# Alumni Survey Analysis of Results
East Tennessee State University
Spring 2012

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Introduction
East Tennessee State University’s alumni satisfaction project conducted during the spring semester 2012 was designed to use open-ended questions to gather qualitative information about students’ experience at ETSU with a focus on student engagement and competencies. As described in the proposal for this project, we had five clusters of questions to ask. For ease of response and coding in the online form, we divided these into 10 distinct items with comment boxes (See Appendix A). Demographic information was also collected on major and year of graduation. The survey was distributed through email to alumni who graduated within the last five years for whom emails are available. The survey was also advertised on online alumni pages.

Research Questions
The alumni satisfaction project fulfilled our aim to gather information that is both specific and actionable. As with any qualitative study, we are not looking for generalizable data, but instead are looking primarily for ideas for improvement sparked by survey responses. Representatives from ETSU’s Office of Planning and Analysis, Student Affairs, Alumni Affairs and the Center for Academic Achievement developed survey items to address the following research questions:

- What helped these students feel connected to East Tennessee State University?
- What are the barriers for students who don’t connect to ETSU?
- What causes students to drop out of ETSU?
- What retains students when they face obstacles to staying in school?
- What learning outcomes from ETSU do alumni most value?
- What brings alumni back to campus after graduation?

Methodology
The survey consisted of two demographic multiple choice and ten open-ended questions. Open-ended responses were coded for “themes” or categories of response and analyzed based on pattern of response. Additional analysis explored outlying responses, and notable comments. Appendix A provides the full text of the survey, as it was distributed online through Zoomerang.

Response Rate
The survey was distributed by email to all undergraduate alumni from 2007-2011, to a total 9,968 valid email addresses. The survey was also linked on Facebook and on the Alumni website, resulting in five responses from individuals outside of our target demographic; these were discarded from analysis. Two hundred fourteen (214) valid respondents replied to the survey, for a response rate of 2%.

Response to the survey was small and self-selected, so most respondents either feel a relatively strong connection to ETSU or have an opinion to share with ETSU administration. Qualitative analysis takes into account the themes of individual responses as well as the aggregated opinions expressed in the survey. “Notable comments” and full text reported in appendices give voice to individual respondents.
## Findings

### Demographics

**1. Graduating Class / Year:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2. Major / Field of Study:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major / Field of Study</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountancy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied Health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice and Criminology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Hygiene</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Media</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Technology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Studies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Design</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Studies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and Leisure Management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying and Mapping Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>219</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Includes five individuals outside demographic target. Those five are eliminated from analysis of open-ended questions.
Connections: Questions 3, 4 & 12

Question 3: What kinds of relationships or activities helped you feel connected to ETSU when you were a student?

Question 4: What can we do to help our current students feel more connected to ETSU?

Question 12: Tell us your story of your absolute favorite thing about ETSU. Why was it your favorite?

The first two substantive questions on the survey explored the connections that students make at ETSU, and alumni perspectives on how ETSU can enhance those connections. The survey’s final question pushes further to ETSU students’ deepest connections, exploring the components that help create “the ETSU Family.”

Most respondents expressed a sense of connection to the institution, and identified specific activities and relationships that helped them feel connected. Figure1 represents these responses. Appendix B provides all themes related to these three questions.

![Connections Diagram]

**Figure 1:** Top categories of response to questions 3, 4, and 12, with quantity of responses for each category.

Question 3: What kinds of relationships or activities helped you feel connected to ETSU when you were a student?

Numerically, the answers to this question mirror exactly the top categories for the total of the three “connection” questions. Generally, students identified specific activities, organizations, and relationships that connected them to ETSU and to one another. Some representative positive responses to this question include:

- The relationships I formed within my department with other students, with professors, and others were the most important [to help] me feel connected.
- Being a part of the Honors College had a huge impact on my time at ETSU. There was a connection, and feeling...
of belonging, that truly made my transfer from a community college into the much larger scope of ETSU a success, in many ways.

- Guest speaker lectures, using the library, using the health clinic & counseling center, being part of the MSWSA
- Going to basketball and baseball games with others in my dorm; going to places like CPA, RUF, and BCM; teachers that were willing to help and cared.
- I was part of several student organizations on campus. Those activities and the relationships that I made with the members of those organizations made me feel connected.

**Question 4: What can we do to help our current students feel more connected to ETSU?**

Responses to Question 4 repeat the importance of campus activities, organizations, and friendships, but they add to the mix suggestions regarding living on campus and diversity. Notable responses to this question include:

- Freshmen (entering from high school) should live on campus for at least one semester to get the full 'college experience' even if they live in the tri-cities area. It really helps you to feel connected to campus and activities. It is a good opportunity for many students to break away and be independent for the first time.
- There seem to be plenty of activities for students to participate in, so a little more advance notice of the events (when possible) might help students make the necessary preparations to fit the activities into their schedules.
- Work to make it a more inclusive and safe campus for people from all backgrounds.
- I would say help smaller groups and organizations advertise to the student body better. It's great when more students from different backgrounds become involved in those smaller groups.

**Question 12: Tell us your story of your absolute favorite thing about ETSU. Why was it your favorite?**

Students’ favorite memories of ETSU are a major part of their connection to the institution. Their responses to this question yielded a slightly different sense of the source of connections. Again, relationships with instructors and friends and campus organizations and activities were most commonly mentioned.

However, a new and relatively surprising category of “Beauty and Nature” rose to the top of these themes. This code was used whenever a student wrote about the physical beauty of ETSU’s campus, buildings, and landscape.

Another theme that was higher for this question than for others in this category was “ETSU Family.” These people indicated a sense of community and belonging, and commented on the friendly atmosphere of ETSU, or they found a sense of family with their own group of friends on campus. Specific comments include:

- My favorite thing about ETSU is the family atmosphere. If you do get involved on campus, you really develop an extended family through working and having fun with other students, faculty, and staff. That is one of the things I cherish most about my schooling here.
- The group of 6 people in nursing program that became a little family. Ate together, talked, laughed, exercised together, clinical’s, weddings together, 1st babys together.
- My favorite thing about ETSU is the people who were and still are a part of my life. You can build bell towers and, hopefully, parking garages but the strength of ETSU is the wonderful people who work there.
- My favorite thing about ETSU is how the whole ETSU community makes you feel like you are part of the family. I have never felt at home so quickly, or as much a part of a team as I have during my time at ETSU.
- The staff of ETSU make every person feel important. ETSU is large enough to count for national credibility but small enough to make the student feel at home. I almost feel out of place now that I’ve graduated and left the community even though I now am a member of the alumni. I miss being a student at ETSU.
Retention: Questions 5, 6 & 7

Three questions addressed issues of retention, through exploration of how successful students overcame challenges and respondents’ perceptions of the experience of those who left ETSU.

Question 5: Tell us about a time when you faced a major challenge in college. Everyone’s challenges are different—be they financial, academic, or personal—but they often cause students to drop out or take time off from school. We’re interested in learning things to help other students face the challenges they encounter.

Question 6: What were the most common reasons why people you knew at ETSU dropped out of college?

Question 7: In your opinion, how can we help more of our students stay in school and complete their degree?

In answering these three questions, respondents targeted a constellation of challenges that students face at ETSU that may cause them to drop out and a variety of mitigating factors that help keep them in school. Figure 2 represents some of the most commonly cited factors. “Make-or-Break” elements are those that can either cause students challenges or keep them in school, depending on the relationships they make and the information they receive from the individuals in those roles. A complete list of themes identified for these questions is available in Appendix C, and the full text of notable challenges and successes are reproduced in Appendix D.

Money is the primary challenge alumni cite for themselves and their friends. Intertwined with issues of balancing work and school, losing financial aid, or just dealing with the red tape of obtaining and retaining financial aid, is an underlying concern over tuition increases and a tight job market. Most of the other top challenges involve financial issues: students with medical issues have attendance problems and grades drop, but they also have medical bills to pay and concern over doing that while paying for school. It is primarily in the arena of money that students label the university “uncaring.” That same label applies when students perceive faculty or advisors as being unsupportive when problems occur.

Appendix D provides the full text of substantive Questions 5 and 6 responses, in order to provide the complexity and context for individual stories of overcoming obstacles to graduation.

Appendix E provides full text of selected suggestions for improving retention that respondents offered in answer to questions 5-7. The suggestions listed are those that go beyond the general supports described in Figure 2.
Learning Outcomes: Questions 8 & 9

We asked two questions to find out what students felt they learned at ETSU and what we might be able to improve on.

**Question 8:** Of all the things you learned at ETSU, which have proved to be the most valuable or useful?

The answers to question eight varied from specific job skills to broader lifelong learning objectives. Appendix F lists, by topic, responses to this question. Respondents provided answers categorized under the following themes, listed in order of frequency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Content</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships, Interpersonal Communications</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning, Critical Thinking &amp; Problem-Solving</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance, Work Ethic, and Focus and lack thereof</td>
<td>1,15,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence and Self-Reliance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management &amp; Organization</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Skills and Emotional/Physical Self-Awareness</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence &amp; Self-Esteem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Respect for Others, and Open-Mindedness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Challenges**
- Money (112)
- Academic frustrations/poor grades (46)
- Family Obligations (30)
- Medical Issues (23)
- Partying, lack of responsibility (18)
- Work-Life Balance (21)

**Supports**
- Counseling Center (24)
- Personal support system (family, friends, may or may not include campus factors) (23)
- Tutoring services (20)
- Flexible schedules and online offerings (15)
- Campus Activities and Events (10)

**Make-or-Break Elements**
- Professor-Student Relationships (34)
- Advising (25)
- Career advisement & job search (15)

Figure 2: Challenges and Supports for Retention
The category with the most entries is subject content, indicating that these alumni value the specific content taught in courses. This category includes very specific courses ("I have also—surprisingly—used Probability and Statistics frequently"), specific course content ("I learned how to properly write a resume and cover letter while I was taking my technical writing classes."), and general subject knowledge ("I truly learned a lot about my field"). The next categories—Relationships/Interpersonal Communication and Lifelong Learning/Critical Thinking/Problem Solving—show that broader learning outcomes are equally valuable to our graduates. Notably, there appears to be no pattern among major fields of study as to which learning outcomes are valued more highly.

