

## Alumni Survey 2006, Nine Years Out (1997 graduates) Summary of Qualitative Data

There were 567 alumni surveys returned out of 1484 reachable graduates<sup>1</sup> for a 38% return rate. The number of responses given below will not total 567 because some former students gave responses falling into more than one category while others chose not to answer 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 405 alumni responded to this question.) And, *What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern?* (A total of 278 former students responded to this question.)

The paragraphs below summarize alumni comments. The comments themselves are available at [www.eiu.edu/~assess](http://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 chair of the departments.

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

No response: 162  
Total responses: 405 (71% of returned survey respondents)

#### **Academics: 341 (84%)<sup>2</sup>**

##### **Relationship with professors/advisors: 178 (43%)**

Of the positive comments related to academics, 178 (43%) former students commented on positive relationships with professors or advisors: 89 (22%) discussed professors in general and commented on their interactions with faculty: faculty with helpful, encouraging, and caring attitudes; their approachability, open-mindedness, and availability outside of class; their dedication to helping students learn, and their preparation and knowledge of subject matter. An additional 89(22%) comments cited particular professors, department faculty, and advisors as having the greatest impact on their time at Eastern. These faculty members were lauded for challenging their students, learning their names, providing excellent instruction, preparing students for careers, and exhibiting a passion for their subject matter.

##### **Specific programs; coursework; scheduling; overall education: 163 (40%)**

Specific majors, courses, or programs had the greatest impact for 89 (22%) alumni. These comments included enjoyment of specific courses, study abroad experiences, hands-on experiences through internships and practica opportunities, and preparation for employment. Twenty-seven (7%) positive comments were given concerning the small class size of most of Eastern's courses while eleven (3%) comments were offered concerning the flexibility of schedules and variety of courses. Twenty-five (6%)

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<sup>1</sup> There were 1661 potential graduates in this cohort. A total of 177 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.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages are taken from the total number of responses to each question, rather than the total number of alumni or total number of returned surveys.

of the positive academic comments concerned the high level of education or simply completing a degree, and eleven (3%) comments related to pedagogy or specific coursework, such as group work, developing communication skills, and hands-on approaches.

**Student Life: 127 (31%)**

**Relationships/social activities/Greek System/Housing: 106 (26%)**

Involvement in the Greek System had the most positive impact for 27 (7%) of our former students while 69 (17%) cited personal relationships with friends, family, and loved ones as the most important. Former students mentioned meeting lifelong friends and spouses at Eastern.

**Activities/Recognized Student Organizations/Athletics: 21 (5%)**

Twenty-one (5%) respondents indicated that their involvement in campus activities such as service organizations, athletics, and other recognized student organizations had been their most positive experience during their years at Eastern. Several students lauded Christian Fellowship while others mentioned their time at WEIU and the DEN.

**University-wide Issues: 52 (12%)**

**Facilities/Services/Community/Staff/Diversity: 20 (4%)**

Twenty-eight alumni (7%) indicated the overall experience in college, the small campus, and the friendly atmosphere as the most positive things about their time at Eastern. An additional 33 respondents (8%) cited positive comments in response to the negative impact question. These comments discussed happy memories of their college years, their intent to send their children to Eastern, and how much they valued their degree. Five former students (1%) indicated that campus services or facilities, like textbook rental, had the most positive impact on their time at Eastern. Eight (2%) alumni indicated that the friendly people with positive, caring attitudes contributed positively to their education. Six (1%) former students indicated that diversity on campus had the most positive impact; these students listed multi-cultural experiences and meeting people from different backgrounds as beneficial.

**Personal Growth: 32 (7%)**

Respondents whose comments fell into the personal growth category indicated they became more self-confident, learned how to deal with a variety of people, learned about themselves, achieved personal goals and awards (such as winning scholarships and contests), became more independent, and developed skills like problem-solving and time management.

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

No response:	289
Total responses:	278 (49% of returned survey respondents; 216 negative impact)
Nothing negative:	62 (22%); 28 additional positive comments (10%)

## **Academics: 133 (47%)**

### **Relationship with professors/advisors: 63 (22%)**

Former students who indicated that faculty or advisors had had the most negative impact on their time at Eastern mentioned people who were arrogant, close-minded, inadequately prepared, out of touch with the profession/field, displayed poor classroom attitudes, belittled students and their intellect, or who were too difficult, uncaring, incompetent, and unfair. Some alumni expressed feeling as if they had been discriminated against because of gender, political and/or religious beliefs, or chosen major or minor. Twenty-one (7%) of the negative comments falling into this category were directed at advisors who did not alert students to issues, did not double-check requirements, or did not know requirements.

### **Specific programs; coursework; scheduling; overall education: 70 (25%)**

Former students indicated frustration with trying to get into classes in their freshman and sophomore years, the scarcity of evening course offerings, and the courses that were not accepted for transfer credit. Some alumni expressed negative feelings toward general education or required courses not directly related to major. Some alumni indicated that they wished more courses were challenging or more rigorous; others expressed dissatisfaction with their preparation for life after college. Others expressed dissatisfaction with particular courses, pedagogy (such as attendance policies, lectures, and assignments/exams).

## **Student Life: 66 (23%)**

### **Relationships/social activities/Greek System/Housing: 61 (21%)**

Some alumni expressed dissatisfaction with the actions of their peers. Others described feeling like they did not fit in or make any friends during their college years. Some students indicated personal problems or issues had marred their college years. Several former students indicated that partying too much had had a negative impact on their experiences at Eastern while others regretted not becoming more involved or not living on campus. Others indicated that the power of the Greek system was too great while some expressed problems with their involvement in a particular fraternity or sorority. A few former students expressed dissatisfaction with residence hall life or dining services.

### **Activities/Recognized Student Organizations/Athletics: 5 (1%)**

Former students expressed regret over not participating in activities, the limited social activities that did not involve alcohol, and issues with athletics and coaches.

## **University-wide Issues: 71 (25%)**

### **Facilities/Services/Community/Staff/Diversity: 67 (24%)**

A few former students expressed the opinion that Eastern lacked the funding and amenities of other larger universities. Some students indicated difficulty working with some offices or units on campus citing red tape, limited hours, lack of customer service, and feeling like they got the “run-around.” Alumni indicated negative feelings toward the library and the lack of computer facilities. Some respondents felt they did not receive enough help of advice in finding a job and still others expressed problems with funding their

college education or paying loans after their education was completed. Some former students expressed dissatisfaction with the city of Charleston in terms of little shopping and entertainment, the location, and issues with the previous mayor. Sixteen respondents (6%) suggested the lack of cultural diversity, discrimination, or segregation had a negative impact with others expressed problems with the lack of diversity on campus.

**Personal Growth: 4 (1%)**

Former students whose responses fell into this category admitted to poor decision-making or planning, issues related to time management, or personal problems.