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98-45

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU TEACHER ED PROGRAM TIGHTENS ADMISSIONS TO ENSURE QUALITY

CHARLESTON -- Faced with more student teachers than it can effectively serve, Eastern Illinois University's College of Education and Professional Studies (CEPS) will utilize a selective admissions process to ensure that the most qualified students are admitted to teacher certification programs.

While some schools dream of record enrollments, Eastern's teacher education program is at its maximum capacity, according to Elizabeth Hitch, CEPS dean.

"We can effectively serve about 500 student teachers annually, which doesn't come close to the more than 800 students we are supervising this year. We are clearly overextending ourselves," Hitch said. "Our number of student teachers greatly exceeds the funding available to compensate faculty assigned to student teaching."

"Besides record enrollments, additional requirements placed on our education programs by the Illinois State Board of Education and rising national accreditation standards forced us to take a

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closer look at our teacher education program, particularly since these new mandates haven't been state-funded," Hitch said. "A proposed teacher education fee to support these initiatives failed."

Most significant are requirements that mandate a staged admission procedure for teacher education, requiring faculty to closely monitor student progress prior to entering professional education classes and student teaching, and that students spend more time in K-12 schools and in more diverse sites.

The university has experienced a 37 percent growth in the number of students in teacher certification programs during the past five years, Hitch said, causing enrollments to exceed resources. The selection process was shaped through campuswide discussions spanning eight months and involving education faculty and students. "It will allow us to keep enrollment consistent with available resources, while maintaining a high quality program. It is predicted that future enrollments will continue to soar, even with early closure of selected admissions," Hitch said.

She added, "Eastern has long been recognized as one of the premier institutions for preparation of educational personnel in the state. The program is in place to continue this tradition of excellence. It cannot, however, be maintained in the face of student enrollment increases."

Under Eastern's new Council on Teacher Education-endorsed selective admissions process, approximately 550 of the most qualified students will be admitted annually to the teacher education program. Admission will be based upon a composite score derived from a student's cumulative grade point average, scores on the Teacher Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) test, and grade in an introductory education class.

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TEACHER

All students enrolled in an initial certification program will be impacted, including native students, transfers and post-baccalaureate students. Those who have not earned "University Approval to Take Teacher Education courses" prior to Aug. 17, 1998, must enter a selection pool.