

Alumni Survey 2007, One Year Out (2006 graduates) Summary of Qualitative Data

There were 846 alumni surveys returned out of 1,907 reachable graduates¹ for a 44% return rate. The number of responses given below will not total 846 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 684 alumni responded to this question.) And, *What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern?* (A total of 591 former students responded to this question.)

The paragraphs below summarize alumni comments. The comments themselves 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?

No response: 162
Total responses: 684 (81% of returned survey respondents)

Academics: 551 (81%)²

Relationship with professors/advisors: 309 (45%)

Of the positive comments related to academics, 309 (45%) former students commented on positive relationships with professors or advisors: 183 (27%) 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 126 (18%) 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, working on research projects with students, and exhibiting a passion for their subject matter.

Specific programs; coursework; scheduling; overall education: 242 (35%)

Specific majors, courses, or programs had the greatest impact for 98 (14%) alumni. These comments included enjoyment of specific courses/programs, hands-on experiences through internships and practical opportunities, and preparation for employment. Forty-three (6%) positive comments were given concerning the small class size of most of Eastern's courses while seventeen (2%) comments were offered concerning the flexibility of schedules and variety of courses. Eight (1%) former students cited study

¹ There were 2,136 potential graduates in this cohort. A total of 229 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 or total number of returned surveys.

abroad opportunities as having had the greatest impact. Fifty-seven (8%) of the positive academic comments concerned the high level of education or simply completing a degree, and twenty-eight (4%) comments related to pedagogy or specific coursework, such as group work, developing communication skills, and hands-on approaches.

Student Life: 224 (33%)

Relationships/social activities/Greek System/Housing: 165 (24%)

Involvement in the Greek System had the most positive impact for 44 (6%) of our former students while 102 (15%) cited personal relationships with friends, family, and loved ones as the most important.

Activities/Recognized Student Organizations/Athletics: 59 (9%)

Twenty-five (4%) respondents indicated that their involvement in campus activities in general had the most positive impact on their time spent at Eastern. Other respondents listed specific organizations, athletics, volunteer work, honoraries, or opportunities in the co-curriculum.

University-wide Issues: 103 (15%)

Facilities/Services/Community/Staff/Diversity: 67 (10%)

Forty-five 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 45 respondents (8%) cited positive comments in response to the negative impact question. These comments discussed happy memories of their college years and their overall enjoyment of college life. Seventeen (2%) former students indicated that campus services or facilities, like textbook rental and the library, had the most positive impact on their time at Eastern. Five (1%) alumni indicated that the friendly people with positive, caring attitudes contributed positively to their education.

Personal Growth: 36 (5%)

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: 255
Total responses: 591 (70% of returned survey respondents; 502 negative impact)
Nothing negative: 89 (15%); 44 additional positive comments (7%)

Academics: 308 (52%)

Relationship with professors/advisors: 143 (24%)

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, or 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. Ten (2%) 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: 165 (28%)

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. Seventy-eight (13%) expressed dissatisfaction with particular courses, programs, or pedagogy (such as attendance policies, lectures, group work, and assignments/exams).

Student Life: 92 (16%)

Relationships/Social Activities/Greek System/Housing: 84 (14%)

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 former 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: 8 (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: 147 (25%)

Facilities/Services/Community/Staff/Diversity: 147 (25%)

Forty-three alumni commented negatively on campus services, offices, programs, or facilities, including parking facilities, construction of Doudna and the temporary art facilities, lack of concern for commuters, and technology issues with PAWS or the internet. Eight (1%) comments fell into the category concerning people or staff members being difficult to understand or lacking helpful attitudes. Thirty-three (6%) alumni comments were related to deciding on a major for a career, their career preparation, career services, or job placement. Twenty-eight (5%) respondents indicated that financial aid concerns, tuition and fees, and loans had the most negative impact on them during their time at Eastern. Problems with the Charleston community such as limited restaurant and shopping choices were listed as the most negative part of their college experience by 31 (5%) respondents to this question. Other issues in this category concerned the distance to Eastern from former students' homes and the rural location.

Personal Growth: 0