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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

GRANT PROJECT LINKS EIU WITH INSTITUTIONS WORLDWIDE

CHARLESTON, IL.--Eastern Illinois University researchers and scholars will soon be linked via Eastern's local area computer network to their peers at more than 1,000 institutions worldwide, enabling them to improve research and instruction effectiveness.

A \$24,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to Eastern is "the university's link to the outside world via computer," said Dave Henard, Associate Vice-President of Computer and Telecommunications Services and principal investigator for the NSF grant proposal.

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The project will connect users of Eastern's on-campus computer network to the wide area network facilities of the National Science Foundation (NSFnet) via this link through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Network access to the U of I will connect users to the National Science Foundation Network, which links the U of I's National Center for Supercomputing Applications Supercomputer Facility to a sophisticated, high-speed "network of networks," linking potentially hundreds of thousands of users, Henard said.

Essentially, faculty will have desktop access to the U of I's Cray Supercomputer and to numerous other computers on NSFnet. Before access was limited to a single low speed dialup telephone line, Henard explained.

Rachelle Bergmann, Assistant Professor of Physics at EIU, said, "A network link to the center has major advantages over communicating by telephone. These advantages not only expedite research, but save Cray time and make the system much easier to use. Furthermore, a network link can be used to reach computers around the country."

Professors in other disciplines, such as math, have also voiced that certain computations require use of computers with a fast speed and large memory storage.

"A network connection will vastly improve campus research capabilities, allowing researchers to share their ideas with their peers across the country through electronic mail, bulletin boards, and conferencing," Henard said.

Networks have also made possible global sharing of large and expensive scientific instruments, such as telescopes, maximizing their research effectiveness, he added.

"Research of campus needs indicates that a direct connection to peers at large research institutions and access to the Statewide Library Circulation System, also available throughout the U of I network, will provide advantages to all disciplines. This access to electronic media will be used by a cross section of Eastern's faculty and should subsequently migrate into class applications," said Verna Armstrong, Vice-President for Administration and Finance.

"We are pleased to bring this technological advancement to EIU," she said.

While the intent of the project is to provide immediate access to the network by faculty and staff for instruction purposes, services for students will soon be increased.

Henard said one student lab has been fitted for networking in addition to 20 faculty workstations, which are serving as testing ground for the system. Additional student labs will be equipped for network services with the completed construction of the Coleman Hall addition.

The project is an expansion of services offered through EIU's Uniform Campus-Wide Area Network. The NSF grant would not have been awarded if Eastern did not have a campus-wide plan for networking, Henard said.

Eastern is among the leading public liberal arts institutions of its size to have a comprehensive network in place, he added.

UCAN equipped workstations on campus allow users to share personal computer resources, such as printers, hard disks and applications, and provides access to Eastern's mainframe computer. It also links users to the Educational Computing Network, which allows educators and administrators an opportunity to discuss a variety of topics with their peers at any of the four other Board of Governors universities.

Twenty-three of 25 campus buildings scheduled for connections are expected to be cabled for UCAN services by July, 1991.