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March 11, 1997

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JORNS TELLS FACULTY, STAFF 'WELL DONE'

CHARLESTON -- Enviably high enrollments, record high alumni satisfaction and a graduation rate of nearly 70 percent are contributing to the emergence of Eastern Illinois University as one of the country's most selective, traditional, public universities, said Eastern President David Jorns at his annual State of the University speech Tuesday.

Jorns told gathered faculty, staff, students and community members that Eastern's graduation rate increased again this past year and now stands at 69 percent (NCAA), a rate far exceeding the state average and as high as many selective, private institutions.

"Eastern was always a strong academic institution, even during turbulent times, but now it's at its peak," said Jorns. "This university is about to leap into the very forefront of comprehensive American universities."

Jorns pointed to several indicators beside the graduation rate to support his prediction, such as Eastern's record enrollments in past years. For next fall,

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admissions are again ahead of the previous year and some categories have already been closed.

Graduate and alumni satisfaction rates remain among the highest in the state - close to 90 percent - according to surveys. Eastern boasts a nearly 90 percent freshman-to-sophomore retention rate. Eastern's award-winning residential hall program has the highest percentage of residential students in the nation.

Jorns said a strong reputation for academic excellence and student satisfaction will position the university well in the future as higher education undergoes some momentous changes. In the future, he said, private colleges and universities will become even more unaffordable, and, as a growing number of older, working adults enroll, fewer traditional universities will exist.

"This means there will be a more and more qualified group of students who will need a fine, selective, public institution and in this state, that institution will be Eastern," said Jorns. "I believe in time, Eastern will be recognized and designated as Illinois' only selective, traditional, public university."

To accomplish this vision, said Jorns, Eastern will need successful private fundraising and strong alumni support. He said Eastern will also need "the State of Illinois to recognize that what they have here in Charleston is rare."

In the past few months, financial support from the state has been positive, said Jorns. Most recently, the state released roughly \$2 million to begin the

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planning work for the renovation of Booth Library and for capital renewal. On March 5, Gov. Jim Edgar endorsed a budget for Eastern next year that would increase funding by nearly 6 percent, the highest increase recommended for any public university. If approved by the General Assembly, the state's capital budget also includes approximately \$16.5 million in renovation funds for the library.

During this past year, Eastern has reallocated funds to technology and programs, and has spent close to \$2 million on improvements called for under the American Disabilities Act. Eastern students have also "stood tall," said Jorns, by approving a new fee increase to finance some campus improvements.

"This is all to the good, but Eastern is still at, or near, the bottom in most funding categories," said Jorns. "Salaries are still too low. Our campus has very serious deferred maintenance problems."

Eastern also has the lowest per capita student expenditure in the state, he said, which makes Eastern's outstanding graduation rate and other accomplishments all the more notable. "We have a faculty and staff who, above all other things, understand that our work is first and foremost our students," said Jorns.

The president called for continued maturity, participation and stewardship from Eastern's faculty and staff. He asked that the university community resist all pettiness, anger, dominance, disrespect, foolishness and incivility as they

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build on this year's progress.

"I know almost all of you and I know what fine people you are," said Jorns. "I know how much you do with very little. I know how you have changed hundreds, if not thousands, of young lives at the expense of your own fortune and sometimes, health. I know how you love this school."