

1-27-1997

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "01/27/1997 - EIU Trustees Authorize Campus Improvement Bond Issue" (1997). 1997. 39.

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97-34

January 27, 1997

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU TRUSTEES AUTHORIZE CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT BOND ISSUE

CHARLESTON -- The Eastern Illinois University campus will see \$9.5 million in projects which will enhance student life at the university, as a result of action taken today by Eastern's Board of Trustees.

Eastern's Board of Trustees voted at its regular meeting in Charleston on Monday to authorize issuance of \$13.2 million in revenue bonds to finance the 11 major projects and enable the restructuring of some high-interest existing debt.

At the same time, trustees approved the establishment of a new \$50 per semester student fee to secure the bond issue, an action supported by 72 percent of the students who voted in a referendum on the issue last November.

"These student-supported and funded campus improvements are going to help Eastern become an even better institution and will be a major tool for recruiting and retaining students," said Vice President for Student Affairs Lou Hencken.

The proposal for the campus improvement projects originated in the student-organized Campus Improvement Task Force formed last spring.

Student Body President Jason Anselment, task force spokesperson, gave

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board members an overview of the group's activities leading up to the campus improvement referendum in November. Informational meetings were held with at least 3,000 students and some 5,000 brochures detailing the proposed projects were distributed.

Board Chairman Mack W. Hollowell noted that roughly the same percentage of freshmen and sophomores (50 percent) as juniors, seniors and graduate students voted on the referendum, "which says something about the validity of the vote." Students passed the referendum by a 885 to 348 vote.

The list of campus improvement projects includes a 24-hour computer lab, an addition to the Clinical Services Building, a campus debit-card system, pilot project funding for direct Internet access for rooms in at least one residence hall, a paved two-mile recreational path, various campus exterior appearance projects, air conditioning in the residence halls and a food court.

Planning and design on the first projects is expected to begin in early 1997. The campus improvement fee would be assessed for a period of 20 years.

Even with the new campus improvement fee, Eastern's tuition, fees, and room and board costs are the lowest among the eight public, residential universities in Illinois.

The board also approved a three-year contract and one-year wage agreement with 201 employee members of AFSCME Local #981 Clerical/Technical Union.

The agreement calls for most unit employees to receive an across-the-board

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sixty cents (\$.60) per hour increase in base pay, retroactive to July 1. In addition, approximately 12 employees in the bargaining unit will receive a longevity increase of 1.5 percent when they reach 5, 10, 15 or 20 continuous years in their classification with the university.

The first step toward a major upgrade of the university's networking capabilities was authorized following board approval of \$400,000 in new network electronics equipment for the newly renovated Buzzard Building and the Student Services Building. The equipment will provide for high speed, building-to-building communications over the university's existing fiber optic network, improving the capacity for multimedia applications. The work will be split between Centron Systems, Inc., Schaumburg, which has installed similar network equipment in the Sears Tower in Chicago, and Anixter, Inc., Bloomington.

In other action, the board approved administrative leave (followed by retirement) for James Quivey, chair of the English department, from Oct. 16, 1997 through April 15, 1998. Quivey has been at Eastern since 1969.

Trustees reviewed reports on Eastern's Fiscal Year 1998 budget recommendation from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which calls for a 5.7 percent increase, the highest recommended for any public university.

Trustees also reviewed the latest figures on financial aid at Eastern. The report shows that in FY 1996, approximately 75 percent of Eastern's student body received some form of financial assistance. Financial aid in FY 1996 totaled

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\$35,369,421, up slightly over the year before that.

Hencken said applications for next fall are up 9 percent for freshmen and 8.5 percent for transfer students.

The next board meeting is scheduled for April 21.