

1-21-1997

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "01/21/1997 - Charleston-Mattoon Area Residents Reflect on First Year as Trustees of EIU Board" (1997). 1997. 24.

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97-18

January 21, 1997

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CHARLESTON-MATTOON AREA RESIDENTS REFLECT ON FIRST YEAR AS
TRUSTEES OF EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY BOARD

CHARLESTON -- Retired Charleston physician Mack W. Hollowell and Mattoon area realtor Keith Branson know the public universities in the state will have to work hard this spring to attract the attention of Illinois lawmakers already focused on the hot issue of adequately funding elementary and secondary schools.

Hollowell, the first chairman of Eastern Illinois University's Board of Trustees, said he and Branson and their fellow trustees are ready for the challenge in 1997 after a "building" year that saw the establishment of new working relationships in the revamped higher education system.

"It has been a very interesting year," said Hollowell. "We've organized the board and learned how to operate under this new system of governance."

"It has been a learning experience for me," said Branson. "It is a challenge with this diverse board but our common goal has been from the beginning to keep Eastern a fine learning institution. I believe we've pulled together to make this happen."

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TRUSTEES

Branson, 64, like six of the seven trustees, is new to Eastern's board. Hollowell was the only one of the seven appointed by Governor Edgar who had served on the university's governing board prior to the reorganization of Illinois public higher education in 1995. The new board began its term a year ago this month.

At that time, both Hollowell and Branson viewed the adequate funding of Eastern as a top priority of the new board. They still do and are delighted that Eastern was recommended for the highest percentage budget increase of all the public universities for next year. As part of that proposed budget, Eastern would receive approximately \$350,000 for deferred maintenance, another priority of theirs, shared by the rest of the board.

Hollowell and Branson point to Eastern's continued strong academic reputation and record enrollments as evidence of a smooth transition to a new board. Among board accomplishments this past year, they cite the signing of a three-year contract with Eastern's faculty union that provides pay increases designed to bring EIU salaries in line with those at peer institutions.

Under the new board, Eastern also raised admission standards and supported the passage of legislation that allows universities to retain their tuition revenues in local accounts. The board approved a \$3.8 million energy conservation overhaul that will save at least \$380,000 per year in utility costs, approved purchasing a new telecommunications system that lowered student long-distance charges and

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upgraded outdated equipment, and supported exploration of a campus-based child care center.

Branson said one of the board's most satisfying efforts was working with Eastern students to finance 11 campus improvement projects, including a food court, Internet access in the dorms and 24-hour computer labs. Students voted to repay any debt taken on by the board for the projects through student fee increases.

Hollowell has resided in Charleston for 50 years and served as president of the Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center. In 1995, Dr. Hollowell was named as a member of the "Centennial 100," a group consisting of 100 individuals who had a significant impact on the university during its first century.

Branson was born and raised in Mattoon, where he works part-time now for Coldwell-Banker Classic Real Estate. He previously owned his own real estate company for 28 years.

The two trustees are looking forward to beginning their second year on Eastern's board. The next board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 27.

"I believe this is a progressive board," said Hollowell. "We've worked hard this past year to help solve some of the problems facing the university. We will do the same in 1997."