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**For Immediate Release**

## Illinois Teacher of the Year to speak at Governors State

University Park, August 10, 2004 – The 2004-2005 Illinois Teacher of the Year, Deborah Perryman, will address the inaugural meeting of the 2004 Beginning Teacher Program at Governors State University on Friday, August 13, from 11 to 11:45 a.m. in Engbretson Hall.

Perryman, a biology teacher at Elgin High School, in Elgin, was awarded Teacher of the Year in April. She was selected from a field of more than 300 teachers who were nominated by students, parents, administrators and school board members.

Perryman's presentation for Governors State, titled "Misunderstood Critters," will offer techniques for raising students' interest in natural history and community advocacy.

"We're very pleased that Deb is coming to GSU," said Dr. Karen Peterson, director of the Beginning Teacher Program, a mentoring program that matches experienced teachers with novice teachers just entering the field. "She's the perfect speaker to set the tone for the upcoming year of teaching and learning by our newest educators."

Peterson said that the Beginning Teacher Program is a partnership between GSU and school districts in Blue Island, Posen, Robbins, Harvey, Glenwood, and Sauk Village.

"It's an important program," Peterson said. "New teachers have a very high attrition rate, and much of that stems from the stresses they encounter when they first enter the profession."

Peterson said that experienced teachers can significantly reduce attrition when they work as mentors to their newer counterparts.

"It's very simple," Peterson explained. "Our experienced teachers know exactly what it takes to create the best environment in the classrooms. They also know the difficulties all teachers sometimes face. Through a structured mentoring program like the Beginning Teacher Program, they can guide new teachers over the hurdles and show them how to make classroom time most productive – for the students and the teachers."

Peterson should know. She's chaired two statewide induction advisory panels for teacher mentoring and helped create a statewide initiative for mentoring and development training.

"It's been proven time and again," Peterson said. "Mentoring matters."

Governors State has been a leader in the field of mentoring for 12 years. Its Beginning Teacher Program is approved by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The university's College of Education, which houses the Beginning Teacher Program, is the largest college in the institution, and it is recognized for meeting the highest standards for teacher training.

The college and its programs were recently accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) with no program weaknesses found under the NCATE 2000 standards, a first in the state at the time of the accreditation.

Peterson said Perryman's presentation is also open to the public.

"Deb truly is one the state's most talented teachers," Peterson said. "I think members of the community, especially parents, will be fascinated by what she has to say."