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For Immediate Release:

EIU'S COS PROGRAM MEETING THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS IN EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS

CHARLESTON – A number of adult learners enrolled in Eastern Illinois University's Career and Organizational Studies (COS) program believe it has helped them both personally and professionally.

"Being involved in the Career and Organizational Studies program at Eastern has enhanced my self-esteem, enabling me to grow personally and professionally so that I can be the best I can be," said Patti Henderson of Charleston, an office systems specialist in Eastern's Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences.

The Career and Organizational Studies program, formerly known as Career Occupations, enables individuals with significant employment experience and professional or technical expertise to earn a bachelor of science degree by attending classes part-time.

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Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

"Since more than 90 percent of our students work full-time, we offer the flexibility of evening and weekend classes, both on-campus in Charleston and off-campus at sites in Mattoon/Charleston, Champaign-Urbana, Olney and other cities in Central Illinois. Students have the option of taking from 3 to 12 semester hours of courses each semester," said Deborah Woodley, professor in Eastern's School of Technology and COS program coordinator.

She added, "People from a variety of organizational fields and walks of life have enrolled in and graduated from the program. Sixty percent of our graduates pursue graduate studies."

Not only is the program unique because it allows students to continue working while pursuing a degree, but it also enables students to earn credit for their work experience by completing a portfolio, in addition to taking coursework that is tailored to their career goals, Woodley said.

Fields of study range from health, construction and electronic technology to training and development and supervision and leadership.

"The program has been beneficial to students who want to get a promotion in their current occupations, to complete an educational program they started but never finished and to become more marketable," Woodley noted.

"I learned about myself by being in this program," said Dianna Ensign of Charleston, a student financial aid adviser at Eastern. "I've learned why I have been in my job for 18 years, and I have learned about the style of my supervision and how I can make it better."

Henderson said, "There is so much to learn, and I'm not afraid to do it after being in this program. The curriculum and services offered are truly designed for the students."

Susan McKenna, a media/communications specialist at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, said, "I remember entering my first COS class. The work and learning from that class also had 'big picture' implications for events going on in my office environment. I was able to apply total systems thinking to my organization and make feasible, insightful suggestions for how my department might engage in goal-setting activities. The coursework provides a good foundation for running a business."

Thomas Fanelli, an associate product manager for ConAgra Store Brands in Danville, said, "The information students receive in class is very current and applicable. I enjoy learning and if you can't apply it to what you are doing, then the learning process is hindered."

Rod Clark of Champaign, a national sales manager for a distribution company, said participation in the COS program is an eye-opening experience.

"The information shared enables adult learners to become more aware of the why's and how's of the workforce, even if one has been in the field for a while," Clark said. "The program creates a better picture of what is out there."

Judy Bruner of Robinson, a part-time project manager for Twin Rivers Regional Vocational Systems, said the classes are workshop-driven, which makes them more enjoyable.

"The classes are enjoyable in this format because adult learners need different

motivations to learn rather than just sitting in a classroom," she said.

Most of the students agree that it is the instructors who make the program worthwhile for them.

"The instructors are dedicated to the adult learners," Clark said. "They bring out the best in us."

"The instructors are just dynamic," Henderson said. "The advisers and faculty make it work from start to finish. Once you are in the program, it is catching."

For more information about Eastern's Career and Organizational Studies program, call Woodley at 217-581-6270 or visit the COS website at (www.eiu.edu/~tech/DegCOS.htm).