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EIU Retains Spot as One of Midwest's Top Universities

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Eastern Illinois University has retained its spot as one of the Midwest 's top universities, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

Rankings released in the magazine's annual guide to "America's Best Colleges" indicate that EIU is the highest ranking public university in Illinois on the list of "Top Public Universities - Master's (Regional/Midwest)," a category which represents those universities which offer a full range of undergraduate degrees, as well as some master's degree programs.

And for the second consecutive year, Eastern ranked seventh among the top 12 public universities in its category from the Midwestern/regional area. Overall, Eastern ranks 38th among 142 institutions, both public and private.

The Midwest region category includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

"I am thrilled to learn that Eastern Illinois University has, for the fourth consecutive year, received such high rankings," said President Louis V. Hencken. "We work extremely hard to preserve both our tradition of academic excellence and our reputation of strong nurturing relationships with our students.

"Our rankings reflect a continuing commitment by our faculty and staff to uphold these traditions and values. And I believe that commitment is especially commendable given the university's financial restraints in recent years. Despite the obstacles, our employees have done a fantastic job in maintaining the highest level of quality education possible for our students."

Rankings are based on schools' academic reputations, student selectivity, faculty resources, graduation and retention rates, financial resources and alumni giving.

"We have thousands of students moving in this week in preparation for the 2004-2005 school year," Hencken said. "They have chosen Eastern Illinois University because of its academic strengths, as well as our promise to do everything we can to assist our students toward a timely graduation.

"The *U.S. News & World Report* rankings cite our enviable freshman-to-sophomore retention rate, our above-average graduation rate and our high percentage (95 percent) of full-time faculty as proof-positive that our efforts are working."

Blair Lord, provost and vice president for academic affairs, concurred.

"Given the financial challenges Eastern and the state of Illinois have faced during the past couple of years, I believe these rankings are a testimonial to the faculty and staff of Eastern Illinois University . They have continued to deliver a superior education and university experience to our students despite these budgetary difficulties.

"That in itself speaks volumes about Eastern Illinois University ," he said.

The newsstand book, " America 's Best Colleges (2005 edition)," which contains the new *U.S. News* college rankings, is slated to go on sale Monday, Aug. 23.