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December 5, 2001

For Immediate Release:

VICE PRESIDENT EMERITUS RETURNS TO EIU; PLANS TO SPEAK AT COMMENCEMENT

CHARLESTON – During his 22 years as Eastern Illinois University's vice president for student affairs, Glenn D. Williams attended dozens upon dozens of commencement ceremonies.

This Saturday he'll add three more notches to his academic robe as he returns as a special guest speaker at EIU's 9 a.m., 1 and 5 p.m. ceremonies honoring EIU's Fall 2001 graduates.

The vice president emeritus was invited to return to campus to honor his long affiliation with Eastern. Interim President Louis V. Hencken worked with Williams for many years and asked his mentor to participate in Hencken's first commencement as interim president.

"Dr. Williams had a significant impact on my professional career at Eastern," Hencken said. "I am honored and privileged that he accepted the invitation to return to campus and serve as the speaker for our fall commencement ceremonies."

Williams, who retired from Eastern in 1992, served as the keynote speaker seven years ago when the university celebrated its centennial. In conjunction with that honor, he was named one of EIU's Centennial 100 – an elite group of persons chosen as those most influential to the institution's growth and reputation during its first 100 years.

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VICE PRESIDENT EMERITUS

If his energy and the dedication he's shown to the university since his retirement is any indication at all, there's no doubt Williams surely deserved the honor bestowed upon him.

The retired vice president continues to hike the mountains near his adopted home of Colorado Springs, Colo., year-round. He supplements that activity with skiing during the winter.

He tutors graduate and doctoral physics students from Cal-Tech and MIT and teaches (as a guest lecturer) at The Air Force Academy.

Despite all this activity, however, he's never forgotten the university where he served under five presidents – another EIU distinction that only he holds.

A native of Columbus, Ohio, Williams was serving as high school principal in the city of Worthington when he decided to pursue his Ph.D. in philosophy from his alma mater, Ohio State University. Less than a month after graduating, the then-34-year-old began teaching at Eastern as an assistant professor in education.

Although Williams had no intention of returning to the field of administration, the environment at Eastern changed his mind. Enrollment began booming and a need developed for personnel with administrative experience.

In 1962, with 10 years of experience behind him, Williams easily stepped into the role of associate dean of student academic services, intending to fill the slot for the remainder of the school year only. President Quincy Doudna had other ideas, however -- and a salary offer Williams didn't feel he could refuse.

The one-year term stretched into a three-year term, ending in 1965 when Doudna installed Williams as dean of student academic services. It was, Williams recalls, before the days of 'searches' to find the ideal candidate.

In 1969, Williams accepted a Fulbright Fellowship to Sri Lanka for the purpose of advising that government in the ways of setting up a community college. He received a telegram from Doudna announcing that a vice presidency position had opened.

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VICE PRESIDENT EMERITUS

"I shall not ask you if you are a candidate for this position," the telegram read. "You are hereby appointed. Come home."

Williams did as he was asked, and it was there he stayed for the next 22 years.

Before leaving Eastern, Williams and his wife, Joan, became known as strong supporters of women's athletics at the school, proving their passion by endowing a woman's basketball coaching position, as well as a woman's athletic scholarship.

They also donated the 13-foot-high bronze sculpture of a female basketball player which now graces the north door leading to EIU's Lantz Arena. And, in 1995, Eastern's softball complex was named in the couple's honor.

In addition, Williams is a recipient of the Livingston C. Lord Award, the highest honor the university can bestow on an employee or member of the community. The award is named after the university's first president.