**Question 9: What didn’t you learn at ETSU that you wish you had?**

Question nine explores the areas that alumni perceived as missing from their ETSU educational experiences. Figure 3 portrays the five main themes for this question. Many respondents identified specific topics they felt were lacking in their programs of study, either as part of the major or electives. For example, one engineering technology major indicated that he is learning at his job “project management skills, computer modeling, etc.” that he wished he had learned in coursework. A history major wished to have learned Latin, and one social work major wished to have learned Spanish. A few offer suggestions farther afield from their major, such as the Engineering Technology major who wished to learn sword fighting. Related to these subject-oriented needs, a number of students express the wish for more time in the field. “I wish that I had more hands on experiences. I wish that I had been in my field from day 1 instead of my last year….I think ETSU needs to get students out in the real world sooner rather than later” wrote one human services major. Others describe factors related to career advisement and job search. Most of these expressed dismay that they didn’t realize how difficult finding a job is, and how tight the job market. Others simply want to know “how to find a good job.” The final group wished they had learned more about personal finance. The burden of student loans, and general money management was mentioned in this category. Appendix G provides a complete list of responses to this question arranged by major to help give context for disciplinary answers.
Alumni Connections: Question 10 & 11

These questions push further into the connections students made on campus to identify the connections that bring them back after they finish their bachelor’s degree.

Question 10: When was the last time you were on campus? Why were you here?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why were you here?</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Ceremonies (own or others)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Classes or Workshops</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Activities, Events, or Organizations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on Campus</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Friends</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give Back to Campus</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Professors</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Campus (driving, walking through)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Family (or bringing them to school)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick up Diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Fairs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the President</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Cities Events</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Pictures</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing Center</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick up Transcript</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 11: If you haven’t been on campus since graduation, what would bring you back?

Out of 34 responses of individuals who have not returned to campus since graduation, four people indicated that nothing could bring them back to campus (See discussion, below, of “individual differences”). Three indicated that they live far enough away that they would only visit campus if they were in the area for another reason. Others named the activities or events listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What would bring you back?</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take Classes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Events (including class reunions)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Activities, Events, or Organizations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Ceremonies (own or others)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Professors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Campus (driving, walking through)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on Campus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Friends</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with Job Placement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable comments from Questions 10 and 11:

- I am looking forward to the new baseball field. I would be even more excited if you could get the JC Cardinals in there too.
- Have a more robust alumni activity plan.
- I can't think of anything. I keep getting requests for money, which seems to be the only reason that the school has any interest in alumni.
- When I came back in February, I found out I could not login on the ETSU WIFI. I can login at McDonalds, Wendys, and the Carnegie. Must be they care about me more than ETSU. The Alumni should ALWAYS have access to the library and the WIFI network with their personal laptops. You never know when you will need to call one of us in on a favor. It is very inexpensive, and it does a world of good to build goodwill with your Alumni base. Shutting off my WIFI was like slamming a door in my face! Please turn my WIFI back on!!

Individual Differences

The above analysis explores predominant themes of all respondents on individual questions. The section that follows explores themes that arise in individual respondent comments on the entire survey. These individuals provide additional insight into the “outliers” or less common stories that are told from a particular perspective.

Online, nontraditional, off-campus, and commuter students

Of all the survey respondents who said that they had “no connection” to campus, all but one of them described themselves as nontraditional, online, or commuter students. Of this population, those that did connect to campus did so through instructors, cohorts, or classmates. One connected because s/he was related to a person who worked on campus.

Another, who took classes online and at Pellissippi State, expressed the careful balance between making campus connections and serving the needs of those who choose to take courses off-campus and online: “while traveling to campus for speeches and tests was a lot of trouble and quite stressful, being on campus for class functions really helped me to feel connected….for remote students, getting them to campus is the biggest thing [to build connections]. However, I don't necessarily think they should be required to visit campus [because] that takes away one of the biggest perks of attending remotely.” Visits from main campus may help connect off-campus students, as well: “Visits and gifts from the main campus was always a nice surprise. I especially felt proud when the dept of Continuing Studies came to class one night & brought us ETSU continuing studies tshirts. Sounds silly, but we were all so proud.”
Online and off-campus students also wish for more virtual connections with their colleagues: “I wish there were more opportunities for dist ed students such as an online forum/community to chat/webchat/help each other with homework and connect adult/dist ed. students with each other.”

These students also reported more issues with work/life balance and concern for child care and family-oriented activities on campus. Wrote one, “I would have participated in any on campus community that does volunteer work or just a group of students that connects parents who are students and allows them to bring their children to the activities. Having children as a student is not the norm so I would love to see more groups/activities for them and let them know about it through the online community.”

A number of them expressed the feeling of being second class citizens on campus: “Instructors treated those of us who had to work as if we weren't serious students, when exactly the opposite was true.”

**Bureaucracy and Lack of Connection**
Alumni who were the most negative throughout their survey responses indicated that they made no connections and won’t ever come back to campus. They are also among those who complain most consistently about campus bureaucracy. For some, administrative offices may have been their main point of contact with the campus, and negative interactions in those offices are their strongest memories of ETSU.

**Football**
Seventeen respondents in our selected demographic (graduating years 2007-2011) indicate an interest in football returning. Three others from outside the demographic also responded to the survey and voiced this concern. One individual specifically said NOT to bring back football, and another would like to see football reinstated, but is even more interested in beefing up the basketball program and playing in a more prestigious conference.

**Conclusion**
This survey will provide ample fodder for discussions in the coming academic year at ETSU. With 2011-12 as our university’s SACS year of record, we have decided to delay discussions and planning related to this data until fall 2012. At that time, a new Director of Assessment and Teaching will be in place to coordinate the review of compiled data in order to identify useful concepts gleaned from the survey. A committee will be appointed to create an action plan regarding the survey and to begin implementation of that plan.
ETSU Alumni Survey

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)

Graduating Class / Year:

- 2011
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008
- 2007
- Did Not Graduate

Page 1 - Question 2 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)

Major / Field of Study:

- Accountancy
- Allied Health
- Anthropology
- Applied Science
- Art
- Biology
- Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies
- Chemistry
- Computing
- Criminal Justice and Criminology
- Dental Hygiene
- Digital Media
- Early Childhood Development
- Economics
- Engineering Technology
- English
- Environmental Health
- Finance
- Foreign Languages
- General Studies
- Geography
- Geology
- Health Sciences
- History
- Human Services
What kinds of relationships or activities helped you feel connected to ETSU when you were a student?

What can we do to help our current students feel more connected to ETSU?

Tell us about a time when you faced a major challenge in college. Everyone's challenges are different - be they financial, academic, or personal - but they often cause students to drop out or take time off from school. We're interested in learning things to help other students face the challenges they encounter.
What were the most common reasons why people you knew at ETSU dropped out of college?

In your opinion, how can we help more of our students stay in school and complete their degrees?

Of all the things you learned at ETSU, which have proved to be the most valuable or most useful?

What didn't you learn at ETSU that you wish you had?

When was the last time you were on campus? Why were you here?

If you haven't been on campus since graduation, what would bring you back?
Tell us your story of your absolute favorite thing about ETSU. Why was it your favorite?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank You Page
### Appendix B: Questions 3, 4, and 12 Themes Frequency

Number of responses coded in each theme for Questions 3, 4, and 12. **Boldface** indicates the top five numbers in each category.

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**Appendix C: Questions 5, 6, and 7 Themes Frequency**

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**Appendix D: Questions 5 & 6 Notable Challenges and Successes**

Because the stories of individual challenges and successes are complicated and have multiple themes intertwined in each, the following is the full text of in-depth responses we received. Selected responses include both a challenge and the mitigating factor that helped overcome the challenge or suggest an opportunity for better campus support.

There were some times when the stress of having a full time job, full load of classes, and being a campus leader felt like too much. Usually when I was the most stressed was because of a combination of reasons.

The biggest challenge I had was during my first semester. I ended up failing a course. That was the first time that ever happened to me. I spoke with the teacher multiple times and he was not helpful in any way. After speaking with other faculty I discovered that this was his SOP. I am mid-way through a PhD program and have never been treated so poorly by an instructor in my academic experience. This teacher remains employed at ETSU and I have peers who suffered the same treatment from him. This person may be a good researcher, but he is not a good teacher. Many students have changed the emphasis of their major after participating in his class. I felt as if he injected me with destructive virus, had it not been for another faculty member coming to my aid (emotionally) I would not have returned to the program and this would have had a huge negative impact on my life. I knew prior to the end of the semester, that I would receive an F; however, I determined that I was not attending for the grade, I was attending the class to learn. I continued to attend every class until the end of the semester in order to be the best student I could be in spite of the instructor.

My son was diagnosed with depression and only one of his professors would accept a doctor's excuse for missing class and he had to withdraw. The Chair of the English department would not schedule a meeting with him to discuss the issue.

My close friend had an infant and attempted to return to school. She was not eligible and could not afford the child care at ETSU. She could not afford a babysitter as well. So she had to drop out of school due to not being able to afford childcare.

The constant run around by faculty and staff. every time you go to a office to ask a question, the send you to another office who will end up telling to go back to the office you were just at. Same thing happens on the phone. It took me talking to 17 people (some where the same) to just to get a hold removed because some how I paid my tuition at the beginning of the semester and at the end it showed I owed 50.00. 3 times I had 8:00am meetings with professors, I would have to take off from work to meet with them, only to have them either show up 15-20 mins late or not even show up.

I had a few friends drop out because they did not have a lot of support at home because they were the first ones from their families to go to college. They ended up moving back home because they work was too difficult and because their families had the "I told you so" or "school isn't important" mentality.

I suffer from OCD, Anxiety, and Depression. At time, I had trouble keeping up with work or other things. I was lucky that most of my professors understood.

Where to begin? Digital Media from start to finish was a complete disappointment with a precious few gems along the way.
- I transferred in with two years of credit (all of which was relevant core material and transferred successfully) and thought I
I transferred to ETSU halfway through my freshman year after taking a year off from my previous university. I left there partly because the balancing of priorities but that is part of learning how to manage your time.

I had several challenging times while at ETSU as I feel many students do. I believe the academic ones for me were the most important ones to overcome. I became acquainted with my professors to help build a group of people I could go to when I needed help with either advising or concerns about grades. Being able to talk with my professors and not only ones from my own department really helped me work through the issues I had and I think maybe other students could do the same. I had some amazing professors when I was a student at ETSU and they were just as valuable outside the classroom as they were in it.

Depression. That which goes up, must come down. When the down swings hit, you have to talk to other people. The professors I had were great at keeping me up, as well as friends I had.

