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April 1, 1996

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU AWARDED GRANTS TO TRAIN AREA K-12 EDUCATORS AND FUTURE EDUCATORS TO TEACH 21st CENTURY STUDENTS

CHARLESTON -- More than 30,000 K-12 students in Charleston, Decatur, Champaign, Effingham, Danville and Centralia will benefit from an experiment in teaching that will be spearheaded by Eastern Illinois University.

Eastern and the six east central Illinois school districts are already working together as members of a consortium called the Professional Development Schools (PDS) Network. The Network is based on the premise that individuals will improve teaching by supporting innovative, non-traditional teacher training.

Two "GOALS 2000" grants, awarded by the Illinois State Board of Education, will enable the Network to train educators already teaching in the six districts and educate students at Eastern, in alternative forms of instructional techniques and assessment methods. They will also learn how to incorporate families, social agencies, university faculty, business and

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community leaders into the teaching process.

"We will focus on the skills teachers and administrators will need to reach students in the future, and that will include conflict resolution, peer mediation and knowledge of the latest technology," said Elizabeth Hitch, dean of Eastern's College of Education and Professional Studies. "The partnership between the K-12 schools and the university is critical to the process. Current teachers and teacher educators will share their thoughts on the most effective practices and work together to improve the quality of preservice education."

The grant money, totalling \$136,220, will help create a cadre of teachers and administrators who will become "trainers of trainers" at all the sites in the PDS Network. Internet access and computer technologies will be integrated throughout the training.

"The grants will provide numerous opportunities for preservice teachers to learn and apply the best practices in diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings," said Don Roberts, superintendent, Effingham school district.

"The involvement of Eastern in the daily operations is a tremendous asset," said Dean Keller, director of Business, Effingham school district. "It will bridge the gap between theory and practice."

The grants will fund activities scheduled to begin in September,

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with the start of the 1996-97 academic year. Eastern's commitment to the PDS Network is reflected in its budget request for Fiscal Year 1997. Eastern requested \$100,000 to launch the Network, an amount that was recommended for approval by the Board of Higher Education and included in the governor's budget proposal. The General Assembly is currently debating the FY97 budgets.

The grants were written by EIU PDS Coordinator Veronica Stephen and Brian Carey, PDS Network site facilitator at Centralia school district, with input from other Network site facilitators, teachers and administrators.

"Nothing is more vital than a close, mutually supportive and enriching relationship between schools and universities in the place where the future is determined, the K-12 classroom," said Eastern President David Jorns. "Eastern, following its great tradition of teacher training and development, is proud to lead the Professional Development School initiative."