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February 15, 1994

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MINORITY ENROLLMENT SHOWS STABILITY

CHARLESTON, IL--Minority enrollment at Eastern Illinois University for the spring semester shows stability in numbers and a pattern of increased retention.

That is the assessment of EIU Director of Minority Affairs Johnetta Jones who said figures compiled by the Office of Planning and Public Affairs show a spring enrollment of 764 minority students, the second highest spring enrollment recorded over the past 15 years. Last spring's enrollment of 773 minority students was the 15-year high.

Minority students enrolled this spring comprise 6.9 percent of the total enrollment (10,975 on- and off-campus students), compared to 7.1 percent a year ago. When the minority student population is combined with the international student population, they comprise 7.9 percent of the total spring enrollment, the same as last spring.

"The current minority enrollment," Jones said, "reflects a larger Hispanic and Asian population and a smaller black population compared to last spring."

The Hispanic and Asian populations grew from 115 and 70 to 144 and 81, respectively. The number of blacks, 522, is down from 569 last spring, while the American Indian/Alaskan Native population, 17, remains consistent with last

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spring's 19 students.

Jones said the slight drop in black students is the result of a larger than average black fall graduating class. "We are a victim of our own success this year in that our students are staying here through graduation."

She noted that quite a few of the 35 black students who graduated in the fall were among the first group of students to complete the university's Partnerships for Excellence program, which encourages minority high school students to go to college.

The program allows students to spend a portion of their summer vacation on Eastern's campus, taking courses for high school or college credit. More than 90 percent of past senior program participants have gone on to community colleges or four-year universities. Fourteen of those taking the summer program in 1992 went on to enroll at Eastern for the fall 1993 semester.

Jones said a program that has been particularly successful in retaining students is Eastern's Peer Helper program. Started by the Afro-American Studies program, Peer Helper was designed to ease the transition of black freshmen and transfer students to Eastern's campus during their first semester. The program, now sponsored by the Minority Affairs Office, has been expanded to include all minority students.

One indication of the success of the program is reflected in improved retention rates of first-time minority freshmen who return as sophomores. The return

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MINORITY ENROLLMENT

rate has increased from 56.2 percent in fall 1984 to 84.3 percent in fall 1992--well above the normal 55 percent retention rate. The university also has been successful in doubling its minority graduation rate, which now stands at 38 percent, second highest among Illinois public universities. The national average is 25 percent.

To continue the upward trend in retention rates, Jones said a pilot program will be introduced next fall which will match upper-division minority students with faculty mentors. Also under discussion is the possible introduction of a supplemental instruction program for minority students where students who have previously completed a course will lead study sessions with students who are currently enrolled in the subject.