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## Nearly \$300,000 in Grants Allows EIU To Expand Teacher Support Programs

*Jan-16-2004*

Eastern Illinois University - one of the state's top producers of elementary, junior high and high school teachers - prides itself on its efforts to lend post-graduate support and mentoring to its alumni and others in their work in the classroom.

And now, thanks to generous financial support from federal sources and the confidence of the Illinois Board of Higher Education in Eastern's work, those efforts will expand during the coming year.

The "Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program," authorized under the federal "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," was designed to support professional development activities for our nation's teachers. By increasing and improving teachers' knowledge in core academic areas, students, too, would reap educational rewards.

Federal monies earmarked for the state of Illinois were primarily distributed to the Illinois State Board of Education (97.5 percent), who, in turn, dispersed the funds as grants to elementary and secondary schools. The Illinois Board of Higher Education, responsible for the remaining 2.5 percent of Illinois' allotment, was charged with distributing that portion to "eligible partnerships," including public universities and their divisions that "prepare teachers and principals."

The IBHE received 40 proposals from "eligible partnerships" requesting a total of \$10.3 million in funding. Evaluations of those proposals by IBHE staff and a panel of 12 external "peer reviewers" occurred, and 26 of those proposals were recommended, and approved, to share the \$5.3 million in available funds.

Three of those proposals, submitted by Eastern's College of Education and Professional Studies and totaling \$286,000, will allow the university to develop new mentoring programs while expanding on existing ones.

Nick Osborne, chair of the college's Department of Educational Administration, will use the largest of the three grants -- \$110,000 - to provide instruction and mentoring to elementary/secondary principals. School administrators - new ones, in particular - will benefit via mentoring and induction activities, mentor training and clinical training (including round table seminars with peers) which focuses on instructional leadership.

As administrators become more highly trained to provide instructional support to their teachers, it is expected students, too, will see the benefits of enhanced learning, thus bringing about a win-win-win situation for participating schools.

A second grant, totaling \$95,000, will provide funding for Project TEAMS (Technological Enhancements and Applications in Math and Science), designed to extend and expand teachers' knowledge base, skill development and instructional effectiveness in the sciences and mathematics.

Marylin Lisowski, a professor in Eastern's Department of Early Childhood, Elementary and Middle Level Education, will join forces with Robert Williams, a Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville faculty member, in training math and science teams from low-performing and low-income schools of rural isolated areas in south and east central Illinois. In-depth training sessions will focus on the integration of science concepts with mathematical problem-solving and data analysis techniques that are appropriately enhanced with the latest technological applications and tools, such as Probeware and digital cameras.

Working side-by-side with scientists, field experts and business and industry partners, program participants will produce an electronic field guide and dedicated Web site presenting information that can be accessed, referenced and expanded by other students and scientists in Illinois and local communities.

The third grant, administered by Douglas Bower, associate dean, and totaling \$81,000, will allow Eastern's College of Education and Professional Studies to continue its support to beginning teachers. Many school districts in east central and southeastern Illinois historically have had difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers - especially in high-need disciplines such as math and science. EIU's "Regional Beginning Teacher Induction Program" will provide a "long-term, systematic strategy" for providing mentoring and professional development to individuals in the early years of their teaching careers.

Success of this program relies on the already-established partnership between EIU, seven Regional Offices of Education and numerous high-need schools building on previous efforts to support novice teachers.