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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
 Charleston, Illinois

news

ART TATE, Assistant Director, University Relations
 Office: (217) 581-5981 - Home: (217) 348-7553

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RIVES DISCUSSES UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

CHARLESTON, IL.--Eastern Illinois University President Stan Rives was one of five university presidents who spoke about the future of education in Illinois Wednesday at the Statehouse in Springfield.

Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities Chancellor Thomas Layzell opened the meeting by giving an overview of the fiscal crisis in education, especially higher education, and its effects on programs and services in fiscal year 1988 and 1989.

Rives then made his presentation to members of the Capitol Press Corps and Springfield area media who were invited to the meeting to learn more about the effects of the current fiscal crisis on university students.

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"Among the central functions of any institution of higher education, excellence in undergraduate education is the highest priority. That is particularly true of the five universities of the Board of Governors system," Rives said.

The fiscal year 1988 budget, which resulted in an actual reduction in funding for the Board of Governors universities for the first time in 22 years, has already had a severe impact on undergraduate students, according to Rives.

At each of the BOG institutions, classes have had to be cancelled, the number of students in each class has had to be increased to accommodate the students seeking particular courses and there has been a serious shortage of equipment for instructional purposes, Rives said.

Rives added, however, that he is most concerned about Eastern's loss of faculty. Three faculty members have already decided to leave Eastern because of the budgetary situation.

"Our ability to retain talented faculty is the worst I have seen it in the five years I have served as president," he said.

"Current budget projections suggest that the situation will only be exacerbated. The 'stand-still' budget (proposed by Governor James R. Thompson for fiscal year 1989) will result in continuing problems and will have a major impact on the quality of undergraduate education at all universities in the state," Rives said.

If there is no increase in the state's income tax and Eastern is faced with level funding next year, Rives said more faculty will continue to leave because they can get better salaries or receive more support for research and instructional activity at institutions in other states.

Illinois ranks 42nd out of 50 states in per capita spending on higher education and average faculty salaries in Illinois are nearly 4 percent below the national average.

Rives also said student access will be reduced. "It will be impossible for Eastern Illinois University, and for most other institutions, to maintain the current level of the number of students served without an increase in general revenue funding," he said.

Without an adequate budget, Rives predicted there will have to be a tuition increase which will present major difficulties in terms of student attitudes and will also further limit access to the university, particularly for minority students.

Other state universities represented at the Springfield meeting were Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago State University, Governors State University and Western Illinois University.