

Alumni Survey 2004, One Year (or less) Out (2003 graduates) Summary of Qualitative Data

There were 851 alumni surveys returned out of 1,940 graduates¹ for a 44% return rate. The number of responses given below will not total 851 because some former students gave responses falling into more than one category. Categories were created after sorting comments. 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 724 alumni responded to this question.) And, *What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern?* (A total of 681 former students responded to this question.)

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

No response: 127

Total responses: 724

Academics: 618 (85%)²

Relationship with professors/advisors: 389 (54%)

Of the positive comments related to academics, 389 (54%) former students commented on positive relationships with professors or advisors: 202 (28%) discussed professors in general and commented on their interactions with faculty, faculty with helpful, encouraging, and caring attitudes, their approachability and availability outside of class, dedication to helping students learn, and knowledge of subject matter. An additional 187 (26%) 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: 229 (32%)

Specific majors, courses, or programs had the greatest impact for 128 (18%) alumni. These comments included enjoyment of courses, working as an assistant in a laboratory, doing independent research with a faculty member, connecting class work to real life experiences like student teaching, and receiving a solid foundation for employment. Forty (6%) positive comments were given concerning the small class size of most of Eastern's courses while fifteen (2%) comments were offered concerning the flexibility of schedules and variety of courses. Twenty-eight (4%) of the positive academic comments concerned the high level of education or simply completing a degree, and fourteen (2%) comments related to pedagogy or specific coursework, such as group work, developing communication skills, and hands-on approaches.

¹ There were 1,972 potential graduates in this cohort. No addresses were available for 27 of those alumni and 5 were returned to us as non-deliverable. As a consequence, 32 alumni were not reachable. 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.

Student Life: 224 (31%)

Social activities, including personal relationships and participation in the Greek System, were listed as having the most impact for 134 (19%) alumni. Eight-six former students mentioned making life-long friends, meeting spouses, and enjoying the interaction with peers while 48 cited Greek affiliation as having the most positive impact. University-sponsored activities, Recognized Student Organizations and college athletics had the most impact for 90 (12%) former students. Twenty-eight students singled out religious organizations, like Christian Campus House and the Newman Center, or volunteer/service organizations like Epsilon Sigma Alpha as their most valued experiences. Twenty-two named athletics or participation in intramurals as among their favorite memories of Eastern, and forty former students cited RSOs like the Business Advisory Board or other activities such as working for the Daily Eastern News or WEIU-TV as having the most impact on their lives. Twenty-one former students listed experiences in the residence halls as having the most positive impact, including working as an R.A.

Facilities/Services/Community/Staff: 72 (10%)

Twelve former students indicated that campus services or facilities, like the library or Rec Center, had the most positive impact on their time at Eastern. Twenty-one alumni indicated that the friendly people with positive, caring attitudes contributed positively to their education. Eleven students indicated that meeting people from diverse backgrounds had the most positive impact.

Personal Growth: 34 (5%)

Respondents whose comments fell into the personal growth category indicated they became more independent, learned how to deal with a variety of people, learned about themselves, achieved personal goals, and developed skills like problem-solving and time management.

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

No response: 170
Total responses: 681 (516 negative impact)
Nothing negative: 165 (57 additional positive comments) (24%)

Academics: 324 (45%)

Specific programs, coursework, scheduling, and overall education were listed by 164 (24%) respondents as having the most negative impact on them. Comments dealing with programs and coursework often involved what former students were not taught that they thought they should have learned while at Eastern, the disconnection between coursework and current jobs, scheduling problems, complaints about busy work and unhelpful course content, problems with internships or student teaching, and the lack of clinical or hands-on experience. One hundred and thirteen alumni (17%) indicated that faculty members had created their most negative experiences while 47 (7%) targeted poor advising. Negative responses targeting faculty or advisors focused on poor teaching abilities, uncaring attitudes (insensitive, arrogant, disrespectful, lack of enthusiasm), professors who seemed biased or had an agenda that was brought to classroom lectures, and not being challenged. Alumni whose most negative experience was advising complained of being told to take classes they did not need, the difficulty of receiving advising information for off-campus programs, not receiving helpful information from advisors, and confusion over requirements.

Campus Community/Services: 217 (30%)

Campus services, facilities, people, and diversity accounted for 159 (23%) negative comments. Of these comments, 78 are related to particular offices or issues like financial concerns and career placement. Thirty-four (5%) of respondents cited money worries, tuition/fee costs, financial aid, and the state of the economy as their most negative experience. Several of these former students stated that working long hours and going to school had a detrimental effect on social and family lives. Since the cohort surveyed had been graduated one year or less, a number of the respondents were either still looking for a job or had very recently completed that search. As a result, 28 (4%) of them listed Career Services, the job hunt, or their preparation for work as having the most negative impact on them. Eighty-nine respondents cited some issue with campus facilities or technology: 54 took issue with campus construction; 17 shared complaints about parking, and 9 reported being dissatisfied with technology. Eighteen former students reported issues with staff members not being student-oriented or not answering their questions. The Charleston community was cited as the most negative experience by 23 alumni who listed issues like bad landlords, lack of businesses, and the size of the town. Eight students commented on the lack of diversity or racial incidents as having the most negative impact on their time at Eastern.

Student Life: 112 (15%)

Of the alumni who indicated that an aspect of student life had had the most negative impact, 78 (11%) fell into the categories of relationships/Social Life/Drinking/Greek System. Of those 78, 45 indicated a problem with a friend, family member, or significant other. Only 9 alumni indicated that problems with partying or drinking had had a negative impact on their time at Eastern. Nineteen former students stated that participation or non-participation in the Greek System had constituted their most negative experience. Activities, Recognized Student Organizations, and Athletics were listed by 19 (3%) alumni as their most negative experience. Several former students stated that there was a lack of things to do off campus and on campus. Some former students reported that problems with coaches or athletic teams constituted their most negative experience. Only 15 (2%) former students cited complaints against housing and dining services at Eastern with complaints surrounding roommates, room temperature, and food quality.