There were 548 alumni surveys returned out of 1377 reachable graduates\(^1\) for a 40% return rate. The number of responses given below will not total 548 because some former students gave responses falling into more than one category and others chose not to respond to these questions. What follows are the number of alumni comments that fell into the various categories in response to the following questions: What had the most positive impact on you during your time at Eastern? (A total of 381 alumni responded to this question.) And, What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern? (A total of 324 former students responded to this question.)

The paragraphs below summarize alumni comments and include one or two salient comments for each category. The complete comments are available at www.eiu.edu/~assess for general academics, student life, and University-wide issues. Comments related to specific programs or faculty have been compiled and given to the deans of the colleges and continuing education and the department chairs.

### What had the most positive impact on you during your time at Eastern?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No response:</th>
<th>167</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total responses:</td>
<td>381 (70% of returned survey respondents)</td>
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</table>

**Academics: 323 (85%)\(^2\)**

**Relationship with professors/advisors: 180 (47%)**

Of the positive comments related to academics, 180 (47%) former students commented on positive relationships with professors or advisors. Professors are applauded for being innovative, friendly, dedicated, caring, knowledgeable, and professional. “The professors showed true interest in the students’ progress and learning. If they truly enjoyed teaching, it made all the difference” (PSY 399). Former students describe the impact of hearing from practitioners and the easy availability of one-on-one contact with faculty. “I am reminded of the friendliness and openness of the teachers at EIU. I felt this helped motivate me to do well—they cared about our success and wanted to know us personally. I don’t think I would have gotten that at another state university” (HIS 209).

**Specific programs; small class sizes; overall education, career: 143 (38%)**

Forty-one (11%) former students commented positively on the small class sizes while 23 (6%) respondents indicated that their overall education, having a flexible schedule, study abroad, or obtaining a degree had had the most positive impact. “I got my degree because I like to learn. I was the oldest of 5 kids and [my] parents could not send me to college. I got the degree because I could. Just wanted to learn” (BOT 351). Seventy-nine (21%) alumni mentioned specific programs or courses contributing to their positive responses to Eastern. “The preparation I received in my business classes for the real world. There are so many things I remember hearing in my job now that I learned in my college classes” (MAR 119).

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\(^1\) There were 1571 potential graduate responders in this cohort. A total of 194 graduates were unreachable because of bad addresses, were deceased, or had “do not solicit” orders. The above total reflects the number of alumni who received the survey.

\(^2\) Percentages are taken from the total number of responses to each question, rather than the total number of alumni in the cohort or the total number of returned surveys.
Student Life:  116 (30%)

Relationships/social activities/Greek System/Housing:  68 (18%)

Involvement in the Greek System had the most positive impact for 21 (6%) of our former students while 48 (13%) cited personal relationships with friends, family, and loved ones as the most important. “The friends and relationships I formed while at Eastern still have a positive impact on me today” (ELE 486).

Involvement/Activities/Recognized Student Organizations/Athletics:  48 (13%)

Nine (2%) alumni cited the ability to be involved and participating in a variety of activities while 17 (4%) cited volunteer work, service or religious organizations. “Being a member of the organization Haiti Connection. Through it, I was able to learn about a much vaster range of issues than I would have otherwise, and I was able to meet people (in Haiti) living radically differently from my own experience. My encounters with the third world have changed the choices I make every day and Haiti Connection has increased the spiritual focus of my life” (ENG 118). Sixteen former students commented positively on their experiences with athletics and intramurals while six lauded organizations such as WEIU, the DEN, and UB.