I faced many major challenges while at ETSU. I had two of my grandparents pass away. Actually I had one of my grandfathers get very sick with cancer and so I stayed near home for the first 2 years and then transferred. I also have my youngest brother to get diagnosed with a blood clotting disorder which landed him in the hospital for 2 months. While I was able to continue with school during these times I feel like if I had not had the support system that I did this would not have been possible.

During my 2nd year (at another school) I could not afford the tuition and had to drop out. I got a job. Finally, I returned and got an Associate and a BA degree at 2 different schools - one was ETSU. I then worked for awhile and finally went back and got a Master's degree. (It took about 20 years to finish all of this.)

When I got sick during the semester and had to be hospitalized. Thank goodness that I had worked ahead of schedule and that I was an "online student".

Family responsibilities were always challenging because the balancing of priorities but that is part of learning how to manage your time.

I was struggling to get course work done due to the fact that I was a mother of two, working full-time and taking courses at ETSU. It was a constant struggle, but having online courses made things a little easier.

I dated a guy who was very depressed while at ETSU for two years. Most difficult time of my life putting up with his junk. I cried a lot but it didn't interfere with my academics. I wish that at the time I was instructed how to be just his friend instead of staying his girlfriend cause I felt like it would be wrong to leave. He thought he was helpless and hopeless, but God willing he made it through and I heard he actually graduated a few years ago!

I was trying to get back into school after my second academic suspension. My campus minister @ the BCM saw that I was growing up and came to my meeting with the vice-president or whoever was way up in the admissions process. He vouched for me and even though the vice president said I could come back even though he did not believe I'd ever graduate, I got my BSW and went back for my MSW. I also had a lot of problems paying for school even with financial aid.

My biggest challenge in college was graduating in four years. Due to a lack of good advising I had to take 18 hours of difficult courses one semester to stay on track and I had a really hard time getting the classes I needed when I transferred to ETSU from Pellissippi.

I moved overseas for a few months, and tried to take internet classes so I could still graduate on time. This was before the extensive internet classes ETSU has available now. It was near impossible to find anyone who would accommodate these requests, and I ended up taking classes that were completely unrelated to my major or minor.

My major challenge was making room for my class schedule around my mandatory work schedule. Find an understanding boss, who can take your change of learning location by being forewarned.

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because of profound homesickness, but also because I felt like the environment there was not healthy in terms of competitiveness, etc. (I had been in the university's honors college there, which accepted only about 100 students a year and was very centered not only on a common curriculum but also on a common living space. It was very difficult to get away from.) I did very well academically there, but there was a lot of pressure to succeed both academically and socially. I would have liked more acknowledgment that problems can occur and, frankly, that it's okay to take a bit of time off before you get burnt out.

When going through personal issues, it was nice to know I could go to my instructor, advisor, or the counseling center to let them know what was going on with me, and create a plan for staying on track in my program.

Just one time? I went through a period of depression (although I was not aware of it at the time) and withdrew from all my classes. My financial aid was suspended; my parents were really pissed at me for doing so. Bad semester... I regrouped before the winter break and talked to an advisor in another academic major than the one I was in. She talked to me about some career options I could do with the major. I think that was a turning point for me in college. That advisor really helped me that day; it was the last 'business' day of school before winter break and she was probably really busy but talked to me anyway. I ended up coming back to school in the spring and changing my major (to public health) and never looked back. I even got my masters in it. Professors like that can really have an impact on students' success in school—even them returning for another semester. But students should seek out help from faculty, advisors, counselors....they are here to help.

In my undergraduate program I did not take advantage of resources available to me (tutoring, etc) partly because I was a commuter student and really did not know what was available to me. No one pushed me to get the help I needed.

I had financial difficulties when I was at ETSU during my fall 2008 year and could not pay me fees. I got help from some minority scholarship and that was a miracle

Having a support system associated with the school. My sorority sisters and friends in the Greek community were always there for me and leaving them was never an option.

I was a single mother at ETSU. I couldn't have made it without Little Bucs, or the CAMPUS Grant they received to help parents pay for child care in college.

The first week I started ETSU I was terribly homesick. I wanted to go home, and home was Ohio so I was pretty far away; my mom encouraged me and told me to be strong. I stuck it out and am so glad I did, I love ETSU.

The only real challenges that I faced were working, school full time along with clinicals, and juggling 2 children. I have to say that my family provided wonderful support to me and I couldn't have done it without them. I would tell anyone going to college to make sure that have a support system whether it be family, church, friends, or groups.

Working as many as three jobs at once while carrying a full-load was challenging. Friendships and talking to professors was enormously helpful in overcoming the stress and anxiety associated with such a heavy work load.

I was mainly confused. I was questioning my religious beliefs and re-evaluating my morals in a party-centered world. I don't know how to resolve that kind of situation, other than to grin and bear it until the answers are revealed.

I transferred from a close-knit Christian college during my sophomore year. My first semester, I felt so alone. I tried to make friends with classmates, but I couldn't find anyone to really become close with. I would have benefited from someone trying to take an interest in me- maybe having the RAs try to spend quality time with small groups or one-on-one. I eventually become connected through a campus ministry, but I would have really loved some encouragement during those first lonely weeks.

When I was stalked on the dorm room phones. The campus police never caught anyone and it made living on campus a complete nightmare.

Poor reception from two of the instructors I had to deal. First time in the country's school system and encountering instructors with bias attitudes towards immigrants was highly challenging. But through it all, I got over, the thing that matters most.

For my first few years at ETSU I was undecided with my major. I was interested in a few different fields but still had not found one I was passionate about. The College of Bussiness did a good job connecting with me and other students. I feel like other colleges lacked this passion with me and others during the time I was going to be making a huge decision for my future.

Transitioning from Female to Male while being a full-time student living on campus. It was challenging to keep up with my course work when there were very few resources and outlets for me on campus. Students like me often feel a great deal of stress not knowing where we fit in. The counseling center was very important in my journey. The faculty and staff at ETSU must be more open-minded in realizing that not every student walks life in the same way.
A major challenge I had in college was a situation with what I was planning to do with my life. I was originally a pre-medical student. My pre-medicine adviser was awful in that she continually told me that I would never make it into medical school and that I should change my major. She never encouraged me nor did she ever help me figure out what to change my mind to or point me in the right direction. I had to figure things out on my own, and it took obtaining a bachelor of science in Biology through a miserable academic experience to realize that my true passion was in a completely different field.

I faced a challenge when I had missed the deadline for my internship. It was pure self motivation that got me through. I had my advisor tell me that I would never make it as a social worker. That negative attitude is was drove me to do the best I could during my internship. I appreciate the fact that other faculty supported me and gave me the opportunity to show the skills I had learned. Because of self motivation and other faculty support I was able to obtain my degree and find employment in my field a month after graduation.

As a freshman, I struggled with wanting to be thin and the challenges of gaining weight due to eating in the cafeteria. Friends and family surrounded me and helped me regain perspective on eating, diet, and exercise, for which I am very grateful. Having a variety of healthy foods in the cafeteria that are healthy and low-calorie would be helpful to students who are health conscious. Also, making the counseling services available to students better known so that girls struggling with Anorexia or Bulimia know where they can find help. Setting up a program with the dietetics program to teach classes on healthy and safe nutrition would also be beneficial.

The teachers who can hardly speak English and cannot teach well because of the communication barrier.

I broke my leg freshman year, the professors' willingness to accommodate and the disability service office was very helpful. The campus was very hard to navigate on crutches.

Racism is still happening. Not often but it is there. So dealing with being the minority on campus is kind of hard and frustrating when some of your colleagues can't get past the color of your skin.

I had to take a semester off due to medical issues. Encourage students and help them know ETSU wants to work with them if they have a difficult situation. I came back and finished up with Cum Laude honors.

Biggest challenge was not getting any type of support from the professors. They never seem to have any time to help students or would wait till the end of the semester to assign big projects or reports leaving you little time to complete.

I was faced with the unique challenge I was a senior in college when my husband joined the Army. I had to switch to online courses and change my major, which I didn't want to do in order to graduate. I think it would be very helpful for students to have a larger amount of courses available online so students could continue their majors.

One of the biggest challenges faced at ETSU were those dealing with incompetent teachers. While the vast majority of teachers were good there are a few who are horrible and the university has not made any efforts to let them go or alter their teaching methods for unknown reasons. While I am unaware of how these teachers fair with an official evaluation many of them hold the lowest possible score on multiple sites such as ratemyprofessor.com and that is simply unacceptable.

My first semester, I had a bout of anxiety and depression, as was hospitalized at Woodridge hospital for two weeks to overcome those issues. During that time, my instructors were very flexible and understanding, encouraging me to not focus on class, but focus on myself, which helped me to clear my mind and return to school. The chair of my department also called me every day to check on me and see if there was anything she could do. My department went above and beyond to treat me like a part of their family and not just a body in a desk. That helped me overcome my challenge, making me realize I wasn't going through this alone and I did have a school family to help me through whatever happened away from home.

During my senior year of college my mother was diagnosed with cancer and received chemo treatments. Because of the financial stress that caused our family we almost lost our house during this time. I can say staff was open to helping me, but I cannot say they ever identified how much I was struggling just to come to class. It was rough and it meant that I ended up failing a semester, but I survived and came back the next semester. I spent that semester in classes like solving the puzzle of life and art therapy to help work through all of the craziness I had just encountered. I was very thankful for that last semester and those classes.

When I was going through a divorce I fell apart emotionally and I couldn't focus on school. I did my best to try to keep my grades up but it was very difficult that semester. I ended up taking the next semester off before continuing.

The toughest challenge for me was being confident that I had chosen the right major. From my experience, most students did not come to college knowing what they wanted to do (neither did I). I had a few interests but didn't know about the amount of education required, what kind of job I could expect to be doing, or the demand for the type of job I would be going
into. I feel like many psychology majors feel that they can get a bachelor's in psychology and then find a job (that is most often not the case--more education is needed). I feel like incoming freshmen would benefit from a seminar (or similar lecture/presentation) that helped undeclared majors learn all of these aspects about majors and careers. I also feel like the demand aspect of a job is important. Some people may not be willing to move for a career, but the demand may not be high in smaller cities such as Johnson City and the surrounding areas.

My biggest challenge was during the start of the spring semester of 2010. My wife had gotten into a car accident which resulted in the death of a pedestrian (accident was not found to be the result of any fault to my wife, rather due to pedestrian's alcohol blood level). As you can image it was a hard time for us. I thought that I was going to need to drop out of school for at least that semester to help her get through this tragic accident. Thankfully the person's family never said anything hurtful toward my wife which was a blessing and we sent our deepest apologizes to them. What professors that I told were very sympathetic about the situation which helped ease my stress level as I continue in school. The result of the incident grew our knowledge and trust in the sovereignty of God. Without knowing that God is in control at all times we may not have been able to get through the situation. What peace we had that God has set the times of all of our births and all of our deaths no matter how accidental they may appear. He works ALL things for His glory and the good of those who love him!

