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February 16, 1994

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU TO HOLD BLACK EXPO

CHARLESTON, IL--A business development specialist, a Charleston business owner and an Environmental Protection Agency executive will team-up to discuss opportunities for minorities in business and government at Eastern Illinois University's first Black Expo Friday (Feb. 18).

"The Black Expo, featuring presentations by three minority business professionals, is intended to inform minorities, in particular, about what job opportunities exist for them in business and government. It also is an excellent opportunity to bring minority students together with minorities who are employed in leadership positions and can share their pathways to success," said Dennis Jones, coordinator of the Black Expo.

All three Black Expo presentations, held in conjunction with other Black History Month activities at the university, are free and open to the public.

Valerie Ross of Springfield, a business development specialist with the U.S. Small Business Administration, will begin the Expo with a talk on minority opportunities with the SBA at 2:30 p.m. Friday in the Charleston/Mattoon Room in the University

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Union.

Ross is responsible for managing resources, such as Small Business Development Centers and Small Business Institutes which provide direct assistance to business owners.

In 1986, Ross was appointed Women's Business Ownership Representative for the Springfield SBA office. In that role, she assists existing and potential women business owners by providing them with access to SBA and other government and private sector assistance, and by referring them to appropriate resources for one-on-one assistance.

Ross earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from Illinois State University.

EIU alumnus Alex Russell, owner of Boats Plus, Inc., in Charleston, will follow Ross' presentation with a discussion about what it's like to be an entrepreneur. He also will offer suggestions on resume writing, business etiquette and appropriate business attire. There will be time for questions.

Russell, who has three degrees from Eastern and was awarded All-American status in football while a student at Eastern, began Boats Plus, Inc., in 1990, a full-service company offering boat sales, storage, maintenance and repair; detailed car, van and truck cleaning; and a pro-tackle shop.

He is one of two boat safety instructors for Coles County and gives seminars on bass fishing to community groups. He also is founder of the Illinois Conservation Bass Club in Charleston

and is a member of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

Prior to becoming a business owner, Russell was benefits manager at Eastern. He continues his association with the university as an adult education instructor during the summer.

Another EIU alumnus, Ted Coopwood of Manassass, Va., will conclude the program with a talk on "Minorities in Government." Coopwood is the national director for toxicity testing for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C.

A former fishery biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and District of Columbia, Coopwood joined the EPA in 1989 and, in his first year, developed an aquatic toxicity testing program. His work also includes outreach efforts to promote environmental awareness throughout the country and reviewing cases to ensure EPA compliance.

Coopwood earned a bachelor's degree in environmental biology from Eastern in 1984. He also holds a master's degree in fishery science and aquatic biology from Tennessee Technological University.

Later in the day, Coopwood will be the featured speaker at Eastern's "Taste of Black Culture" dinner, offering traditional African-American foods.