FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bob Edwards Becomes Chair of the Department of Sociology

GREENVILLE, N.C. (July 1, 2015) — This summer the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences will appoint five new department chairs to the college. Dr. Bob Edwards, professor of sociology who has been with East Carolina University since 1995, will step into the role of chair for the college’s Department of Sociology.

“I feel invigorated by the challenges of taking on a new position with a different set of responsibilities,” said Edwards.

Edwards, who has research interests in the areas of social movements, civil society, social capital, organizations and environmental injustice, will succeed associate professor of sociology Dr. Marieke Van Willigen, who has served as the department’s interim chairperson for the previous four years. In addition, Van Willigen served as interim chair of the department for eight months in 2008 and as an associate dean for Harriot College for two years prior to becoming interim chair. Van Willigen will be moving to Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Ga., to assume the position of Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology on July 1.

“The department will be in excellent hands with Dr. Edwards at its helm,” said Van Willigen. “Dr. Edwards has assumed almost every other leadership role in our department at some time or another. As such, he is well versed in personnel procedures, student recruitment and retention, and facilitating strong research and teaching. His national reputation brings prestige to the department and the university. His experience in researching organizations will also lend itself well to understanding and navigating the organizational environment that is ECU and the UNC system.”

Harriot College Dean William Downs expressed his confidence in Edwards and in the future of the Department of Sociology at East Carolina University.

“I am pleased to appoint Dr. Edwards as chair because it is clear how devoted he is to enhancing excellence in all three of our essential commitments—student success, public service and regional transformation,” said Downs. “Sociology is especially well positioned to make positive impacts in each of these areas, and we’re all eager to start writing the department’s next chapter.”

As the incoming chair of the department, Edwards hopes “to lead the department through its current transition by building on initiatives already underway, while articulating appropriate reforms to insure the effectiveness and vitality of our BS/BA and MA programs. I hope further to enhance a collegial and collaborative scholarly environment to facilitate the career development and success of our faculty.”