My personal challenge came from home life. Maybe the University could offer more counseling for what may be happening to their students off campus. This may already exist; however, I wasn't aware of it. Great personal problems are becoming more and more the downfall of college students.

My sister and I decided to get our masters at the same time and we both have GAs. We also both started with a job off campus as well. I worked around 80 hours a week and went to school. I was able to manage my schooling and work. My sister however was not. She was ready to drop out of school so she could afford to live. I instead started helping her pay for things and picked up extra work when I could. Point being, for my sister the financial problems was enough to cause her to quit. I think if people just had more help financially it would make them feel less stressed all around.

Freshman year I had an incident no one should have to go through. Public safety treated me like crap through the whole process. I ended up depressed causing my grades to drop and for me to have issues at work causing even more financial struggles. I felt so alone on campus and so very unvalued. I nearly dropped out after a group project went south. The project carried 60% weight towards the final grade. Having a zero for 60 percent of my average screwed up my A average and I failed. I was at the point of being in deep student loan debt, I wasn't enjoying any aspect of my classes, and I just wanted to run away. Luckily I had a significant other, great friends, and supportive parents that pushed me forward. Now that it's over with, I'm glad I finished. Now if that piece of paper will just help me land a respectable job...

I was not given the same attention and respect as the male students in my class. The inability to focus on students rather than research made professors absent and indifferent to their students' education.

When I took human anatomy. It did not seem like I had enough time to study and I barely passed with a C-. I think having tutoring available, for anatomy would have been a big help.

At the beginning of grad school, my financial aid was two weeks late-and I got all my paperwork in on time during the summer. I had to wait two weeks to get my books because of this. This seemed to be a common theme that affected many students,some of which dropped out because of this. The Financial Aid office needs to be more efficient.

I developed anorexia my sophomore year. My disorder made it very difficult for me to enjoy school because I was very sick physically and mentally. It would have helped if I had had somewhere to turn for help and intervention.

I went through a divorce, being without a place to live in the state, and a cancer scare. I had great support from the people around me. I was not told I was missing a class and would not graduate until summer--until my last semester.

The business department really has it together when my son had mono I was given the options by several professors there to make up quizzes and tests that were a crucial part of my grade. I was very grateful for that. The other departments that I had to take core classes in we're not so accommodating. I was a serious student and was punished because my child was sick which is silly. I think a professor can tell which students are serious and which aren't.
Appendix E: Suggestions for Retention

Appendix E provides selected suggestions for improving ETSU that respondents offered to all questions, but in particular those focused on retention in questions 5-7. These suggestions provide more depth regarding general supports described in Figure 2 and provide additional specific feedback. Responses are divided into topical groupings for ease of reading.

Advising

- [Academic advisors should ] meet with students and not ignore them ever.
- Centralized student degree counseling. I can't stress how nice that would be with each counselor specializing in a several different departments, giving each student a clear plan, rather than coasting from semester to semester.
- COMMUNICATE. Students shouldn't take or pay for unnecessary classes. Likewise, students should know before they apply for graduation whether or not they have more than a semester's worth of classes left to take.
- Provide clear path to graduation and clearly communicate program requirements and course offerings up front.
- Students need more personal connections to their advisors early in their career. It was not until I was admitted into my program I received good and accurate advising. Faculty advisors should be trained and strongly connected to students from the beginning of the student's academic career.
- Expand the advisor role to address issues with grades, encourage tutoring and other ideas to include the advisor.
- Advising at ETSU can be a hit or miss. I had a great advisor as an undergraduate (Dr. Burgess) and a nonexistent advisor as a graduate student. I think there needs to be more accountability for advising. I have talked to many students who don't even know who their advisor was, or the advisor seemed to never have time to meet with them. A good advisor can keep a floundering student tethered to ETSU.
- Having designated advisers, much like those in the ARC who advise just undeclared majors, whose sole job is to listen and advise students to the appropriate paths.
- Have advisors that are more of a mentor and provide support for students rather than only being there to register them for classes.
- Improve training for advisers so they can better help students create a LONG TERM plan of study
- Mandatory meetings with qualified academic advisors at least twice a semester.
- Overhaul academic advising system so that advisors are actually telling students what needs to be done to complete degree. Too often my advisor just signed a piece of paper allowing me to register for classes, but didn't actually help me figure out exactly what classes I needed to take.
- Better advising and teachers actually caring if kids are doing bad and recommending different things for them

Campus Activities/Events/Organizations

- I would strongly encourage getting involved in something. Whether it's Greek life, or one of the other organizations on campus, or starting your own, get involved, find other students like you and work together.
- Encourage participation in campus activities. Whether they are cultural, social, Christian, service or whatever the administration needs to do better supporting all student organizations.
- Facilitate the connections between younger and older students as well as between students and staff. This could be via mentor programs...and similar situations that would encourage students to learn about otherwise undiscovered opportunities in life.
- Maybe if there was a football program ETSU would grow more popular and it would give the students something to look forward to.
- Hosting fun activities that does not involve drinking alcohol

Child Care

- Need for child care facilities.
- Offering free child care to full time students who has a child below school age.
- Providing affordable and high-quality child-care for students would also be very helpful.
- Provide child care or make more students aware of this option

Choosing a major and career

- It might be helpful to have available jobs that student workers can do in various majors and available starting freshman year so that they can start getting ideas of what might interest them. I struggled with that decision and would have liked to have had "apprenticeship" types of opportunities. It should be voluntary to participate but should pay like a student worker would get paid. If companies are involved, it might be that they could pay the worker as they would any other temporary worker. The student gets a chance to see what it's like and to network
with people in the industry. Possibly have a class for it. --- In other words, real-world experience with real pay and real experience BEFORE you graduate.

- I feel like incoming freshmen would benefit from a seminar (or similar lecture/presentation) that helped undeclared majors learn all of these aspects about majors and careers. I also feel like the demand aspect of a job is important. Some people may not be willing to move for a career, but the demand may not be high in smaller cities such as Johnson City and the surrounding areas.
- Perhaps increasing the availability of career guidance and program information would be helpful.
- Mandatory career counseling
- The Career Services Department should be advertised more.
- Offer more free counseling on majors.
- Also better educate students on the degree they are seeking. Many degrees simply do not have jobs available in the real world and students need to be informed of this before ever stepping into a classroom.
- Changing majors multiple times can be time-consuming, expensive, and discouraging. More resources should be available to have one-on-one time with a variety of mentoring professors from each department.

Job Placement

- Improve Placement Services to give them incentive to finish.
- Job Placement is crucial! I believe if you offered help with finding employment and helping more with the transition from college to work by helping with resumes and interview skills that more students would see the benefits of completing their degree.
- Partner better with local industries to create more available jobs for ETSU students and ask local industries what should be taught to gain their interest in ETSU graduates.
- Offer better job seeking services. If students have a better chance of getting a job when they graduate or even having internships while in school they will be more likely to stay in and graduate.
- Make ETSU's degrees more “exclusive.” For example, specialize in more academic areas so that a degree from ETSU is almost guaranteed to open doors after graduation.

Counseling

- Struggling with personal relationship issues (working on a divorce) probably was the most detrimental thing to affect my studies. Although it didn't affect "my" enrollment, similar situations can, and have, affected the enrollment of other students, nationwide. Making known that there are services (are there?) that can be used in these situations.
- Making the counseling services available to students better known so that girls struggling with Anorexia or Bulimia know where they can find help.
- Maybe the University could offer more counseling for what may be happening to their students off campus. This may already exist, however, I wasn't aware of it. Great personal problems are becoming more and more the downfall of college students.
- Expand the counseling center hours.
- Expand counseling services.
- Advertise the counseling center way more! Get people in there!
- Maybe mandatory counseling for those on academic probation, so they can regain the confidence to bring grades up

Diversity

- The faculty and staff at ETSU must be more open-minded in realizing that not every student walks life in the same way.
- Scholarships and diversity related activities. Getting everyone feel important and a part of ETSU family

Financial Aid

- There needs to be a representative for financial aid. Maybe a few, divided by last names. Someone you'd call an expert. Not just one of the ladies that has to ask someone else. Financial aid is a huge problem for many. My husband and I and our neighbors use to talk about this making students stumble.
- One issue that several of my friends who are still in school at ETSU have had a hard time with is the financial aid department. Something has got to change down there. There is no clear internal communication and it seems they are very far behind in technology as far as "losing forms" that students have sent in, etc. I also went to another college before transferring to ETSU and I had never heard anyone complain so much as students do at ETSU.
- Improve financial aid! More programs and better service, better expertise overall.
- Make ETSU's degrees more "exclusive." For example, specialize in more academic areas so that a degree from ETSU is almost guaranteed to open doors after graduation.
- Having friendly people to answer financial/scholarship questions would help.
• Better financial aid education
  - I think if people just had more help financially it would make them feel less stressed all around.
  - My financial aid was two weeks late and I got all my paperwork in on time during the summer. I had to wait two weeks to get my books because of this. This seemed to be a common theme that affected many students, some of which dropped out because of this. The Financial Aid office needs to be more efficient.
  - Higher experts within the Financial Aid departments looking to help students get grants not just loans.
  - Add the program where people can work on campus and pay for their education.
  - Rewards for academic achievement. Not just based on income.
  - More work study positions so they can make some money while taking classes.
  - Get creative with financing. Everything shouldn't have to go through a government program. Start a local micro loan market or start an ETSU credit union. I often wonder what the cost to ETSU is for each incremental student. It can't be very high, so there needs to be an emphasis on keeping students in school. You may even want to relax your account receivable standards - let students continue taking classes even if they have an unpaid balance. It's not costing you that much, and you're more likely to get paid eventually if the student completes his or her degree.
  - Having some sort of rebate option if they pass each semester. Possibly they receive a couple hundred dollars back if they pass the semester or credit the upcoming semester.
  - The work-study programs are a big help.
  - Offer more scholarship money. I was the valedictorian of my high school and didn't get near as much scholarship as many people I knew.
  - Increase financial aid staff numbers.
  - Inform them of scholarships and grants available.
  - Provide more information about work study.

