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For Immediate Release:

LUIS CLAY MENDEZ AND BILL KIRK NAMED EIU'S 2003 DISTINGUISHED FACULTY

CHARLESTON – Luis Felipe Clay Mendez and William G. Kirk, professors of foreign languages and psychology, respectively, have been named the 2003 recipients of Eastern Illinois University's Distinguished Faculty Award.

They will be recognized for their accomplishments during commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 10, in Lantz Arena.

The Distinguished Faculty Award is presented to faculty members with at least four years of full-time teaching experience and who excel in teaching, professional research/creative activity and service. Recipients receive a small monetary award, in addition to a plaque.

The selection of the two men was based, in part, on letters submitted by colleagues, friends and students to the Distinguished Faculty Award Selection Committee.

Clay Mendez, who arrived on Eastern's campus in 1980, was lauded as a "pillar of both the department and the university."

"Dr. Clay is one those legendary figures who are the vital life-blood of every university," wrote Karen Taylor, associate professor of Spanish.

Alan Baharlou, chair of Eastern's Department of Geology/Geography, agrees. "(Clay Mendez) is a dedicated and tireless faculty who has the same combination of personality and capability which is an essential ingredient of an effective academician in an institution of higher learning."

Stephen Canfield, chair of the foreign language department, added, "An equally striking quality about Professor Clay's teaching is his willingness to extend his efforts beyond the traditional classroom." These efforts include nearly 17 years of summer study abroad programs in Spain and Costa Rica, numerous contests and language-related events organized for students of all levels within the department and a service learning initiative which allowed many of Eastern's Spanish students out of the classroom and into local schools to work with elementary school students.

In the areas of research and creative activity, Clay Mendez has (among other projects) developed and published a manual and PowerPoint-based auxiliary materials used by the United States Coast Guard

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to teach practical Spanish to military personnel. During his Fall 2002 sabbatical, the professor traveled to numerous Coast Guard bases to apply these materials and techniques.

Service activities have also included contributions at departmental, university, community, state and national levels.

"His work with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and with Prisoner Visitation and Support Program's Cuban Unit at the U.S. Penitentiary in Terre Haute exemplifies his commitment to use his professional skills for national service," Canfield wrote. "On a regional and local level, he has worked as an interpreter/translator for both municipal and circuit courts in Coles County."

As for being named a Distinguished Faculty Award recipient . . .

"After 23 years of joyful employment at EIU, the award was possibly the best of a series of pleasant memories of my teaching at this institution," Clay Mendez said. "What made this award particularly meaningful was that there were many other candidates just as deserving as I, and that the award was chosen by colleagues whom I respect and admire.

"I am grateful for the way God has guided my way to this country and this profession. It is very gratifying to be recognized for work that one loves to do," he added.

William G. Kirk began teaching at Eastern in 1975; he will retire at the end of the current school year. William Addison, chair of Eastern's Department of Psychology, does not look forward to the search for Kirk's teaching replacement.

"We will hire an individual who is qualified to take on the responsibilities of Bill's *position* in the department," Addison wrote. "What we will not be able to do, next year or ever, is replace the *person* that is Bill Kirk. His contributions as a scholar, a teacher and a citizen of the psychology department, the university and the local community are irreplaceable."

According to his colleagues, Kirk was instrumental both in the development of Eastern's clinical psychology master's degree program and in the daily operations. Under his leadership, the program has developed a reputation as one of the strongest and most successful of its kind in the state, if not the entire Midwest.

In addition, Kirk is recognized on a national and international level for his work on adolescent suicide. His book, *Adolescent Suicide*, was published in 1993 by Research Press; to date, thousands of copies have been sold world-wide. He currently is working with a colleague at Ohio University on another book, *Surviving Suicide*, which focuses on coping strategies following the suicide of a family member.

Kirk also has made significant scholarly contributions in the area of eating disorders, having co-developed a cooperative program with the EIU Counseling Center designed to train student interns in the treatment of eating disorders.

As for his teaching abilities . . .

Former student David Schmittgens ('88) of Northfield, Ill., wrote that "(Kirk)is first and foremost, a master teacher. His classes are lively, interactive, immensely entertaining and ultimately practical and

profound. He understands both the art and craft of teaching and has made a lifetime commitment to master both."

And, Schmittgens added, "(Kirk's) sense of commitment and dedication to Eastern Illinois University sets the standard by which all teachers should aspire but for which few can claim."

"Being trained initially to be a therapist and counselor rather than a teacher has had an interesting impact on my professional development," Kirk said. "Essentially, my clinical training focused on the privilege it was to have distressed and disturbed people open their troubled lives to a therapist and how humbling it was for the good therapist to be put in such a position.

"I've been able to transfer that same model to teaching, believing that teaching has been a remarkable privilege. I've learned and grown with many wonderful students over the years and feel that the teacher/student relationship frequently provides me with as much stimulation and learning as the students reportedly receive. The good educational relationship is really a partnership characterized by reciprocity," he added.

"I also have grown tremendously from the many peer relationships I've had over the years at EIU. Eastern has a terrific cadre of fine teachers, and my own success has occurred, in part, because of the mentors that I've been fortunate to have right here at EIU."