You asked the President!

During the spring semester President Núñez visited with the residents of the freshmen residence halls. During those visits you were engaged in great dialogue and asked many excellent questions. As promised, here are the questions you asked and the University’s answers.

Multiple students express concern with advisor not being available/responsive. What can be done to remedy this?

First year students have two advisors, a faculty member and a Student Development Specialist who works in Advising Services in the Academic Services Center. Advising Services has implemented a new policy that all student emails or phone calls should be returned within 24 hours, although a full response may not be available until it is possible for the student to meet with the SDS.

Faculty advisors have regularly scheduled office hours. If a faculty advisor does not respond to an email or phone message a student advisee can visit them during their office hours. Office hours will be posted on the faculty member’s office door and also are often posted at department web pages. The department chair in a faculty member’s department will assist students if a faculty advisor does not respond within a reasonable period of time.

Students expressed concern with advisor not being resourceful, and advising students to take unrelated courses. What can be done to remedy this?

While we hope that both SDS advisors and faculty advisors are aware of all of the course opportunities and constraints faced by students, students should use the Degree Evaluation tool in eWeb to monitor their progress toward completion of degree requirements. They should also pay close attention to degree requirements listed at the web pages for their academic majors and in the online academic catalog.

Resident suggests that students not be required to meet with advisor. Is this feasible?
President suggests mandating advising by GPA.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs will ask the Academic Advising Committee to consider changing policies so that some students do not have to meet with an advisor to get a registration code.
Most students have general frustrations with student workers not being adequately trained to respond to inquiries felt as if they were not being given enough information from office regarding their aid processes in financial aid, how can this be improved?

The Office of Financial Aid is in the process of hiring an additional staff member who can answer some of the questions that are currently answered by student workers. In addition, the office is planning to post more general information online so that students can get information without having to speak to a student worker or staff member.

While most students had good reviews about the Center, some students expressed frustrations with math tutors not being able to provide help for LAC required course MAT135. What can be done to improve this?

The Director of the MAC has been notified of this complaint and is training more peer tutors to provide support for MAT 135 students. In addition, MAT 135 students can go to Tutoring Services to get a professional tutor to assist them.

Why is Math 110 a pre-requisite course for 135, if the principals learned in MAT100 are not applied to Math 135?

Many students place right into MAT 135 based on their Math SAT or Accuplacer scores. If a student’s scores do not place them into MAT 135 then he/she must take MAT 101 before taking MAT 135. The mathematics faculty has determined that the skills developed in MAT 101 are necessary for student success in MAT 135.

Students expressed frustration with adjunct professors teaching math course and suggested that required courses should be taught by professors who “care” and know that students need to pass these courses in order to move forward. Why is this not always possible?

Eastern expects that all faculty members, both full-time and part-time are committed to supporting the success of their students. At the end of the semester students can provide an assessment of an instructor on the Course Evaluation forms or by communicating with the appropriate department chair.

How competitive is it to get into Graduate school?

Just as with undergraduate schools, there is great variation in the selectivity of graduate schools. Students who anticipate applying to graduate school will need to build a very strong academic record. They should also talk to their faculty advisors and with the staff in Career Services to get information on what the admissions standards are in different types of graduate programs.
Does the first year program count? Does it matter?

First year students at Eastern generally take a cluster of courses, including FYR 174, for the First Year Program. All of the credits earned in these courses apply to the 120 credits required for graduation. The goals of the program are to help first year students succeed academically, build connections with faculty, staff and students, and learn about campus resources.

Is it possible for the school to allow students to focus more on their majors, especially double majors?

Eastern is committed to ensuring that all students have a strong foundation in the liberal arts and this is why students must complete the Liberal Arts Core requirements. The courses that satisfy this requirement help students to build critical thinking and other skills while exposing them to a wide variety of disciplines. In addition, the agency that accredits Eastern has a standard that stipulates the following:

**General Education**

4.15 The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution’s definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn.

4.16 The general education requirement in each undergraduate program ensures adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students by showing a balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences. General education requirements include offerings that focus on the subject matter and methodologies of these three primary domains of knowledge as well as on their relationships to one another.

