Alumni Provide Feedback

Annually, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) requires all four-year public institutions to survey their alumni based on an annual rotation of one year, five years, and nine years from graduation. In 2004, Eastern surveyed former students who graduated one year ago in 2003. A total of 44% of surveys were returned.

In addition to the questions provided by IBHE, Eastern asks its former students to answer two open-ended questions: What had the most positive impact on you during your time at Eastern? What had the most negative impact on you during your time at Eastern? A total of 724 students responded to the positive impact question with 85% of those comments related to academics. Of the positive comments related to academics, 54% of former students commented on one-on-one interactions with faculty, faculty showing concern and interest for students’ learning, their approachability and availability outside of the classroom, and knowledge of the subject matter. Faculty members were commended for challenging students, knowing students’ names, providing excellent instruction, and preparing students for their careers. “Many of the instructors I had were very positive in their attitudes toward teaching and towards wanting us to succeed as a student. This made classes interesting and easier to comprehend what was being taught,” one former student wrote.

Thirty-two percent of alumni (Continued on page 2)

Provost’s Assessment Awards

For the third year in a row, the Provost’s Awards for Assessment were given to programs excelling in or greatly improving in assessment. This year’s winners are the M.B.A. program, Family and Consumer Sciences’ Undergraduate Dietetics Program, and the Undergraduate program in Chemistry.

The awards were presented to department representatives at the Dean’s retreat held at the Neal Welcome Center on November 22. When asked how she felt when she learned that her program was one of the recipients, Cheryl Noll, Associate Chair, School of Business, said, “I was really excited! It’s important for programs making an effort to be recognized along the way.”

Noll acknowledged that working on the assessment plan in her department “was one of my primary program goals for the year because we have noticed the changing demographic in our program, and we have to address those demographics. We’re having more students continue their graduate education immediately following their undergraduate work. So, we’re trying to build assessment into the way we do things around here.” (Continued on page 2)
commented favorably on specific programs, coursework, and their overall education. Forty comments noted the importance of small class sizes in contributing to their education. “Those instructors who, perhaps because of small class size, were able to recognize and remember me by name. I gained a great deal by getting to interact with my professors on a more personal level and felt that my education benefited through those relationships,” one alum wrote.

In addition to academics, 31% of alumni also listed social experiences and the co-curriculum as having the most positive impact on their time at Eastern. Forming personal relationships and social activities, including participating in the Greek system, topped the list for 19% of the respondents while 12% listed participation in a recognized student organization as providing the most positive impact. “All of the RSO’s made my time at Eastern full and exciting. RSO’s benefited me making me a stronger leader, learning how to work as a team member, and helped me to learn time management, prioritizing, and communication skills,” explained one alum.

Ten percent of alumni indicated that campus services or facilities had had the greatest impact while others cited friendly staff members.

Of the 851 alumni surveys that were returned, 516 alumni offered comments concerning negative experiences. Of these comments, 45% pertained to academics with 24% of the academic comments related to specifics programs or coursework and 17% related to faculty interactions.

This year’s respondents offered more negative comments about the campus community or services. Of the comments that fell into this category, 54 were related to campus construction. “The construction of the library was very difficult due to the dispersion of materials; however, the end result was tremendous,” noted one respondent.

To read additional comments or the executive summary of the alumni survey, visit the assessment web site at www.eiu.edu/~assess and click on “alumni survey.”

This year was the second year in a row that Chemistry won an award for its assessment plan. Doug Klarup, chair of the department, said, “We’re pleased at the support from CASA, the Provost, Dean Hanner, and the VPAA’s office.”

Chemistry’s plan “has tried to use measures already embedded in the curriculum like specific laboratory assignments and coursework, explained Klarup. Based on assessment data, the Chemistry department has “modified labs and changed some course requirements to better prepare students in certain areas like a better background in Physical Chemistry,” he added.

The Provost’s Award for Assessment is given annually each fall. Departments submit plans to the deans and the deans determine which programs to nominate.

Pictured: Cheryl Noll, Associate Chair, School of Business; Blair Lord, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Doug Klarup, Chemistry Department, Chair.