Financial Issues
• I don't think that any school should charge out-of-state but I also know the financial hardships schools go through to stay afloat.
• It is important to let students know what the out of pocket expense is for a degree, especially during the summer. Summer tuition is considerably more expensive than fall/spring tuition, which can be a huge unexpected expense.
• Well, when the edu bubble bursts it'll be much easier, and waaaay cheaper... since the state of TN and all corresponding Universities have decided to continue to raise tuition every year I've been here... it can't continue... it will fall and fail like the house of cards it is... So my advice would be to drop tuition, that'll help everyone including ETSU.
• ETSU MUST address the cost of education by looking at alternative funding from sources other than students. MANY of my friends who dropped out left because they could not pay books, fees, tuition and maintain good grades while working full time to make the bills while raising a family.
• Figure out how to lower costs overall. It's not just about tuition, but also textbooks, supplies, and other expenses that come up each semester.
• Teach financial planning.
• Make books and tuition more affordable.
• Make students more aware of how and when to order their books online at substantial savings...I know this takes away from the bookstore sales but in some cases, like mine, it really saved me a lot of money that allowed me to continue my education and still provide for my family.
• Reduce the cost of tuition by using alternate forms of funding.
• Considering the increasing debt the average college student carries, I think some sort of economics or "personal finance" course should be part of the Gen Ed. curriculum.

Internships and “Real World” Experiences
• If relevant, I believe that practical experience of some sort makes the degree more meaningful. For me, being involved in a psychology research laboratory helped me understand what psychologists do and what graduate school would be like, which increased my motivation to do well in school. For people in other fields, somehow increasing their contact with real professionals in the field would be a great idea...increasing partnerships with local businesses and organizations. I know that NESCC does this well with their trade programs; I wonder if ETSU can improve this area in their degree programs.
• Apprenticeship type of program with real experience and real pay. Should not be an elective, not a requirement for a degree program, also not restricted to someone in that degree field. (I would have appreciated the ability to experience different work fields during all four years in order to decide better if my degree was a good fit or if I found something else more to my likes and abilities.)
• Offer opportunities outside the classroom, especially work-study in a relevant field and undergrad research.
• More opportunities for internships

Tutoring and other Academic Support
• [Put the] Nurses Resource Center [back] the way it was. Visited 2/13/12 looking for study guide for national test. Very disappointed the center was a meeting place, no books, no evidence of tutoring, sharing of class info.
• It would have been beneficial if there was online tutoring available [for online Probability and Statistics course].
• I think having tutoring available, for anatomy would have been a big help.
• Be more proactive about advertising tutoring and offer free tutoring which I think you already offer free tutoring...
• Create study groups.
• More promotion of the tutoring services that are available might be beneficial. I'm sure many students who would appreciate the extra help just aren't aware that it is available to them.
• Help students with things such as study skills and habits, time management, etc.
• A university tutoring and mentor service that can is reachable through web and/or in person.
• College of Nursing had tutoring for every class and that helped.
• Offer more student one-on-one help.
• Mentors, mentors, mentors. They let students know that somebody is there to listen, give advice, and direction.
• Online tutoring. Peer tutoring. Social networking. Goal setting workshops.
• Offer tutoring services for more subjects. Make tutoring and writing center referrals mandatory for students who receive an F on a test/paper.
• Encourage study help programs, seminars, and tutoring. Make those services more publicly available... especially to students who feel lost, confused in picking a major, etc.
• After a students grades drop, offer tutoring services for them at a reasonable cost.

Dealing with Personal Problems
• Have information available for students with ideas of how to cope with their problems.
• Provide means for stress relief and relaxation.
• Push the fact that there are places to go, people to speak with, about...stressors.
• Educate students on where and how to get help, including during times where they fall behind and feel overwhelmed.

Mentoring
• A lot of students are away from home for the first time, so a mentor-type program may be helpful.

Safety and Security
• Do not hire men who take advantage of young female students (though I am sure this is never done intentionally or knowingly). This happened to a friend of mine by an employee at the school and it was very difficult on her. This employee's co-workers knew what was going on and sought to have him fired. They did not bother to have anyone at the university contact her and offer assistance. All employees should be taught that when circumstances like that arise, they must report it to the administration and the administration should see to it that the victimized student receives care and attention.
• Prior to being supported though a Greek organization, I was a victim of a ATTEMPTED sexual assault. I was lucky, but I am sure there were other women without such luck. The University could invest in proactive education for freshman women and how to avoid placing themselves in dangerous situations. This could be part of a first year experience program?

Graduate Assistants
• Graduate assistants should not get to grade papers. If a student pays for a college class, the professor should be the one giving the feedback and the grades.

Professor-Student Relationships & Classroom-related
• Professors need to be more accommodating to students with children...they get sick we have to miss we are just asking that you work with us.
• Students should come first, not research, not acquiring grants, not departmental duties. Students at ETSU feel that they are nothing more than a number to most professors, that professors are not invested in their success, and it shows by our high drop out rate.
• Better professors to work with you on grades.
• Time to talk to professors other than by email.
• More one on one with the instructors.
• Encourage instructors to be flexible with deadlines and make-up work, even if they have to put up a strict front at the start of a semester to motivate students.
• Some professors require so much homework you feel like it's a 12-credit class for only 3 hours.
• I would suggest incorporating more teaching techniques that are interactive and encourage student participation and do not focus exclusively on lecture.
• Offer more course sections with smaller class sizes and more reasonable teacher to student ratios.
• CARE ABOUT THE STUDENTS’ SUCCESS!!!! Demand of professors a higher quality of involvement with the students, not as numbers filling seats. Also set standards for professors; if fifty-percent of a class is failing something is wrong WITH THE PROFESSOR. Pay better attention to evaluations, students genuinely tell the truth if they know that their answers are submitted anonymously and professores will not be able to see something written in their own hand. Put evaluations online and read them, and act upon them.
• Relate the subject matter to their own lives.
• Require that your instructors are ENGAGED with the students. Know who they are, know what they are trying to accomplish, know what motivates them.
• Communication between the student and the instructor is key. Instructors need to be available and students need to be encouraged to meet with/speak to them. If an instructor sees a student struggling, make it a priority to reach out to the student. Sometimes younger students are intimidated

Red Tape

• I would recommend making the process of withdrawing easier to understand and the forms (perhaps a checklist) available in one easy to find place. Also, make the terms and language of this process easier so that students can understand withdraw vs withdraw failing vs dropped and what they mean, what they require, and what will be the required to repeat the course.
• The constant need to correct Financial Aid, Registrar, and Admission mistakes is daunting. You are shuttled from department to department, without getting an answer or a solution to your problem. No one wants to step up and take responsibility. Paperwork is continually lost, misplaced, misfiled, and the student pays the price by having to correct it. I know many students who have just given up rather than go through one more paperwork nightmare with the college.
• I was not told I was missing a class and would not graduate until summer—until my last semester. It would help if they could tell people that sooner.
• Increase the staff and transparency of financial aid and registrar.
• Make the administrative aspects of applying to school more pleasant and easier to use. It seems like almost every department that could be helping students has chosen to harass them instead. Rules are not laid out clearly and when something is messed up, there is little help for the student besides to apply again the next semester.
• It’s time for the graduation office to be overhauled. COMPLETELY. The catalogs and transfer programs need to be simplified/unified so when a student transfers, they’re not told two months before graduation that they’re a class or two short because magically some obscure freshman level course taken at Northeast State didn’t transfer as the same course. And yes, this IS STILL GOING ON.
• I think people often just get burnt out and drop out for good because they can’t figure out how to just take some time off without having problems. If it were easier to take time off without worrying about losing out on scholarship money or something, I think it would help people to be able to come back to school.
• Smooth and consistent processes
• Show an interest in them without babying them. Too frequently, students feel they are getting the run-around (whether they are or not - it is the perception). Everyone on campus should be required to assist students with finding the answer to his/her question or seeing that the student is put in touch with the correct person - not pushing transfer on the phone. I think that a number of students get so frustrated that they just give up.
• Quit making the same students do verification 2-4 years in a row.
• Hire advisers that actually know what they are doing so students don’t have to take a surprise summer course or an extra year of courses because the adviser screwed up.
• Also, wouldn’t it to have people double-checking financial aid and how classes are registered (for example, changing from ALNU to NRSE and then billing the students for the Nursing Program’s mistake).

Advice to Students

• Students should seek out help from faculty, advisors, counselors....they are here to help.
• Always remember--this too will pass. Your time in college is but a moment compared to the scope of your life.
• [Students] MUST TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CLASSES.
• Communicate to them how important higher education in present economic times is to our present society.
• Teach them to do all things as unto the LORD. God has blessed us with gifts, talents, and opportunities and we should use them to Glory God by doing our best. After all God loved us so much that He sent His son to pay the debt of sin that we could never pay!

Flexible Scheduling

• From offering classes at convenient times to having fewer courses that are firmly required, the University could increase flexibility without sacrificing quality.
• I think it would be very helpful for students to have a larger amount of courses available online so students could
continue their majors.

- Offer more online classes, offer more classes at more flexible times, and more classes at more locations.
- Offer more classes throughout the year. Sometimes a class is only offered 1 time a year or only offered at night. This is stressful to single parents such as myself who want to finish school but have responsibilities at home, or who have no family in this area to help out. It would also be nice to offer more classes on other campuses. Even if they’re web based. Or offer web based classes we can take at home.
- I enjoyed my classes where I could watch the classes live from home. Utilizing these tactics could greatly help students stick it out better if their school schedule was a bit more flexible. I think this would be more beneficial to the older/less traditional students the most. However I was 22 taking these courses and loved them. I was able to work a full time job and still be a full time student without having to worry about a commute to class.
- Offer non-traditional class hours. (And not all night classes on the same evening so you can only take one class a term)

Curricula (including Gen Ed)

- Student teaching semester left no time for ANYTHING else. Need to make it two semesters of 6 hours each
- My MAT graduate program was so poorly structured that I almost quit at the beginning of my student teaching semester. I was scheduled to work with two teachers for my first placement and was told that I was responsible for completing what amounted to two six-week sessions, one for each teacher. Thankfully, my mentors helped me through it. I also often met in trailers or other teachers’ classrooms offsite because space on campus was not available; frequently, the teachers whose rooms we were using did not know we were coming. This created unnecessary strife. Also, the Teacher Work Sample, as it is currently structured, was a waste of time and an insult to my desire to be a teacher. Please revamp it.
- PHEX classes needed more available seats in their classes.
- I think it would be beneficial to have less busy work-pointless classes such as the general ed courses (speech, bio for non majors, etc) Let students get involved in their major classes sooner rather than later.
- I don't know if it is a TBR requirement or ETSU requirement, but the two years of core classes really make people want to leave before they get to their major. It is a repeat of highschool that I do not think is necessary. I personally would have enjoyed focusing four years on my major. I understand the desire for well-rounded students, but I got so bored in my core classes it was very hard to stay focused. When I got to my my major, I was taking 18-19 hours a semester and loved every minute. Maybe if there were a test to opt out of such classes?
- Not as many "shake out" classes early on.
- Offer more courses that allow for students to earn certificates without having to take a bunch of "filler" classes and expand the associate degrees.
- Make the requirements of Majors and Minors as well as General education easier to understand.

