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98-20

January 26, 1998

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**EIU BOARD CONSIDERS HIRING NATIONAL EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRM
TO ASSEMBLE A-LIST OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES**

CHARLESTON—Eastern Illinois University's Board of Trustees are closer to selecting a national search firm to help lead the effort to hire a new president for the university.

At their regular meeting in Charleston Monday, the trustees heard a presentation from a executive search firm on how they would work with the board and a university-appointed search committee in selecting the next president of Eastern.

President David Jorns has announced that he will retire at the end of June 1999. The Board of Trustees is legally charged with hiring the university's chief executive.

Representatives from the firm of Witt Kieffer explained to the board that national search firms work confidentially with boards and institutions in evaluating and recruiting candidates for executive positions. The firms provide extensive research on the backgrounds of candidates as well as their qualifications for the position to be filled. They utilize a network of established contacts in the academic field to recruit and screen

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Eastern that showed slightly more than 75 percent of the student body receive some form of financial assistance. In one year, financial aid, including loans, scholarships, grants, waivers and/or employment, totalled \$38,836,647.

“Those figures represent increases in both the number of students receiving aid (3.2 percent) and the total dollar amount (9.8 percent) over the previous year,” Lou Hencken, vice president for student affairs, told the board. “The vast majority of that aid is from the federal government, which recently changed eligibility rules for some programs from need-based only to being strictly income-guided. The changes may have increased the number of students opting to borrow money. Hencken said despite the increased number of students borrowing funds, he does not expect the university’s default rate to go up. The default rate has remained steady at approximately 4.6 percent for several years -- the lowest rate among Illinois public universities.

The board reviewed the recommended fiscal year 1999 budgets for operating expenses and capital projects. Eastern received the highest percentage increase recommendation in general funds in the past seven years and the highest among all state public universities.

In other business, trustees endorsed spending \$346,375 to replace windows in Lincoln and Douglas halls. A Jerseyville construction firm submitting the lowest qualified bid was awarded the contract.

The board also approved changes to regulations regarding sick leave accrual and

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tuition waivers. The changes bring Eastern's regulations into compliance with new state legislation, although the university has been enforcing the new mandates since their effective dates.

In the case of tuition waivers, the children of eligible university employees are now able to receive 50 percent tuition waivers at any of the other state public universities. Previously, the waivers were good at just four other public universities. Sick leave accrual changes eliminate the option of providing cash payouts for sick leave days accrued after Jan. 1, 1998 for employees terminating their service.

In other action, trustees approved a labor agreement with 12 members of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local #399 which calls for a wage increase of 3 percent effective July 1, 1997 and an additional 3 percent increase effective Nov. 6, 1997, the date the contract was ratified. The agreement also provides for wage increases for the next two years to be tied to state salary appropriations.

Trustees also approved a resolution that gives the president, with the prior consent of the board, authorization to grant multi-year administrative contracts (not to exceed three years) to a vice president, athletic director or coach.

In addition, board members endorsed the university's Constitutional Plan outlining the institution's mission and goals in several areas, including academic achievement, resources and personnel.