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April 8, 2003

For Immediate Release:

EIU TRUSTEES TO LOOK TOWARD DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FOR FURNITURE NEEDS

CHARLESTON – It sounds like a perfect win-win situation for two state agencies.

When Eastern Illinois University's Board of Trustees meets next week, members will consider a purchase agreement between the university and the Illinois Department of Corrections that would leave students living in university housing with the furniture they've been yearning for.

The meeting, set to begin at **10 a.m.** Monday, April 14, will take place in the Grand Ballroom of the University Union.

Under a proposed 10-year agreement, furniture in each residence hall room would be replaced as funding, made possible through room and board fees, becomes available. The new furniture, built by IDOC inmates, would be of wood construction and be designed to allow students the ability to move, stack and interchange the furniture as needed in order to adjust to their individual needs.

Under the terms of the agreement, the furniture would have a 25-year warranty, and the cost would not exceed \$10 million during the 10-year period.

According to Mark Hudson, director of Eastern's Office of Housing and Dining Services, the current furniture located in the university's residence halls is original, some dating back 40 years or more. The pieces offer little-to-no flexibility as far as placement goes, he said, adding that a recent student satisfaction survey indicated that 65 percent of students living in residence halls would be willing to pay increased housing fees if it meant getting more up-to-date and versatile furniture.

If approved, the agreement would provide the added attractions of keeping state money within the state system, while also allowing the Department of Corrections the opportunity to further tap into higher education as a client for its wares.

Trustees also will consider the purchase of digital equipment needed to refurbish the university's WEIU-TV mobile production van, including cables, headsets, patch cords, cameras, a generator, digital converters, modules, video recorders, monitor assemblies, amplifiers, controllers, etc.

Funding for the \$300,000 purchase would come from Illinois' Capital Development Board.

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FURNITURE NEEDS

A third purchase proposal, totaling \$443,500, would allow for the installation of wet-pipe fire protection sprinkler systems in five apartment-style buildings in Eastern's University Court. The cost includes new water services for each of the buildings, as well as all necessary asbestos abatement, with work to take place during the summer months.

Other action planned by trustees includes the election of officers, the setting of the 2004 meeting calendar and tenure recommendations.