4.17 The institution ensures that all undergraduate students complete at least the equivalent of forty semester hours in a bachelor’s degree program, or the equivalent of twenty semester hours in an associate’s degree program in general education.

4.18 Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind.

It does require careful planning to complete two majors and still graduate in four years. Students who wish to do this should be sure to work very closely with their academic advisors.
Are there ways to get more than one advisor for double majors?

Although students have only one official advisor, faculty and department chairpersons are generally very pleased to assist students who are pursuing a double major. Students with two majors should ask a faculty member in their “second” major for advice. They should also work with the Advising Services staff to ensure that all requirements for both majors are being met.

How can you Improvement of Financial Aid Process via the front desk workers?

The Office of Financial Aid is in the process of hiring an additional staff member who can answer some of the questions that are currently answered by student workers. In addition, the office is planning to post more general information online so that students can get information without having to speak to a student worker or staff member.

Can you provide more Job opportunities for non-work study students?

The university places high value on providing on-campus jobs for students. Unfortunately, the number of jobs that can be provided is limited by the availability of funds.

Can students get copies of financial aid forms in advance so they can better understand them?

Most financial aid forms are available online at:
http://www.easternct.edu/finaid/downloads1112.htm

Can the Financial Aid e-mail to students be more assistive; can they contain links to the sites and forms they tell students to connect with?

This is a good suggestion. Financial Aid will work to provide more links in emails to students.

Students receive their refund checks in a random manner. How do we find out from what source the money is coming from?

The best way to determine the source of your refund is to review your on-line student account. The Bursar’s Office sends an e-mail notification that a refund has been issued to the student. If you receive that e-mail and you don’t understand why the refund was created, go to your student account. It will show you recent financial activity and you should be able to identify the payments or reductions in charges that resulted in your refund. If you need assistance in following the activity do not hesitate to contact the Bursar’s office at bursar@easternct.edu
Is there a way to make paperwork easier for Independent Major for advisors and professors sign them?

It is true that the paperwork for an Individualizes Major is complex. Some of this complexity may be unavoidable given the requirements for the major but we may be able to reduce some of this by making it possible to have forms signed and forwarded electronically. We will look into this.

There are points at the MAC center that it gets busy and it is hard for the tutors to help each student with every question. Is it possible to get more tutors for the MAC?

We hire tutors for the MAC using grant funds. The amount of these funds limits the number of tutors available. Some students may be willing to work in the MAC for credit instead of pay. We can look into that possibility.

How much do the evaluations that are distributed at the end of the semester contribute to the Professors’ future?

These evaluations are taken very seriously in the renewal, promotion, and tenure processes. Every one of the forms is retained and all comments are read by the instructor but then also by the department evaluation committees, the deans and other administrators.

Is each course required to evaluate their professor at the end of each course?

It is not a requirement that professors administer an evaluation form at the end of each course.

Why are sign language classes not offered at Eastern?

Eastern’s ability to offer courses is limited by the number and areas of expertise of our faculty members. We do not currently have any faculty members who are able to teach sign language classes. A full-time Eastern student who wishes to take a sign language class could enroll in that class at another public college or university in Connecticut without paying tuition.

Why are certain classes only offered during certain semesters or summer/winter sessions? Can they be made more available to the students who need to take them as major requirements?

It is expected that academic departments will offer all courses during the fall and spring semesters and that sections offered in the summer or intersession supplement but do not replace fall and spring offerings. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will remind department chairs that courses should not be offered only during summer or intersession.
Why does the University not enforce the no-smoking within 40ft of a building rule?

Because we have so many buildings on campus it is very difficult to enforce this rule. For instances where you see someone smoking too close to a residence hall you can go into the lobby and ask the Housing staff to address the smoker.

Regarding the sign-in process for first year halls, why do students have to leave their ID’s with the RA’s, instead of simply showing it?

Collecting the ID card allows staff to know who is still in the building at the end of the evening, at which time staff can go the room the student is signed into to remind them it is time to leave.

Can Health Services to be open during the Weekend?

The University does not have the staff or resources to keep Health Services open on the weekend, but we are fortunate to have a hospital within one mile of the campus. University Police and Housing staff is available on weekends to assist students who may need medical attention.

