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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BOT APPROVES WAGE AGREEMENT, NEW TENNIS COURTS

CHARLESTON -- Eastern Illinois University's grounds workers and maintenance equipment operators will see base pay salary increases of 3 percent -- retroactive to July 1 -- following action today (Aug. 27) by Eastern's Board of Trustees.

The board voted unanimously during a special conference call meeting Wednesday to approve the contract agreement which was reached in July and ratified by members of the Teamster's Local No. 26 earlier this month. Negotiations involved only wages.

In other action, trustees approved a \$229,849 project for the design and construction of six new tennis courts south of Lantz Gym for use by intercollegiate athletics, student recreation and physical education classes. Grunloh Construction of Effingham will complete the local revenue bond-funded project, with construction expected to begin this fall.

The six regulation-size courts, located immediately south of the existing Lantz Gym tennis courts adjacent to the Monier Field baseball diamond, will allow the Panthers to host Ohio Valley Conference competition, but also will be utilized on a regular basis by students for non-competitive activities. "This will be another quality athletic facility that also will be available to the general student population when the intercollegiate teams are not using it," said Richard McDuffie, director of athletics. "By having all six courts together, we can conduct an official conference meet and possibly host an OVC tournament."

Trustees also approved Eastern's operating and capital budget recommendation for fiscal year 1999 which will be forwarded to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, governor and General Assembly for approval.

Eastern is requesting an 8.94 percent budget increase for a total appropriated and income funds operating budget of \$69,955,900 for next fiscal year, an increase of \$5.7 million over this fiscal year. The proposed increase includes \$1.7 million for employee salary increases averaging 3.5 percent, \$2 million for new or expanded academic programming, \$750,000 to meet growing technology needs and an additional \$750,000 to address escalating deferred maintenance needs. The increase recommended would cover at least part of an expected increase in the cost of utilities and provide \$99,200 (a 10 percent increase) for the acquisition of new library materials.

“We believe the proposed budget is a positive step in addressing the financial needs of the university. We will work closely with the IBHE, governor and legislature to insure the successful passage of the budget in the spring legislative session,” said Eastern President David Jorns.

Eastern’s FY 1999 budget package approved by trustees Wednesday includes a capital budget request of \$29 million -- \$18 million of which would fund the Booth Library renovation. Environmental health and safety improvements, movable equipment for Booth Library, renovations to the Fine Arts, Life Science and Physical Science buildings and a proposed pedestrian mall which is part of the Booth Library renovation/expansion also are on Eastern’s capital improvement list. Of the \$29 million, \$2 million is slated for small- to medium-size campus rehabilitation and repair projects such as upgrading steam tunnels, heating, ventilation and air conditioning controls, air systems and windows.