

Alumni Survey 2005, Five Years Out (2000 graduates) Summary of Qualitative Data

There were 765 alumni surveys returned out of 1946 reachable graduates¹ for a 39% return rate. The number of responses given below will not total 765 because some former students gave responses falling into more than one category. 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 569 alumni responded to this question.) And, *What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern?* (A total of 475 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.

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

No response: 196
Total responses: 569 (74% of returned survey respondents)

Academics: 441 (78%)²

Relationship with professors/advisors: 267 (47%)

Of the positive comments related to academics, 267 (47%) former students commented on positive relationships with professors or advisors: 161 (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; their dedication to helping students learn, and their knowledge of subject matter. An additional 106 (19%) 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: 174 (31%)

Specific majors, courses, or programs had the greatest impact for 79 (14%) alumni. These comments included enjoyment of courses, using coursework for a portfolio for employers, study abroad experiences, hands-on experiences through internships and practica opportunities, and preparation for employment. Forty-five (8%) positive comments were given concerning the small class size of most of Eastern's courses while seven (2%) comments were offered concerning the flexibility of schedules and variety of courses. Thirty-one (5%) of the positive academic comments concerned the high level of education or simply completing a degree, and twelve (2%) comments related to pedagogy or specific coursework, such as group work, developing communication skills, and hands-on approaches.

¹ There were 2167 potential graduates in this cohort. A total of 221 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.

Student Life: 243 (43%)

Relationships/social activities/Greek System/Housing: 174 (31%)

Social activities, including personal relationships and participation in the Greek System, were listed as having the most impact for 174 alumni (31%). One hundred-fifteen former students (20%) mentioned making life-long friends, meeting spouses, and enjoying the interaction with peers. Thirty-two former students (6%) indicated Greek affiliation as having the most positive impact while 25 (4%) cited living in University housing or being an RA.

Activities/Recognized Student Organizations/Athletics: 69 (12%)

University-sponsored activities, Recognized Student Organizations and college athletics had the most impact for 69 (12%) former students. Fourteen students (2%) singled out religious organizations, like Christian Campus House and the Newman Center, or volunteer/service organizations as their most valued experiences. Fourteen (2%) named athletics or participation in intramurals as among their favorite memories of Eastern, and 23 (4%) former students cited RSOs or other activities such as working for the *Daily Eastern News* or WEIU-TV as having the most impact on their lives. Former students credited such activities as helping to develop their leadership and communication skills.

University-wide Issues: 128 (22%)

Facilities/Services/Community/Staff/Diversity: 84 (15%)

Fifty alumni (9%) indicated the overall experience at Eastern, the small campus, and the friendly atmosphere as the most positive things about their time at Eastern. Five former students indicated that campus services or facilities, like textbook rental and the counseling center had the most positive impact on their time at Eastern. Ten alumni indicated that the friendly people with positive, caring attitudes contributed positively to their education. Seventeen former students (3%) 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: 44 (8%)

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, 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:	290
Total responses:	475 (62% of returned survey respondents; 331 negative impact)
Nothing negative:	143 (35%); 61 additional positive comments (13%)

Academics: 206 (43%)

Relationship with professors/advisors: 87 (18%)

Former students who indicated that faculty or advisors had had the most negative impact on their time at Eastern mentioned people who were arrogant, inadequately prepared, out of touch with the profession/field, poor classroom attitudes, too difficult, uncaring, incompetent, and unfair. Some alumni

expressed feeling as if they had been discriminated against because of gender or political and religious beliefs.

Specific programs; coursework; scheduling; overall education: 119 (25%)

Former students indicated frustration with trying to get into classes in their freshman and sophomore years, the scarcity of evening course offerings, bringing courses in from other institutions, and touch-tone registration. 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 particular courses, pedagogy (such as attendance polices, lectures, and assignments/exams).

Student Life: 46 (10%)

Relationships/social activities/Greek System/Housing: 38 (8%)

Some alumni expressed dissatisfaction with the actions of their peers, the quality of the other students in their classes, competitiveness of other students, or the small number of adult students in their programs. Others described feeling like they did not fit in or make any friends during their college years. Several former students indicated that partying too much had had a negative impact on their experiences at Eastern. Others indicated that involvement with Greek organizations or students who belonged to such organizations had marred their college life. A few former students expressed dissatisfaction with residence hall life.

Activities/Recognized Student Organizations/Athletics: 8 (2%)

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: 117 (25%)

Facilities/Services/Community/Staff/Diversity: 95 (20%)

A few former students expressed the opinion that Eastern lacked the funding and amenities of other 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 construction that took place during their college years 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, crime, and issues with the local police. Other respondents suggested the lack of diversity, discrimination, or segregation had a negative impact with others expressed problems with the diversity of people on campus.

Personal Growth: 22 (5%)

Former students whose responses fell into this category admitted to a lack of maturity during their college years or poor decision-making or planning. Others indicated sicknesses that affected their education, commute time to campus, or failing to take advantage of services or opportunities.