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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SHEPHERD RETIRES

CHARLESTON, IL--Maurice Shepherd, former associate professor of chemistry and student teaching at Eastern Illinois University, has dedicated his skills and ingenuity during his long teaching career to making better chemistry and physics teachers through continued training.

Although he retired at the end of the fall semester, Shepherd will remain involved in Eastern's teaching program as he will teach in the chemistry department on a half-time basis every fall.

As the former chemistry coordinator of the summer term Master of Science in Education program, Shepherd has helped make earning a master's degree much easier for teachers employed during the regular school year. The program was designed so that teachers can earn their degrees in three or four summers.

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A shortage of chemistry and physics teachers exists, said Shepherd, because larger salaries are offered in industrial fields. "By providing re-training for individuals to become better qualified to teach chemistry and physics, we can help alleviate the shortage," he added.

"Through this program, the teachers can prepare themselves for teaching new advances in chemistry to their own students," Shepherd said. "In one of my courses, Advanced Methods of Teaching High School Chemistry, they have an opportunity to share their own methods that have proven to work for them."

As the past president of the Illinois Association of Chemistry Teachers, with a membership of more than 300 high school and university chemistry teachers, Shepherd has widened his influence past Eastern's physical science building.

"Our purpose is to learn from each other through paper presentations and by sharing ideas on classroom activities and labs," he said.

Shepherd says he enjoys seeing his students develop into teachers with their own special styles of teaching. In his 26-year career at Eastern, he has seen more than 200 chemistry and physics teachers graduate with undergraduate and graduate degrees. Before coming to Eastern, he taught chemistry and physics for seven years at Mattoon and Olney high schools.

"Eastern is one of the leading producers of science teachers in the state," Shepherd said. Last year, only 30 chemistry teachers became certified in the entire state. Eastern graduated four of them.

To keep those teachers up-to-date on new discoveries and teaching methods, Shepherd has conducted numerous science and science safety workshops for elementary and high school teachers.

Aside from challenging teachers to become better at their profession, Shepherd created a contest to challenge young students in their knowledge of chemistry. For the past 18 years, area high schools have sent their best chemistry students to Eastern for a competitive test on chemistry concepts and to attend a presentation by a professional in the field.

Involvement in education is a family affair for Shepherd. His wife, Rose Mary, is currently serving her second term as Regional Superintendent of Schools for a six-county region, and his daughter, Donna, is a home economics teacher at Mulberry Grove High School.