University-wide Issues:  56 (15%)

Facilities; services; community; diversity:  29 (8%)

Thirteen (3%) former students indicated that specific facilities, the safety of the campus, the small town feel, and the school in general had had the most positive impact on them. “The overall atmosphere, it was a sense of home away from home. The campus wasn’t too big, and everyone that I met was friendly and helpful” (SOC 151). Sixteen (4%) of respondents cited diversity as the key factor. “The many opportunities for diversity, community service, and support from the University staff was great. I truly enjoyed my experience at Eastern!” (SPC 469)

Personal growth:  27 (7%)

Respondents whose comments fell into the personal growth category indicated they increased their self-esteem, learned how to deal with a variety of people, became more independent, and developed skills like problem-solving and time management. “I feel that I really learned a lot in college. I learned how to manage my time and coordinate my efforts in order to accomplish large projects. I developed my critical thinking skills and truly learned a lot about how society works” (SOC 13).

What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern?

| No response: 224 |
| Total responses: 324 (59% of returned survey respondents; 227 negative impact (70% of responses)) |
| Nothing negative: 97 (30%); 30 additional positive comments (9%) |

Additional positive comments included ones such as, “I don’t think that there was anything negative about EIU. It was the most rewarding experience of my life and I owe my success to the education that I received” (SPC 358).

Academics:  127 (39%)

Relationship with professors/advisors:  44 (14%)

Thirty-five (11%) former students indicated problems with faculty who were too liberal, rude, hard to understand due to English being their second language, or were apathetic about teaching. “Some of the professors did not care about teaching. Got the feeling from a few of them that they were going through the motions—lack of
passion” (MGT 347). Nine (3%) alumni offered negative comments about advising; they indicated their advisor knew little about careers in the major or did not know the requirements of the University. “Not going to a counselor to talk about a career. I ended up choosing a degree I can do nothing with” (PSY 20).

Specific programs; scheduling; overall education, career: 83 (26%) Comments in this category express alumni frustration with required courses and coursework, lack of specific information or opportunities in the major, and time spent to degree. Twelve (4%) people commented negatively on general education requirements being a waste of time and/or money. Thirty (9%) former students felt unprepared for careers, unchallenged by coursework, or had issues with particular classes. “I do not have many negative memories, but allowing more time in a real classroom setting. You can only get so much from observing; actually teaching is where the learning takes place” (ELE 343). Forty-one responses related to transferring coursework, complaints about when classes were scheduled, or time spent to degree. “It was sometimes difficult to get the classes you need. Some were only offered every other semester” (EVB 322).

Student Life: 54 (17%) Relationships/social activities/Greek system/housing: 49 (15%) Fifteen (5%) former students indicated that partying too much had had a negative impact on their experiences at Eastern. “Socializing, too many distractions from academic work at times” (FIN 22). Eight (2%) former students commented on the Greek System either indicating that it wielded too much power or expressing problems with their involvement in a particular fraternity or sorority. Sixteen (5%) former students expressed dissatisfaction with residence hall life, roommates, or dining services. Ten alumni indicated problems with other students.

Activities/recognized student organizations/athletics: 5 (2%) Only 5 former students commented negatively on organizations; three of these comments concerned apathy toward athletic teams from the student body; one was related to Eastern no longer having a wrestling team, and the other related to a bad coach. “EIU should try to encourage students to gather behind the sports team more” (PPEG 161).

University-wide Issues: 62 (19%) Facilities; services; community, diversity: 39 (12%) Thirty-one (10%) alumni commented negatively on campus services, offices, programs, or facilities. Twelve of these comments related to the Booth library renovation that was completed after this cohort graduated. Eight comments concerned the small size of Charleston and the lack of cultural events outside of the campus. “The most negative impact: small town. Need more diverse culture, shopping, and entertainment” (BTC 372). Six respondents commented on outdated facilities and four mentioned trouble dealing with bureaucracy. Eight of the survey participants commented on diversity issues that ranged from low enrollment of minority students and few minority instructors to disapproval of “segregated” activities. “Low enrollment of minority students and teaching staff. Each ethnic group seemed to be sectioned off during extra curriculum activities” (HIS 319).

Personal growth/finances: 23 (7%) Former students whose responses fell into this category lamented long commutes (4), time away from family (4) working while attending school (4), or the expense of a college education (11). “The stress of supporting three kids while earning my degree” (SPE 479).