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NEWS

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR: Attached is a copy of Dr. Jorns' "letter of intent to retire" presented to the Board of Trustees during executive session today.

97-215

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 21, 1997

JORNS ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

CHARLESTON -- After more than 4 ½ years at the helm of Eastern Illinois University, David Jorns announced today that he is stepping down in two years as the university's seventh president.

The 53-year-old chief executive, whose academic career spans three decades, said he plans to retire from Eastern July 1, 1999. "I leave Eastern with great peace of mind. The next administration will receive an institution in excellent working condition," Jorns said.

"My time at Eastern has, to date, been exciting and fulfilling. However, it's time for a change. I believe it is in the best interest of the university and the board of trustees to allow sufficient time for an orderly transition to new leadership," Jorns said.

The Board of Trustees will determine a timetable for a search for a new president. A search for a new provost and vice president for academic affairs has already begun. Terry Weidner, interim provost and VPAA for the past three years, announced his retirement plans earlier this year.

"My presence for these next two years will also insure that candidates for the provost's position have the comfort of knowing that the person who hired him or her will be in place for a year. Further, it will insure, along with the personnel contracts I have recommended to the board, that the current strong administration remains in place," Jorns said.

During the remaining two years of his presidency, Jorns said he will focus on adding momentum to Eastern's campus-wide strategic planning initiative that will lead the university into the next century and enable it to become an even stronger, more dynamic institution of higher education.

"We are beginning to enter the most critical stage of the strategic planning process -- that of comparing ourselves to other colleges and universities -- to insure that our productivity is at optimum levels. This will help guide future strategic planning activities under new leadership

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and serve as an important accountability tool for the university in years to come.”

Other important campus initiatives he hopes to complete are beginning the Booth Library renovation, finishing a BOT- and campus-endorsed master architectural plan for the university and insuring that Eastern’s development area is in a position of strength.

Jorns added that the \$13 million Buzzard Building renovation also is nearing completion, and parking lot renovations and campus beautification projects are now underway. The university also is moving forward with \$9.5 million in student-approved campus improvement projects over the next three years. Projects include a 24-hour computer lab, an addition to the Clinical Services Building, a campus debit-card system, pilot project funding for direct Internet access for rooms in at least one residence hall, a paved two-mile recreational path, various campus exterior appearance projects, air conditioning in the residence halls and a food court.

Under Jorns’ leadership, the university has made a successful transition to its own governing board, increased admission standards, improved employee salaries, implemented interest-based bargaining, advanced Eastern’s political presence in Springfield and reallocated existing resources to key priorities. These include attracting well-qualified students, faculty and staff; increasing the diversity of the student population; improving the quality of education in both undergraduate and graduate programs; enhancing university service and outreach; and addressing campus-wide technological and deferred maintenance needs.

During his annual State of the University address this past March, Jorns pointed to enviable enrollments, record high alumni satisfaction, a graduation rate of nearly 70 percent and a freshman-sophomore retention rate of nearly 81 percent as contributing to the emergence of Eastern as one of the country’s most selective, traditional public universities. He said a strong reputation for academic excellence -- reaffirmed by renewed accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools -- and student satisfaction will position the university well in the future as higher education undergoes significant changes. “I think people are beginning to realize what a jewel Illinois has in Eastern,” Jorns said more recently. “Although Eastern historically has experienced underfunding, additional state support acquired through the budget process in recent years is yet another reflection of the university’s success.”

“Eastern has always been a good university, but in the last few years, we have had a number of things come together that have had excellent results. First, we have a very good team of people administering the university. Second, we’ve had a lot of cooperation among faculty and staff that has created an esprit de corps on campus that benefits everyone. And, we have committed to a strategic planning process that has put everyone on the same page, as far as goals and objectives. The results have been phenomenal.”

Jorns will retire from Eastern with nearly 30 years’ experience in higher education -- 20 of which

have been in administration. He came to Eastern in November 1992 from Northern Kentucky University where he was vice president for academic affairs and provost. Before that, he held administrative and teaching positions at West Texas State University, Mankato State University and University of Missouri.

He earned a bachelor's degree in radio and television and a master's in speech and drama from Oklahoma State University in 1966 and 1968, respectively. He earned a Ph.D. in theatre history and drama from UCLA in 1973.

As to his future plans, Jorns said he and his family plan to remain in the Coles County area and hope to maintain close ties with Eastern. "I am originally from Oklahoma, but have fallen in love with this part of Illinois. My wife, Audrey, a 1981 Eastern graduate, is from Oakland, so we are looking forward to staying in an area we are so fond of and where we have so many close friends and family."