Housing and Residence Life

- As an RA, I often witnessed my residents struggle with such matters as financial distress, a lack of parental guidance, abusive relationships, drug abuse, sexual identity and life goals. I think that RAs in particular could be an effective front line for the challenges that students face while at ETSU. But for this to take place, the university would need to emphasize retaining residence hall staff and improve their training.
- I would have benefited from someone trying to take an interest in me- maybe having the RAs try to spend quality time with small groups or one-on-one. I eventually become connected through a campus ministry, but I would have really loved some encouragement during those first lonely weeks.

Food

- Having a variety of healthy foods in the cafeteria that are healthy and low-calorie would be helpful to students who are health conscious. Setting up a program with the dietetics program to teach classes on healthy and safe nutrition would also be beneficial.

Alumni Connections

- Discussion boards from current and past students that share the experiences and how they got over educational, financial, living barriers
- I think encouraging alumni relations to be a source of networking, allowing students to see the light at the end of the tunnel and encouraging communication and possible tips to make it through the individual programs would be helpful. Alumni have a lot to offer, and I know when I was going through it, it allowed me to be more knowledgeable about what the program required and how to make it through.

General

- Add a bonus program. Such as parties for certain people with good GPA's.
- Provide a site where students can voice their concerns without worrying about repercussions from professors. Unless they happen to be in a specific program (Honors etc) they have no advocate, no one to help them navigate the paperwork nightmare, and mistakes made by lost paperwork, and bad professors.
• Encourage students and help them know ETSU wants to work with them if they have a difficult situation. I came back and finished up with Cum Laude honors.
• I think encouraging those who are all in the same program to have a time and place to get together to air grievances, or just get together to vent is VERY helpful.
• Build a parking garage!
• [School shouldn’t be] a hassle, parking, tickets, getting around campus, teachers who didn’t seem to care, and offices like financial aid and bursars office-- where the students seem to be treated as a burden, rather than the reason that the school is here).
• College isn’t for everybody. It’s important that ETSU isn’t putting the focus on getting drop outs to come back. Rather, I feel ETSU needs to focus on the great students that continue to succeed. It's quality vs. quantity.
• Many complain about being forced to take classes that are completely unrelated to their major and I even debated dropping out because of the huge amount of “filler” classes that would be better supplemented by education in the field a student has chosen.
• You have to learn that I am the customer, you should respect me, not abuse or chide me. Many students got caught in classes without any tutor support. Please lose the sink or swim attitude! That is total garbage!
• Be more organized. I attend graduate school at Liberty University. The organization and personal attention that I received there shocked me. They knew what I needed to do and when I needed to do it. I often received phone calls from knowledgeable university employees to remind me of the next steps that I needed to take. I could call at any time and get an advisor that could actually help me almost any time. Getting planning help at ETSU was like pulling teeth. The advisors were unorganized and imposable to get a hold of. Course paths were not clear or easy to map out.
• Encourage involvement in organizations of all types. The most successful students were the ones that felt a part of ETSU.
• Treat them like adults and not children. Retention to me would be better achieved through a more stringent admissions process.
• Try to instil a larger sense of community and family atmosphere, so that every student regardless feels like they have a place.
• ETSU, like every college with which I’m familiar, is too focused on institutional needs and desires, rather than on student needs.
• Stop having each department work so hard against one another.
• Be as flexible as possible, within reason.
• Guide them to make good choices.
• Peer programs.
• Make the students feel important, better customer service by all departments and people
• Maybe more penalties for dropping out.
• Monitor them closely to catch in time when they are becoming candidates for drop out. That way, you can follow-up with them on where they have problems and how you can help them change their minds.
• Enforce positive “stay in school” campaigns.
• Raise standards of admission.
• Only accept people with a 24+ on the ACT.
• Providing an environment where students can rely on one another and teachers/faculty are willing to work around unforeseen circumstances in the students’ lives.
• Start the process in first grade. Do not wait until they start college!!!!
• Blow up the bell tower. Stop wasting time, space, and money building water fountains and do something ACTUALLY useful with the money.
• Don't make it easy....none of this touchy feely crap....like "no child left behind". If you pass students to maintain quotas you are only hurting the student.
• Become a more prestigious school, make the degree worth more.
• Focus on the students, not just the honors kids.
• I feel some staff should be more empathetic versus judging.

Work-Life Balance
• Be more understanding that in college people have many other responsibilities other than just school. A huge percent of college students have a job, family, and bills to pay. It can be stressful trying to keep everything in order with so much going on. A person can only handle so much before they break.
• Put limit on hours carried if working.

First Year Students & New Transfers
• Find ways to support students, especially during the first year. Unless you are proactive you miss out on a great deal of information vital to your success.
• Offer a required freshman orientation course.
• I would also suggest more efforts towards freshman/sophomore mentoring programs, as well as an orientation program for transfers to further acclimate them to the differences of two year vs. four year colleges.
- Freshman success center.
- First year on campus housing requirement (for traditional freshmen)
- First year is everything. That is all.
- Require freshmen to take the course by Dr. Brown about values and finding oneself.
- Offer a variety of services for each type of student. The adult students, the students that must work a lot to support themselves during college, parents, students who feel unprepared emotionally for college. I'm sure there are a lot of these services already at ETSU that I just wasn't aware of. Maybe include all the services for each specific student in a handout during orientation.
- In all honestly for freshman coming from high school I think a lot of it has to do with parenting/lack of parenting/and the expectations the student has for themself which would have to be developed before they get to college. For freshman it may be important to have an introduction class that helped them figure out goals and ways to work toward them.

Distance Education and Online Students
- Organized support for long distance students
- I think keeping those who live off campus connected would also be a great way to encourage a sense of community.

Kudos
- As a current faculty member, I applaud the early attendance reporting and the alerts to freshman.
- Encourage participation in campus activities. Whether they are cultural, social, Christian, service or whatever the administration needs to do better supporting all student organizations.
- Push counseling center (AWESOME!!!!!! DR. BROWN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)
Appendix F: Valuable Lessons Learned

Comments are organized by theme, with the number of responses in parentheses following each theme. Majors, as reported by respondents, are reported after each response (multiple individuals reporting the same item are indicated by multiple major designations).

Broad Education (2)

Communication Skills (4)
- Communication skills. [Finance, Public Health, Interior Design, Biology]

Competitiveness (1)
- I have learned through ETSU to be the most competitive person in the workforce. I feel like ETSU helped me to prepare for that. [Sports and Leisure Management]

Confidence & Self-Esteem (6)
- I learned that I could succeed. The faculty and staff had faith in me, which gave me faith in myself. [English]
- I am currently still at ETSU working on my Masters of Allied Health. I am learning more and more to believe in myself, to not be afraid to ask questions, and to try everything without fear of failure. [Dental Hygiene]
- Confidence in my abilities. [Interdisciplinary Studies, Economics]
- That the sky is the limit for anything I want to achieve. There are incredible professors at this university and they are insightful and truly encouraging. [Health Sciences]
- That valuing yourself is the most important and big organizations like ETSU will not care about you, even if you pay them.
- The value of knowing that I have accomplished something that less than 25% of the population has done. [English]
- Self-respect, dignity, pride in my field of practice, the fact that if you want it, it's there, just strive for it. [Nursing]

Coping Skills and Emotional/Physical Self-Awareness (6)
- Coping with disappointment. [Psychology]
- I learned how to deal with stressful situations. When you juggle much of what I have while going to school full-time you learn how to deal with the "real" world. [Social work]
- Overcoming anxiety from traveling to campus to give speeches and take tests. [Interior Design]
- How to come out of my shell and involve myself in places I am not comfortable-like groups of strangers. [Dental Hygiene]
- Being well rounded can be more important than being the best at what you do. Happiness is a huge factor in success. [Accountancy]
- Taking care of my body and spirit as well as my brain. [Political Science]

Diversity, Respect for Others, and Open-mindedness (5)
- How to interact with other people with differing beliefs and values. [Physical Education]
- Respect for people. My supervisor Dr. Wadeska Jeffery of the chemistry department had total respect for people, me included. That was one of many great things ETSU taught me. [Chemistry]
- The most valuable experience at ETSU has been meeting people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. [n/a]
- Being open to relationships with a diverse group of people. [Physical Education]
- I have enjoyed the variety of people and learning situations that I have been exposed to. [Social Work]

Independence and Self-Reliance (14)
- Independence. [Health Sciences]
- My most useful experience during college was my study abroad in Europe. I think every college student should go through such an experience. I grew up significantly during my time outside the United States. [Finance]
- Having to keep up with my education, financial aid, work, and everything else taught how to become an independent young adult. [Nursing]
- The most valuable thing I learned at ETSU is how to figuring things out for myself, basically grow up. I had to learn that no one else is going to perform a task or, in a lot of cases, help you do it. Self-reliance, in other words, was the most useful. [Biology]
- Take up for yourself, no one else will. [Professional Studies]
- To become my own person and to make my own choices. [Social Work]
- I was somewhat narrow-minded, but the humanities classes really opened up my mind. [Management]
- How to live independently. [Allied Health]
- Trust no one. And if you want it done right, you'd better do it yourself. [Foreign Languages]
- Living on my own prepared me most for life outside of school and helped me learn finances and responsibility.
[Psychology]
- To be self-reliant. [Physical Education]
- To look out for yourself. It seems that in the current (2003-present) scheme of things, the student gets very little help in getting things done (mostly from administration, parking, or public safety) but also gets the short end of the stick when things go wrong. This is useful because unfortunately, most companies and government agencies operate this way. The difference between them and ETSU is that most of those you don't have a choice to deal with them, whereas ETSU, you lose many students because of this. [English]
- I learned to be independent as well as thrifty. There was no money for a lot of things that I needed so I had to make do with what I had. [Allied Health]
- The ability to work independently. [Computer Science]

