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Eastern Illinois University

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EIU Faculty Development program receives national award

Too often, universities' new faculty members tackle a teaching role at an unfamiliar campus feeling lost and completely on their own.

That is not a problem at Eastern Illinois University, where a rapidly growing Faculty Development program reaches out to new employees to encourage and support them in all facets of their lives, professional and personal.

The program, which started forming in 2002, has been so revolutionary that it was one of only eight institutions to be awarded a 2006 Innovation Award from the Professional and Organizational Development Network. Specifically, the POD Network award lauds EIU's new-faculty orientation program and its "wholesome professor" theme, as well as its Faculty Appreciation Day event.

"New-faculty orientation has been very rewarding," said Mildred Pearson, director of EIU Faculty Development. "It's an honor that our work has been recognized because it has been a collaborative effort from a

group of tenacious, dedicated and supportive administrators, faculty and staff to better serve our students. This award honors the entire EIU family."

During the first day of the new-faculty orientation program, new faculty members tour various locations and meet key people on campus to familiarize them with EIU. The day ends with a workout at the Student Recreation Center, thanks to a complimentary one-semester pass.

The workout is part of Faculty Development's "wholesome professor" theme, which encourages faculty members to be "physically fit, mentally ready, emotionally healthy, scholarly prepared and socially engaged."

To make new employees become acclimated to the community, the orientation also includes a "partners in action" program, in which local businesses donate gift certificates, coupons and gifts, to the tune of more than \$500 for each of about 50 new faculty members.

"This helps to convey that we are

a faculty-friendly institution," Pearson said.

As an extension of those efforts, the office hosts a Faculty Appreciation Day, which provides an evening of food and fun for faculty members and their families.

The role of Faculty Development extends to veteran faculty members as well, with programs slated throughout the year to encourage discussion and ongoing learning.

"Learning doesn't end once you earn a degree," said William Weber, associate vice president for academic affairs. "Faculty members work to improve their skills both in their classrooms and in their disciplines."

"It's great that we have this external recognition," Weber said of the POD Network award. "It shows that our Faculty Development area is providing quality programming to address faculty needs."

"Sometimes you do things just because your heart knows they're right," Pearson said. "This award validates those feelings and encourages us to continue forward."



Mildred Pearson, director of EIU Faculty Development