The purpose of the Provost’s Integrative Learning Award is to recognize departmental efforts to advance integrative learning within a degree program. Eastern has always been focused on providing a high quality educational experience for our students, and a number of effective practices and activities have always supported this effort. The focus on Integrative Learning is to enhance the educational experiences we have always offered. At its best, higher education is a transformative experience. Integrative Learning seeks to ensure this by being intentional and purposeful in ensuring that connections, transfer and transformation occurs.

As was the case with last year’s awards cycle, there are four awards in the categories described below, and they will focus on undergraduate initiatives. CAA or a representative subcommittee thereof will serve as the “jury” to identify the award recipients. The timeline will be as follows:

Departmental submissions due by March 8, 2013
Award to be identified and distributed no later than April 19, 2013

As was the case last year, awards will be made to departments, and the Provost’s Office will work with the recipient departments to affect this in the most beneficial way. A department which received an award in one of the categories last year may not be granted an award in the same category this year, but it may seek an award in a different category.

To be specific, awards are intended to recognize initiatives which are “in progress” or “completed.” A second innovation grant program is available for “new and proposed” initiatives. In addition, this award is not intended for course-specific, time-limited efforts. Rather it is aimed at recognizing more broadly based, program-level initiatives. These can take many forms including initiatives that have changed course or courses as part of a broad program-level initiative. Finally, for clarity, the definition/description of integrative learning we have been using follows:

Integrative learning encourages students to make connections among all aspects of their lives—academic, professional and personal—and apply learning gained in classes and other life experiences to new, complex situations. EIU provides significant learning and life opportunities through which students, faculty and staff work together to connect academic, professional and personal activities into a harmonious whole. As students reflect on the meaning of their learning and their lives, they become confident, lifelong learners and engaged, responsible citizens.
Award Categories

Curricular Innovation – One of the principles on which we have focused is having our students make connections to other coursework, other activities and other experiences and then intentionally, thoughtfully and regularly reflecting on them. This award will recognize initiatives within a degree program and/or curricular design of a degree program that embeds reflection into the student experience.

Partnership with Student Affairs – Another essential element of IL is the making of connections with other elements of a student’s life at the University. Many of our students’ experiences come through their residence life or other student life activities. Academic partnering with Student Affairs can make such connections real and immediate. This award will recognize creative partnerships established with a unit(s) in Student Affairs.

Making High Impact Experiences Central and Integrative within a Degree Program – A key element in all discussions of IL is the role of high impact experiences. In and of themselves, high impact experiences may or may not be integrative in nature, but designed and incorporated effectively, they can be. Program design which makes high impact experiences an expectation and fosters student connections and reflection necessary to make them truly integrative is the level of development to be recognized with this award.

Evaluation/Assessment of Integrative Learning Opportunities – The last pillar in our IL visual model calls for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of the IL opportunities we afford our students. While this step is not always seen as the most exciting step, it is an essential step in helping to determine the efficacy of the IL opportunities we provide and documenting their impact on our students’ experience. Each program will have unique ways of making such evaluations. This award will recognize effective approaches to evaluation and assessment.

Guidelines for Submissions

Preparing a submission is not intended to be a protracted exercise; nevertheless, sufficient information needs to be provided to permit the faculty evaluators to reach an informed judgment. Elements of the submission should include:

• Category in which the award is sought

• Description of the initiative including its place within your program/curriculum

• Evaluation of how the initiative meets the expected outcomes of integrative learning. This would include a statement on the learning outcomes sought and the experiences which promote this outcome. Specific information on how students create connections within the discipline, across disciplines, with co-curricular activities, with the community, and/or other experiences beyond campus should be provided.
• Finally, commentary on how students are expected to reflect and assess on the activity/experience and discover how to transfer the skills/theories/etc to new situations is requested.

A maximum of four pages should be sufficient.