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For Immediate Release:

EIU REACHES RECORD ENROLLMENT; OFFICIALS PLEDGE TO MAINTAIN QUALITY

CHARLESTON – Statistically speaking, the 225-student increase in Eastern Illinois University's enrollment doesn't seem incredibly drastic.

The more attention-grabbing fact behind the 1.8 percent jump is that, at 12,349, this fall's enrollment brings the 111-year-old institution to its highest enrollment ever.

The increase includes a jump in honors students, minority students and international students, giving officials even more cause for celebration.

"We are very pleased that the university has seen an increase in enrollment, and we credit that increase to the reputation of the institution," said EIU President Lou Hencken. "In the past few years, Eastern has taken a more aggressive approach to promoting the university throughout the state of Illinois, and those efforts are paying off."

With the higher numbers come concerns about keeping the university's personal touch, but the university has been able to keep student needs in check, said Blair Lord, provost and vice president for academic affairs.

"Our students come to Eastern, in part, because we offer small classes and offer them the personal attention that they both want and need," Lord said. "President Hencken and I are committed to continuing to offer that same quality education this year and in the future."

Hencken said the university's success is the result of efforts by people from all over campus.

"I'm most pleased with the hard work of the provost, the deans, the department chairs and the faculty who, while working 'above and beyond the call of duty,' were able to accommodate students' needs for classes," Hencken said.

That hard work will continue to be needed in the coming months and years, Hencken said.

"Certain challenges lie ahead," Hencken said. "We expect a very large graduating class this year, and in order to maintain this year's enrollment, we will need to continue our aggressive marketing efforts.

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"These figures could also be difficult to maintain without additional money coming to the university from the state. We don't want to admit students without knowing definitely that we have the resources they need in order to graduate in a timely manner."

This fall's figures show much promise for the campus. For example, the Honors College is celebrating its largest-ever incoming class with 181 freshmen, representing about 10 percent of this year's 1,843 entering freshmen.

Most other Fall 2006 enrollment figures also indicate increases. A breakdown of Eastern's 10,592 undergraduate students (up from 10,375 last year) is as follows, with Fall 2005 figures in parentheses: freshmen, 2,669 (2,505); sophomores, 1,980 (2,185); juniors, 2,671 (2,637); and seniors, 3,272 (3,048). Graduate students number 1,757, a slight increase from last year's 1,745.

Minority students represent 11.4 percent of the total enrollment, up from 10.5 percent last year (from 1,276 to 1,401). Those enrollments, broken down, are as follows: black, 924 (848); Hispanic, 284 (272); Asian/Pacific Islander, 154 (129); and American Indian/Alaskan native, 39 (27).

The number of international students attending EIU is up as well, with 151 enrolled in Fall 2006. The number a year ago was 132.

Transfer numbers continue to be strong, with 1,058 new undergraduate transfer students this fall.

The university plans to move forward with six long-range goals introduced by Lord and designed to further enhance the university's appeal to current and future students:

- Become a showcase for teaching and learning, with an emphasis on relationship-driven education;
- Have the most active and highly regarded student research/student scholarship program of any Illinois public comprehensive university;
- Evaluate all academic programs with an eye to having each degree program be identified as the "first choice" program for students considering that major at an Illinois public comprehensive university;
- Become known as the university of choice for Honors College/programming among the state's public comprehensive universities;
- Increase the portion of students participating in Study Abroad programs, with the long-term goal being to have the highest rate of student participation in these programs among the state's public comprehensive universities; and
- Have the Doudna Fine Arts Center become known within the region in a fashion similar to that of the University of Illinois' Krannert Center.