Moving Forward: A note from EIU
President Bill Perry

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As this academic year finishes, we have much to celebrate in our mission to provide superior education to our students.

Please watch this three minute video on EIU 360 regarding commencement — you will be uplifted: The video is a great reminder of the joy our students experience upon graduation, why we as faculty and staff are here, and why Eastern is making a difference in the world.

Also, please take just five minutes to look at this EIU 360 story and scroll through brief summaries of the positive impacts and achievements EIU’s students, faculty and staff have accomplished this past year. You will see that we are accomplishing much.

Now I want to address how we will be moving forward, on this foundation of achievement. As you probably know, in the coming two years, we will be making significant budget adjustments to become more efficient, while maintaining excellence. Consistent with our strategic plan, this past year we engaged in an open shared governance process, involving the university’s Council on University Planning and Budget (with representatives selected by several campus constituencies) to analyze all of our programs. In April the CUPB’s recommendations regarding this analysis were forwarded to the president’s office. The CUPB worked thoughtfully and diligently to complete its recommendations by the due date. The report was shared with the Board of Trustees at its April meeting. The CUPB report is available online here.

After receiving the CUPB recommendations, budgets were formulated for presentation to the Board of Trustees at its June 6 meeting with three primary objectives in mind: 1. Continue to build the university consistent with our strategic plan vision of being a premier comprehensive university. 2. Support the strategic plan theme of Academic Excellence. 3. Support the strategic plan theme of Financial Sustainability.

We recognize that with our enrollment decreases and level to slightly declining state funding for operations, we are facing lean budgets in the next two fiscal years. We are working to improve enrollment. We also know that though we have some reserves and fund balances, we have to minimize the call on those resources so we can manage the cash flow issues resulting from slow reimbursement from the state on our appropriations. Even so, we are using some of those reserves to assist in our budgeting in the next couple of years.

Over the past five years the university has performed strongly and accomplished much,
even though resources have been constrained. That is a tribute to the excellence we have expected of ourselves, each other, and our students. I am deeply appreciative of the willingness of everyone to shoulder the responsibilities associated with these constrained times.

As we move into the next two years, we will need to work even more closely with each other to achieve our strategic plan goals and focus on our vision of being a premier comprehensive university. We must focus on our opportunities for further achievement, while addressing our challenges.

Here are some of the specific budget actions we are taking, that are consistent with the CUPB’s recommendations:

1. We have instituted a hiring freeze, with limited exceptions for criticality to university mission. Searches that have already started may proceed. Faculty contracts have been offered, so that we will meet our instructional obligations for the coming academic year. Exceptions to the hiring freeze may be made only with the approval of the president.
2. We are selectively investing in programs that can produce sustainable, quality enrollment increases.
3. We are reducing personnel and operational expenses. We will use attrition as much as possible to reduce personnel expenses.
4. We will study information technology costs and structure with a goal of reduction in expenditures of at least $500,000.
5. We will analyze our scholarship programs with a goal of optimizing recruitment yield.
6. We will reduce our staff to faculty ratio over time, with a goal of more efficiency in our support services.
7. We will review reassigned faculty time with a goal of optimizing faculty assignment to our core mission of instruction.
8. We will increase online offerings, where appropriate and cost effective.

Other specific actions we are taking, which are related to the CUPB assignment to make recommendations to reduce our base budget, but are not specific CUPB recommendations are as follows:

1. No base salary increases will be awarded, except those specified in collective bargaining agreements, which we will honor.
2. We will enforce our minimum class size policies.
3. We are reducing our base budgets for equipment, travel, and library materials.

We will continue to seek opportunities to operate with less cost. For example, this year we have migrated student email to Microsoft 365, which saves us over $50,000 a year. By next year we plan to migrate faculty and staff email as well, saving over $100,000 a year. These are just a couple of examples of actions taken at the suggestion of faculty and staff. There certainly are others that we should consider. If you have a suggestion to reduce costs please email me directly at wlperry@eiu.edu.

Our budgets are based on projections of revenues and costs. We will adjust budget actions based on realized revenues and costs and keep the campus periodically informed. We will also have to be ready to act based on outcomes with respect to state budgets and impacts of changes in state revenues, especially related to personal income tax revenues. I encourage everyone to keep operational expenses at a minimum. Every dollar saved in operations is a
dollar we do not have to take from personnel expenses.

Moving forward, we must keep uppermost in our minds our commitment to academic excellence. Eastern has always done so since its founding, in all types of fiscal conditions. The university has dealt with lean times before, each time to emerge stronger. The university has always done so with hard work, resolve, and optimism; and by expecting greatness of ourselves, each other, and the university. Our university’s strength is, and always has been, its people; working together to make Eastern better today than yesterday, and better tomorrow than today. Our strength today is you--thank you for all you do for EIU.

Bill Perry
President, Eastern Illinois University