Internships/Field Experiences/Off-Campus Work (5)
- The courses I had to take that involved completing field work. In education, you really don't know what you are getting into unless you get out there and see different classes at different levels. The more field experience, the better! [Special Education]
- My internship, direct practice experience. [Social Work]
- The staff at ETSU was excellent. (especially the social work staff) my internship semester for social work was the most valuable and useful experience. I completed my internship at the Johnson City Downtown Day Center which is run by ETSU's College of Nursing. It was a great experience and I use the skills that I learned there every day. [Social Work]
- The experiences within the field. [Special Education]
- My field experience. [Public Health]

Leadership (2)
- The ability to organize and lead people to a common goal has been extremely valuable to me. [Early Childhood Development]
- Leadership. [Management]

Lifelong Learning, Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving (16)
- The most important skill learned at ETSU is the ability to continue learning beyond the bits of information gained in classes. [Computing]
- I learned how to learn and how to know what my abilities were and how to apply them to a problem. [Digital Media]
- Dedication to learning. [Chemistry]
- Being able to adapt to situations and find my own ways to learn and accomplish tasks. [Economics]
- How to think. [Professional Studies]
- How to use critical thinking in a clinical healthcare setting. [Nursing]
- Critical thinking skills- Through a rigorous degree program at ETSU I learned how to think critically. Due to this education I was able to be successful in my career path at an early age. [Physical Education]
- Critical thinking. [English, Sociology]
- Learning so many different things and perspectives, I had to REALLY learn and think about what I truly believed and why. [Psychology]
- BE OBJECTIVE... always question EVERYTHING. [Sociology]
- My liberal arts classes! Logical and critical thinking skills have benefited me in many aspects of my life. [Psychology]
- I learned how to learn on my own. [Computing]
- What I learned on my own. [Physical Education]
- Getting a degree is only the beginning of a life full of learning. [Social Work]
- A well rounded education. [n/a]
- From my first degree as Home Economics I learned that I had a diverse background and I could do anything. [Professional Studies]

Networking (5)
- It's who you know, not what you know. [Criminal Justice]
- I think networking came out as one of the most valuable things I learned while at ETSU. It helped me to achieve quite a lot while I was a student and like most incoming students I wasn't aware or interested in it at first. But because I took those initial steps in establishing myself in groups and forming connections with professors from my courses I was able to develop a network of people who proved to be valuable for my overall experience. I have since carried those skills with me and they have proven useful ever since. [Engineering Technology]
- Networking is important in this area especially for jobs after college...[Mathematics]
- No matter your capabilities, talent, or skill level, it's all about who you know. If you don't have access to established individuals in your field, you will have a very hard time succeeding because very few people take it upon themselves to help anyone get started. [Digital Media]
• Concepts of networking. [History]

Perseverance, Work Ethic, and Focus (15) and lack thereof (1)
• Never give up on your dreams. With hard work and dedication, it can happen. :) [General Studies]
• Just keep trying. Persevere. [Social Work]
• Stick it out no matter how hard it seems now, it will make you stronger. You can't get anywhere without a college degree these days. [Dental Hygiene]
• "Hearts on fire, minds on ice." Have a passion for what you are doing. Let no other distractions get in the way. [Physical Education]
• That being lucky gets you far, hard work gets you farther, and the combination gets you farthest.[English]
• The relationships I established with several faculty members have really shaped my life, and taught me much about professionalism, dedication, work-ethic, and research. [Biology]
• Perseverance. [History]
• I think the work ethic and the dedication to learning has proved the most beneficial to me after leaving ETSU. [Chemistry]
• Persistence, [Mass Communication]
• Dedication and persistence. [General Studies]
• That I can do anything I put my mind to and I can prove people wrong with hard work. [Health Sciences]
• All the hard work you put into something will eventually be put to use, whether you think it is useful or not. [Engineering Technology]
• Determination and Professionalism. [Management]
• To persevere in an unfriendly environment. [Biology]
• How to get by with doing the barest minimum to get things done. [Engineering Technology]

Presentation Skills (3)
• Speaking and presentation skills. [Accountancy]
• Speaking skills. [Political Science]
• Talking in front of people (i.e. presentations). You do a lot of that in the real world. [Management]

Relationships, Interpersonal Communications (18)
• That community and connections are important and should be something to work towards. [Interior Design]
• People skills and the understanding that thriving in any career is about building relationships. [Mass Communications]
• Interpersonal skills. [Public Health]
• Get involved with as many things as possible. Doing this helps you manage your time, be motivated to complete your school work, and meet new people. [Management]
• I learned that being involved in college organizations (like SGA) makes the college experience much more fulfilling. I took that attitude with me to law school and stayed involved. I am now involved in my career. [Criminal Justice]
• How to ask for help and depend on others. [Human Services]
• staying in touch with my instructors and advisors. [Professional Studies]
• Life skills. Things learned in the classroom can almost always be looked up on the internet these days. But, living alone for the first time in the dorms and having to get along with people you otherwise wouldn't have is a great experience. [Biological]
• I really enjoyed and learned a lot from the student organizations I belonged to. That taught me how to deal with the public and others in general.
• To seek out wiser individuals and learn from their experiences. [Chemistry]
• How to work with people in situations where you may really not like the people, yet have to come together for a common goal. [History]
• Developing relationships with people. [Physical Education]
• Life and social lessons. [Interior design]
• Being able to relate to individuals even when I do not know them that well. [Economics]
• How to build and maintain relationships. [Accountancy]
• Relationships are important. [Criminal Justice]
• Friends. [Sports and Leisure Science]
• The value of extending a helping hand to others around you. [History]
• How to work with others and how to work independently. Both are important. [Computing]

Research (5)
• Researching/Research. [Engineering Technology, Biology, n/a]
• How to do research and realize when others haven't done things properly.[History]
• I learned a lot about research. [English]
Self-Awareness (6)
- Learning who I am. [Accountancy]
- Be myself. [Engineering Technology]
- Knowing yourself. [Physical Education]
- Understanding the value of myself and what I can bring to the table. [Economics]
- All of it is of significant value. I grew more and more each year. [English]
- It is not the journey but the lessons you learn along the way. College is not necessarily about learning everything you need to learn but about learning how you will react when you receive challenges. [Computing]

Subject Content (26)
- I feel very blessed to have attended ETSU. I have learned many things working in my field but I strongly feel that ETSU really prepared me for what was to come. The professors were wonderful and the tutoring and resources were very helpful. [Nursing]
- I truly learned a lot about my field (thanks College of Public Health!). No this is not useful to other students, sorry. But it does let them know that if they find a major that they are very interested in, it will be so easy to learn and finish school. [Public Health]
- Courses within my major. Scale back gen-ed requirements and focus more on major specific topics. I went to ETSU for Computer Science, not humanities. [Computing]
- The things I learned the most that was the most useful has also been the content knowledge in my history and legal studies classes. [History]
- 'Real-world' situations in schools. [Interdisciplinary Studies/Education]
- Practical classes that contained skills I use often in my job. [Early Childhood]
- I had nothing tangible to sell from my first program. The Engineering Technology program needs to be modified to include courses of tangible skills for better job opportunity. [Engineering Technology]
- The upper level classes. [Chemistry]
- My undergrad degree in Exercise Science is aiding in my graduate degree. [Exercise Science]
- Database skills. God bless Donald Sanderson. He is missed. [Computing]
- How to encourage literacy in young children. [Early Childhood]
- My education at ETSU was invaluable...the FACS department really did teach me everything needed for success. We were one of VERY FEW schools who taught clothing construction. This course NEEDS to be included in the Fashion program again. Without it, I would be lost today! [Interior Design]
- Analytic methods and understanding of quantitative analysis and mathematics. [Economics]
- How to be a performing artist. [n/a]
- I learned lots of things in my classes that are useful, but probably the most important class info I got was the suicidology class I took that help me learn the signs of suicide and report them. [General Studies]
- Gaining knowledge about my field of study. [Psychology]
- Career skills. [Interdisciplinary Studies/Education]
- Classes are designed to help out in the real world. [Political Science]
- Reading strategies and ideas for classroom use. [English]
- So far it has been accounting. I don't use it for my profession, but I have started keeping books for my hobbies that have lead me to start profiting more from these activities. [Management]
- Statistics. [Management]
- Professional Skills. [Sociology]
- I have also (surprisingly) used Probability and Statistics frequently. [Psychology]
- My classes that helped me understand the computer. [Engineering Technology]
- Economics course I took proved to be very valuable in understanding the cause, effects, and possible recovery from the 2008 financial crisis/housing bubble. [Political Science]
- Computer skills. [Accountancy]
- I learned how to properly write a resume and cover letter while I was taking my technical writing classes. That has been extremely beneficial to me in the time since I graduated. [English]

Take Risks (2)
- I hedged my bets in life by going to ETSU instead of Princeton or Cornell (I was accepted to both) because I didn't want to go into a lot of debt. I learned to take more chances rather than stick with something that obviously wasn't right for me. [Digital Media]
- I learned that time is short and the opportunity to pursue your dreams is worth taking a risk - financial or otherwise. [Psychology]

Teaching (2)
- After the bad experience with that teacher, I learned a great deal about what I would not do as a future instructor. [Mathematics]
Even in today's information available with the vast knowledge of mankind available at the click of a button there is no substitution for an experienced and knowledgeable teacher. This of course means the teacher has to be intimately familiar with the subject, not just the teaching material. [Engineering Technology]

Teamwork (3)

Time Management & Organization (11)
- Time management [Biology, History, Interior Design, Physical Education, Psychology, Nursing]
- It doesn't make you a bad person if you go out with friends and take a break from studying. [Psychology]
- How to deal with financial ordeals. [History]
- Time management. I participated in a lot of activities and had to learn what my limitations were and how to prioritize my academics over my social life/work/etc. [Mass Communications]
- I learned how to work hard in school and prioritize my studies. [Biology]
- Organization. [Criminal Justice]

Values (4)
- Integrity. You are nothing without it. [Nursing]
- Responsibility and accountability. [General Studies]
- Responsibility. [Psychology]
- Honestly, growing in the knowledge of God by reading His word and meditating on His precepts. [Nursing]

