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Newly Named Vice President Eager to Become a Part of the EIU Family

Dec-22-2009

Bob Martin looks forward to becoming a part of the Eastern Illinois University family.

He's excited about "enhancing a culture of philanthropy" throughout the EIU community.

And he's happily anticipating the celebration of four seasons again.

"I'm looking forward to returning to the Midwest and all that it brings," he said recently from his home in Auburn, Ala.

Martin will officially be welcomed to Eastern on Feb. 1, 2010, when he begins his new role as the institution's vice president for university advancement.

He replaces Jill Nilsen, who announced her retirement, effective Dec. 31, after serving as vice president for external relations since 1998. EIU President Bill Perry chose to sharpen the position's portfolio and change the name of the position to "better signal -- both internally and externally -- that the primary emphasis for the position is on fundraising, development and allied university advancement activities."

Martin, who is currently serving as assistant vice president for development at Auburn University, is certainly no stranger to the areas of fundraising and development. Prior to arriving at Auburn in 2003, he served as assistant vice chancellor for development (promoted from director of major gifts), at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (1997-2003).

He has also been actively involved with the YMCA, starting with the Nashville YMCA, then as associate executive director in Owensboro, Ky., and 10 years as district vice president at the YMCA of Florida's First Coast.

He received his master's degree in philanthropy and development from St. Mary's University of Minnesota and his bachelor's degree in political science from Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.

A Tennessee native, Martin said the size and location of EIU were attractive to both him and his family, including his wife, Donna, and their three daughters -- Lindsey, 23; Kerri, 20; and Codi, 13.

Eastern's athletics program also beckoned, Martin said, recalling that EIU and UT-Chattanooga were in the same division when he was at UTC.

"Charleston seems to be a nice small town," Martin said. "There were just so many things we found appealing. It seemed like the perfect fit."

He looks forward to his arrival at Eastern and beginning the process of meeting and getting to know the institution's faculty, staff and students, as well as alumni and friends of the university.

"I want to become a part of the EIU team and family," Martin said.

He's also eager to advance Eastern's major capital campaign, already in progress, but in its early stages.

"In tough economic times, we need to let people know that their private gifts are no longer icing on the cake," Martin said. "They need to know that those gifts are a necessity in order to maintain the quality EIU experience our students expect and deserve."