The Daily Check-In: A 60-Day Journey to Finding Your Strength, Faith, and Wholeness*, as well as her podcast, *Checking In*, where she engages in thoughtful conversations centered on mental health, faith, and personal growth.