The concerts that CAB chooses to put on do not satisfy everyone and they are not fully filling to everyone this year. If not many people show interest in the concert they should save the money for the following year for a better concert.

Music is so diverse today that it is difficult selecting entertainment that satisfies everyone. CAB does its best to select concerts that fit their price range and they could certainly hire more expensive and more popular bands if students were willing to pay a higher student activity fee to support it. CAB is unable to put this year’s fee money to another year because students who pay it this year and who will not be here next year, deserve to have it spent while they are here.

Will the staff consider adding priority points for those of the students who have jobs on campus, that limit them from attending priority point events?

Yes, now that we have the first year of priority point behind us we plan to consider and add other criteria for next year’s process.

Why is the required silver meal plan so expensive?

There is a lot of variety in the server at Hurley hall. Eastern has an “all you can eat” program as well as unlimited access to the dining hall during its open hours. Hurley Dining really features a premier meal plan program. Prices of the meal plan are in line with what students were paying for a very limited meal plan in the past which restricted access to certain times of the day and a one-time pass/meal. Chartwells' workers are unionized, so their wages are more expensive.
then the restaurant industry bears. The meal plan prices are partly reflective of Hurley’s labor costs.

**Why can’t students have the options allowing for smaller meal plans versus the “all or nothing” model that is current?**

The residence halls which are required to buy a full meal plan have no kitchens. There is no way to prepare meals for these students so a “full” meal plan is what is required for students living in these buildings. As an aside, Eastern decided to make this meal plan mandatory for students living in these residence halls only, and not for every student living on campus which has been the practice at many other public and private universities.

**Can fresh fruit, salad, and vegetables be more readily available?**

Per the contract, Eastern requires that there be a minimum of 48 items on the salad bar. Chartwells also offers an entire component called “Terre Ve” which is a vegetarian concept. There is also a stir fry component to the dining program which allows students to choose their vegetables to stir fry with or without a protein component.

**Students would like Hurley to open earlier on weekends, and remain open later during the week (9 p.m.).**

This is a cost issue. The longer the dining hall is open the more it will cost the students on meal plan rates. In our meetings with students who attend the twice-a-semester Food Focus Group, the students have indicated they do not want to incur the extra expense for such a marginal benefit.

**Can we have more dining dollars?**

Again, this is a cost factor. More dining dollars have been added to each mean plan since the inception of this program. The University re-evaluates this each year when it amends the food service contract and adds what we can without impacting the cost to the students.

**Students expressed frustration with food turn-over times and would like more of a variety of food during these times. Some students have to head straight to class, and would like a meal; but are forced to eat pizza and burgers because that is all that has been set out for consumption. What can be done?**

This question is a little vague. If it is referring to the Lite Lunch which happens between hot lunch and dinner (between 1:30 and 4:00 p.m.) and is typically lightly attended, the contractor will be asked to review food varieties offered between large meals.
Guest meals having age requirements (students under the age of 10 or 11 should have discounted rates when visiting). What can be done?

If these are guest meals on the meal plans this is a set swipe. If you are paying for a family to come in, there are provisions in the contract for this. The price is less for people this age. As a matter of fact there is an entire column of prices on Hurley Registers called “kids breakfast”, “kids lunch”, etc. which charges the appropriate price for this age group. If there is a question at the register, please ask to see a manager.

Why does Hurley close for 3 hours in the middle of the day on weekends?

The simple answer is: cost. There are not as many students here on the weekend and so to keep the cost of meal plans down, the dining hall is closed for the interim period. If residents remain more frequently on campus on weekends, the University will seriously consider changing the contract in this regard.

Why are the fountain drinks watered down or not mixed properly?

This is an easy fix. Just let the manager on duty know. Sometimes the “bag in the box” product is low. Although this is something the beverage runner monitors, there are times during heavy usage that there is a lag time between discovery of the problem and its solution. Never hesitate to let someone there know.

Hurley is not being sensitive to the Christian population – they have Meatless Monday but they aren’t doing a good job about being sensitive to the Christian population and having Meatless Friday instead?

Fish is served every Friday during Lent as an option along with Terre Ve (vegetarian concept). There was always a meatless soup as well (made from scratch on the premises). “Meatless Mondays” is a promotional concept.