

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2001
Board of Trustees Meeting

The elimination of prison educational programs may lead to longer prison stays and a higher rate of returns to prison, according to statements given to the Board of Trustees of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges at the regular meeting Tuesday, December 11, at Olney Central College.

The State of Illinois has eliminated prison education programs that are currently operating at the Robinson and Lawrence Correctional Centers.

Tim Watson, Educational Director of the Lawrence Correctional Center stated, "The guards and wardens use our programs, not only to educate, but to administer the prisons. Without education prisoners will have a lot of free time and nothing to occupy their time. Rather than having constructive time, prisoners will now have idle time on their hands. I'm sorry the program has ended for the prisoners, but I'm also worried about the operation of the facility."

The Department of Corrections decision to eliminate education programs, effective February 1, 2002, means that the economy of Southeastern Illinois will lose more than \$900,000 in income. It also will lead to the laying off of 15 full-time employees and 45 part-time employees presently working at the Robinson Correctional Center and 32 part-time employees slated to work at the Lawrence Correctional Center.

Glen Donaldson, Program Director and former President of the International Correctional Educational Association, stated, "Not only will the area lose some very fine people, but I expect the cost to taxpayers will go up. Studies have shown that when prisoners receive basic education they do not return to prison. But without education higher percentages return to prison. This alone could cost the state 9.5 million dollars. And prisoners earn good time for attending class and as a result are released earlier. Now they will serve longer jail sentences and cost the taxpayer an additional 6 million dollars. Overall, this move will cost more than 15 million dollars."

Paul Stouse, instructor at the Robinson Correctional Center, stated, "These prisoners need a job when they get out of prison and we teach them those job skills. I

don't know what the state is thinking because now the taxpayer will be spending more money to keep more prisoners in jail for a longer time. We do good work, our prisoners don't come back to jail, and they become taxpayers. This decision is going to be costly."

Board members expressed regret that the state had made a decision to terminate the program. "We have assembled some of the finest instructors in the State of Illinois and Illinois Eastern has been recognized by the state for its high quality program. The programs we offer have been highly successful and we are proud of what we have done to rehabilitate people," said board member Kevin Williams.

Several district employees appeared before the Board and the general tenor of the meeting was deep regret that the programs are being terminated and discussion of possible steps that can be taken to keep the program operating.

The college currently has 226 students enrolled in the programs and has graduated more than 632 students over the past five years. The Department of Corrections pays \$958,851 per year to operate the programs at both the Robinson and the Lawrence Correctional Centers.

Following discussion, the trustees adopted a resolution urging Governor George Ryan and the Illinois State Legislature to reinstate the higher education programs at all Illinois correctional facilities.

The Board of Trustees took the following additional actions:

Gayle Lawn-Day was employed as Dean of the College at Lincoln Trail College.

Jennifer Mathes was employed as Dean of Instruction at Olney Central College.

Debbie Wolfe was employed as International Student Liaison for the District Office.

A change in status was approved for Jervaise McGlone, from Interim Dean of the College at Lincoln Trail College to Program Director, Title III Coordinator/Activity Director at the District Office.

New Internet and telecourse tuition rates were approved as follows:

In-District students: \$40 per credit hour.

Out-of-District and out-of-state students: \$75 per credit hour.

Non U.S. resident students: \$108 per credit hour.

Student satisfaction surveys for the fall semester at all four colleges were presented. Each college annually surveys 100 students, 50 each in transfer and technical programs.

Under new accounting guidelines, taxes for calendar year 2001 will be collected in 2002 and all of that levy will be allocated to fiscal year 2003. The district's fiscal year is July 1 to June 30. There is no change in the levy, extension, or the total amount of taxes to be collected. The trustees approved the guideline change.

The bid of Eagleson Oldsmobile-Cadillac-Chevrolet, Olney, was accepted for a 2001 Chevrolet with 13,300 miles, at a cost of \$10,780, for Frontier Community College.

The bid of Burger Chrysler-Plymouth-Dodge, Olney, \$14,875, was accepted for a 2000 Dodge Grand Caravan with 7,581 miles, for Frontier Community College.

The bid of Ford Square, Mt. Vernon, was accepted for a 2002 Ford F350 Supercab Pickup for Olney Central College, at a cost of \$26,921.40.

Next regular meeting will be Tuesday January 15, at 7 p.m., at Lincoln Trail College.