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For Immediate Release:

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ADVENTURE IN BELGIUM: FIND OUT HOW!

CHARLESTON – Earlier this year, a highly diverse group of honors students from all around the U.S. gathered on the campus of the Université Catholique de Louvain, in the rolling countryside of Belgium's Brabant Province, to discover for themselves what archaeology is all about.

Some of those students now plan to share their experiences, education and adventures with other potential student archaeologists. An open informational meeting, designed to generate interest in the 2001 dig, has been scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 26, in Lumpkin Hall 122 on the campus of Eastern Illinois University.

“Our hope is that we can motivate students to study abroad and faculty to support such endeavors,” said Jean Dilworth, associate professor in Eastern’s School of Family and Consumer Sciences. “Of course, faculty and others could benefit from enrolling in the course that will be offered Summer 2001. I went this past summer; it was a great educational stretch for me.”

The program, offered by EIU's Honors Programs in co-operation with UCL's Centre de Recherches Archéologiques Nationales (CRAN), is made available to students with interests

–more–

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 11,000 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.

ranging from anthropology to biopsychology, and from history to physics. Most of this year's participants were undergrads, but others, too, were especially attracted by the program's focus on the excavation of a medieval castle – Walhain St. Paul Castle, to be exact.

Eight centuries ago, Walhain's lord dwelt in the round stone tower that still dominates the site, guarding the borders for his overlord, the Duke of Brabant, and keeping an eye on the peasants whose energetic labor in the surrounding fields, pastures and forests was already beginning to launch the dynamic European economy. The first goal of the excavation project, which began in 1998, was to throw the spotlight on those peasants, so much less understood and appreciated than the knights and lords, by investigating the farming estate outside the castle walls.

The results so far are exciting and surprising. Sections of a wide and sturdy, well-constructed cobblestone roadway have been found as well as a series of buildings probably intended for animals. These may have been built during the 1500's, a time of a prosperity and technological progress when Walhain's new owners modernized the old feudal fortress.

The extensive relandscaping involved made archaeologists fear, at the end of the 1998 season, that most of the older medieval site had been destroyed. But the July 2000 dig confirmed that some impressive medieval structures are preserved underneath the more recent buildings, including a farm building with earthen walls and a massive pillar of high-quality masonry that suggests a second line of fortifications. These discoveries generated some excitement in the Belgian media, both print and televised, and the public who came to visit the site.

They were intrigued and pleased to see American students, their presence symbolized by an American flag planted in the mounds of dirt, working alongside Belgian students under joint American-Belgian direction. The project is the brainchild of Herbert Lasky, director of EIU Honors Programs, and Bailey K. Young, EIU associate professor of history, in collaboration with Raymond Bulet, professor of archaeology at UCL and director of the CRAN. Young, who used to teach in

French universities in Paris and Lille, has shared for many years with Brulet an interest in medieval archaeology, and details of the co-operative agreement were worked out during visits to one another's campuses. The program is unique in offering a solid classroom introduction to the subject combined with extensive hands-on excavation experience on a medieval site.

UCL provides housing and meals, as well as classroom space, computer facilities and library privileges for those students who chose to earn enhanced credit by preparing an individual research project. All students attend weekly lectures covering the history and methods of archaeology, regional history and archaeology (including an all-day field trip to the city of Tournai) and medieval fortifications. There are also visits to laboratories concerned with pottery, with geology and with pollen analysis. Students keep field notebooks and write an essay summing up their experience.

The EIU/UCL Summer Honors Archaeology Program is unique in providing qualified American undergraduates with a chance to earn four to eight hours of general education credits (which can be counted either as a humanity or as a science) with hands-on field experience on the type of major European research site usually reserved for advanced students. Keeping the program affordable has been a major concern, and a private scholarship fund has been set up to assist worthy students.

A new feature in 2000 was the participation of "Friends of Walhain Castle." Anyone interested in spending a week or more learning the basics of archaeology is invited to apply. Dilworth was among this group, as was her sister, Donna Geer, an educational administrator from California, and Kathy Hunter and Dolores Busch from Mattoon.