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## From President Perry: A Letter to the University Community

Jan-15-2008

Dear Members of the Campus Community:

I am writing to report to the campus my conclusions from the series of just over forty meetings I had with various groups of faculty, staff, students, and university friends from August through November. My objective was to listen and learn. The participation of so many people, about 1,000, was gratifying to me and educational for me. My sincere thanks go out to all who participated.

In the beginning of this process, the letter I sent to student leaders, the faculty, and the staff mentioned my desire for EIU to be best of class and first choice, and to discover what that would mean for us. Participants in the meetings were forthright in telling me in which areas they believed we were already arguably best of class or first choice. They were equally candid in discussing needs and areas in which they believed we needed to do better. Overall the comments made, coupled with my other observations and analyses since arriving in July, enabled me to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to Eastern's advancement. My conclusions with regard to our values, strategic objectives, potential, priorities, and resources were drawn from the content of the meetings.

**Values:** The most important result of the meetings was a much better understanding on my part of the values of the Eastern community. I consistently heard a strong belief in four underlying values which are the foundation of the commitment I see every day in our activities and programs:

We value excellence, personal relationships, accessibility to an EIU education, and service.

**Strategic Objectives:** The four values directly support four strategic objectives which will guide our future actions:

- Uphold excellence in all we do.
- Strengthen the EIU personal experience for all members of the EIU community and all whom we serve.
- Enhance accessibility and affordability of an EIU education.
- Support service to each other and to our community, region, state, nation, and world.

**Potential:** Our students will upon graduation begin a lifelong learning journey, participate in a knowledge economy, serve in a volunteer society, and compete in a global arena. To prepare them, we must provide the best in academic and personal development. EIU is a strong academic institution which has traditionally provided a strong higher education experience with a distinct personal dimension for our students, and it will continue to be so. I believe that with our underlying values and directly related strategic objectives above in place, and consistent with our mission statement that affirms a student-centered campus culture, we can aspire to more:

Eastern Illinois University can be the best in the nation in the integrated academic and personal development of students.

This overall goal will be our guide and frame our actions going forward. By becoming best of all in integrating the academic and personal development of our students, best of class in this dimension is assured. As best of class, we will become first choice for those individuals seeking such an environment for their student, faculty, or staff experience in higher education. Achieving this overall goal will take time, and it will occur program by program. We have the foundation on which to build. We have the people equal to the task. Each of us has a role to play and a contribution to make. At Eastern, everyone is engaged in making the Eastern environment one in which students can thrive.

**Priorities:** In order to move forward in a focused way, I am establishing five university-wide priorities in support of the academic and personal development of our students:

- Enhance support for excellence in faculty scholarship and teaching, in particular faculty-mentored undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative activities.
- Enhance service and leadership opportunities for students.
- Enhance fine arts programming and outreach.
- Enhance study abroad opportunities.
- Enhance honors programs.

The benefits of success in these priority areas will be shared by faculty, staff, and students across campus.



EIU President William L. Perry

**Resources:** In several of our meetings, individuals raised the issue of resource development and investment. I heard many say we will need to invest in faculty, staff, students, fundraising, marketing, and sustainable operations. I agree, and surely success depends upon the careful investment of resources brought to bear from local, state, and federal sources, private support, grants, internal budgeting, and allocation of cost savings. Beginning this spring, we will be investing in the five program priorities listed above and in the faculty, staff, and students involved in those programs. We will be investing in fundraising for the five priorities listed above, for merit and need-based scholarships to enhance affordability, and for bricks-and-mortar projects. We will invest in marketing our efforts and results to the university's internal and external constituents. And we will invest in sustainable operations that lead to cost savings and cost avoidance. A primary goal for me is to increase the university's resource base to support our progress.

**Next Steps:** As the spring semester unfolds, the vice presidents will be working with their divisions to discuss plans, budgets, innovations, and actions in support of our overall objective of being the best in the nation in integrating the academic and personal development of students. I intend for those discussions to include individual input at the departmental level. Reaching our goal will require everyone's contributions and efforts. I am encouraging interdivision discussions for projects or actions that will involve or be supported by individuals in more than one vice presidential area.

This is an exciting time to be at Eastern Illinois University. We are a university which honors its past and embraces its future. Each of us, day in and day out, affects the university's future. Let us each resolve to make ourselves the best we can be as contributors to the academic and personal development of our students, and let us resolve as a university community to work together to that same end. Let us work together, confident of success, so that when asked our part in the success, each can say, "Individually, I made a contribution; together, we made a difference for our students, our university, and our society." I look forward to working with you to advance our university.

Sincerely,  
William L. Perry  
President