General (3)
- Just because you have a degree, doesn't mean you are going to get the job of your dreams. [Management]
- Honestly? I realized ETSU has a horrible career center, and the job recommendations are just below average. [Management]
- The real life application lessons some professors graciously shared. [English]
### Appendix G: Question 9, sorted by major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>What didn’t you learn at ETSU that you wish you had?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| No Answer         | Exposure to future employers  
|                   | How better to market self and enhance degree options.  
|                   | how to earn a living as a performing artist.  
| Accountancy       | I really didn't have relationships with my teachers. I also wish there were more ways to get involved with the community.  
|                   | Negotiation skills. More CPA preparation.  
|                   | Quickbooks  
|                   | Applicable accounting knowledge.  
|                   | I attended graduate school at UT after graduating ETSU, and I feel that I am a bit behind academically compared to undergrads from most other universities represented in this program.  
| Allied Health     | On the job skills. I learned all of the text part of my degree but I felt like I was in the dark when it came to my first job.  
|                   | How the work force is different in each state. My degree is not respected as much in PA where I live now than in TN/VA  
| Anthropology      | I wish I had learned more about opportunities to present research or publish research.  
| Art               | Lots of things - I feel like my schooling in graphic design was a joke. The real world showed me how little I learned in class (and I'm a straight-A student)  
| Biology           | I wish I had learned what my true passion was before finishing my undergraduate degree.  
|                   | I wish that the general education courses were higher quality. I would have liked to learn more in them as opposed to them being easy or not-seriously taught. I would have liked to have more time to take philosophy, art, and a variety of humanity courses, but the credit hour requirements of my degrees didn't allow it.  
|                   | School spirit.  
|                   | How to prepare for graduation and beyond. Getting through college was the easy part.  
| Chemistry         | More about diversity  
|                   | How to properly prepare for applying to graduate schools and jobs. I also wish I had learned how to properly prepare for job interviews.  
|                   | Don't park in faculty  
| Computing         | More real world experience throughout the degree so that I could have more confidence at graduation that I was in a field I enjoyed. Maybe more obvious signs from the Career Center that they are there and what they offer - start during freshman year.  
|                   | Art and design  
|                   | More depth in networking and database development.  
|                   | More experience in the field for a resume  
|                   | More job specific tasks  
|                   | Wow, that is like staring at the ocean from the shore. There is so much to accomplish here. I only wish I had more time and resources to learn more and hone my skills in those areas that I had previous experience in. I was introduced to many areas of computer science, however, being introduced to these areas does not make one an expert. I wish I had more time here to have taken on a role in OIT during my B.S. to help nail down those lessons learned in a practical way. Theory is good, however we really need to be in someone's office fixing real problems in real time. That is where you learn. An "apprentice" or intern element should be a requirement in the program.  
| Criminal Justice  | I wish that I had learned to enjoy myself more. During college, I spent a lot of time studying and believing that school was difficult. I wish I had known how much more difficult grad school would be and that college would be one of the easiest times of my life. I do not think this is something that ETSU can teach...it is just something people learn through the experience.  
|                   | That I should have chosen a different major. I can't find a job in my field that pays well enough to pay off student loans  
|                   | Not to major in criminal justice  
| Dental Hygiene    | I wish there was a dental school. I seem to lack a few aspects being a dental hygienist compared to those who went to university with a dental school.  
| Digital Media     | I wanted to get a degree in Animation. I was told that's what I would get. After four years, I had taken three animation classes. Three. And they were totally excellent. Pete Hriso and Mary
Fitzgerald are/were excellent instructors.

Career skills for Marketing & Self-Promotion as the job market is horrible.

How to deal with the "business" aspects of being a freelance artist.

**Early Childhood**

I wish I would have developed more real life training in my field.

Classroom management.

How to use my degree after graduation.

**Engineering Technology**

I wish I had learned to stay in touch with an employer who would hire me for the learning experience I had so that I could apply my skills right after graduation.

I wish I had learned more about research and what steps are necessary for moving on to graduate school a little more. I learned quite a bit in my studies but when I got into graduate school elsewhere I found I was lacking in some aspects.

More people

Sword fighting

I wish I had learned what I am learning now, including project management skills, computer modeling, etc.

Basic principals of the engineering field. Most professors have never worked in the real world so they can't apply the lectures from a book to what actually happens.

More physics based engineering and hands on lab classes to make me more familiar with new technology, while the concepts were taught, hands on experience is much more memorable.

The amount per month I would be paying for student loans once I graduated. Everyone leads you to believe that you will pay 2-300 dollars a month for a few years when in reality that number doubles and the time you pay doubles. I feel I was misled and would not have taken out the loans at such amounts having had a little better information going in.

Didn't learn how to work the system to my advantage. I worked hard and earned my degree, unlike some I know.

**English**

More real life application lessons

Unfortunately, I didn't really learn about how to answer questions at job interviews. If I had taken advantage of the career services that are offered to students, I'm sure my ensuing job hunt would have been much easier.

Resume building, establishing occupational campus.

Teaching is hard, unrewarding, underpaid, and thankless.

More about elementary reading education in the reading specialist program

**Finance**

I think that many of my classes could have been more challenging.

I wish that some of my professors were more prepared with using the technology at the school. It is so much easier to prepare for a class when we can get online and see exactly what to read or study in depth. This being in opposition to being given a syllabus that simply states a chapter and nothing else.

**Foreign Language**

Getting a job outside of college is a million times more difficult than anyone ever indicated it might be.

**General Studies**

Maybe a different field of study, no particular wish.

Socialization with coworkers

How important it is to pick the right degree. Just having a degree doesn't guarantee that you will get a job. I wish I had know the importance of having a real skill.

**Health Sciences**

That leaving college and actually trying to land a job is HARD.

Money management.

**History**

More about practical math. Statistics are not something I encounter everyday, however, other forms of math are important in my life.

I was in the education program. My professors were great and knowledgeable, but I wish I had spent more time in a classroom and more time actually teaching before I graduated. I was content prepared as far as knowing my subject, but actually knowing how to teach and handle classroom situations I have faced a bit of a learning curve the past three years. I think they should add a class exclusively on classroom management. That would be most beneficial in my eyes.

Latin

Latin, the language

**Human Services**

I wished that I had more hands on experiences. I wish that I had been "in my field" from day 1 instead of my last year and grad school. I think ETSU needs to get students out in the "real world" sooner rather than later.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>How hard it is to get a job in my profession. I went into the College of Education thinking that I would instantly find a job right after graduating. I graduated in 2008 and I’m still not teaching. It's very competitive.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better test preparation for various licenses.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How to market myself for employment during and after completing my Masters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interior Design</td>
<td>How to deal with real life after graduation. There needs to be more support for students graduating.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wish I had been able to take a couple of electives to learn about things that interest me, such as photography, but my major didn't have any such electives and I received financial aid so I would have had to pay out of pocket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal finance, Copy Machine repair(I'm a school teacher) haha. I would like to have had a wider variety of foods courses at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Not one course focused on the importance of having a work ethic - the importance of fulfilling your responsibilities and not letting down or imposing on your fellow workers. Those of us who also worked full-time learned it on our own, but those who only went to class went out into the world with a huge handicap. I no longer hire graduates who didn't work to pay their school expenses - they aren't worth the time and trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to get a good job.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What the real world was like rather than making the students believe once you graduate, everything will fall in place just because you had a college degree.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>More accounting/finance knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ETSU needs to have students develop a more hands-on, creative approach to classes. There is sometimes a lack of creativity in projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish I had either majored in finance/Econ/accounting instead of management, or at least pulled a double major.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>The best way to use connections that you already have to help your career, what is the best way to approach these people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass Communication</td>
<td>How to prepare for the next stage in life after college... come up with 5 and 10 year PLANS.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A foreign language</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The importance of study abroad and internships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wish I would have learned more about personal money management. I signed up my last semester for a class on personal finance and the class was cancelled due to budget cuts and time restraints. I think with many students paying their own way through college like I did and taking on student loans, it's important to stress that in order to be successful, proper money management is key, especially in our present economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would have liked to know that I could have done more internships that could have lead me to getting a job in my major after graduation...I still do not have a job in my field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Specific information with the loans, &amp; setups for future employment with this economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>How to type</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I wish (for the nursing program) there was more emphasis on clinical hours. I know we needed the in classroom time, I think more clinical hours should be added.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More clinical time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The doctorate degree that will soon be coming after gaining two years experience in the field.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>A global perspective- While at ETSU I was hoping to study abroad and was unable to complete this ambition. I felt discouraged and did not receive the support I needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to be a young professional.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Occupational therapy!!</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>For me I settled for some Bs and very few Cs when I could have had As. Didnt realize how much those few extra As help for grad school...But I had a lot on my plate. I couldve took a little bit off my plate and studied a bit more. No regrets though! I loved all of college :-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish there was a course in how to be a magician.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Political Science      | I wish there had been more access to resources in the library and a one-stop resource for all study-abroad programs at ETSU. They seem to be a bit spread amongst different majors. The International Education Scholarship Board could stand to advertise a bit more than through word-
More practical experience with professionals/companies.

The experience of a real college campus. On the weekend it completely died. No football.

Wish I would have learned more about the global world economy. Too often, courses were taught in a very American-centric business mindset. Faculty are going to have to shift to a combination of American/Chinese/Latin American mindset if future graduates are going to compete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Studies</th>
<th>Business classes that I didn't think I needed I should have.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How to network with employers in a natural way.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Psychology

- How to be less stressed
- That my degree was pretty much useless.
- How to prepare for the future in regards to career and loan repayment

Public Health

- Which majors have a high job placement.
- I felt very unprepared for the job market. I didn’t really know where to look for jobs, how to get internships, resumes, interview skills, etc. I had basic concepts down, but when you are looking for an epidemiology job, you need some guidance and preparation...I felt clueless. I did not know everywhere I applied would ask for two years of experience or a doctorate.

- More practical experiences

Social Work

- Financial responsibility and not to take out student loans.
- That even with a college degree you may not be able to find a job in your course of study when you graduate. There is too much emphasis on graduating students getting their dream jobs especially in this economy.
- That I don’t have to change my values in order to be a social worker.
- Financial planning
- I wish I had been able to explore a foreign language. I couldn’t afford anymore classes. I would like to take some Spanish classes if they are affordable.

Sociology

- I think it would be nice to see a finances class for incoming students to help with budgeting.

Special Education

- How to handle people that work for you and with you. Sometimes it isn’t always a bed of roses.
- The Special Education program does not have a specific class to prepare you for students who are gifted. Well, in TN there isn’t a degree for that - but I am currently teaching a 6th grader who is labeled as gifted so I was lost at first.

Sports and Leisure Management

- That the law is there to help you not hurt you and how to best approach financial aid