Standard Six: Students

Description

Admissions. Eastern is a mid-sized university, with a total enrollment of approximately 5,400 students. Undergraduates represent 93.5% of the University’s total enrollment (with 6.5% graduate enrollment). Nearly all (94.5%) of Eastern’s students are matriculated and pursuing degrees. The majority of the University’s students (78.9%) are enrolled full-time, though Eastern also offers students the option to pursue part-time programs of study and life-long learning opportunities.

Eastern has implemented a holistic program of enrollment management. Enrollment goals (including a ten-year forecast) are established by Eastern’s Enrollment Planning Committee and are aligned with targets set at the Connecticut State University System level. Established goals are vetted through the Enrollment Management Committee, which is chaired by the Director of Admissions and Enrollment Management and is composed of members representing units/areas directly related to recruiting and retaining students. The Enrollment Management Committee meets five times each year and works collaboratively to ensure that necessary initiatives and efforts are coordinated to realize enrollment goals. The trend for applications for admission as well as the number of newly enrolled students has been positive and in keeping with goals set by the Enrollment Planning Committee supported by the Enrollment Management Committee. The Office of Admissions and Enrollment Management staff includes the director, two associate directors, two assistant directors, one counselor, three full-time clerical staff and eight part-time student workers.

In keeping with Eastern’s Mission and its Affirmative Action Policy, the admission program is designed to ensure that the new student population is ethnically, economically, and geographically diverse. Eastern does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, gender, religion, economic background, sexual orientation, demographics, or physical or learning challenges in its admission decision process. The Office of Admissions and Enrollment Management is responsible for implementing a comprehensive recruitment plan which includes initiatives to attract students from varying geographic regions and cultural backgrounds, and who have a range of talents and abilities that will enrich the University community.

The University’s recruiting plan has allowed Eastern to attract a student population that is ethnically, economically, and geographically diverse. As a public university dedicated to serving the people of Connecticut, it is fitting that 92 percent of the University’s students are Connecticut residents, representing 165 of the state’s 169 towns in 2009. The remainder of the University’s students come to Eastern from 24 states and 48 countries. Sixteen percent of the University’s students belong to racial or ethnic minorities. Fully half of the students enrolled identify themselves as the first in their family to attend college. The gender mix (55 percent female, 45 percent male) continues to follow national trends, with slightly more women than men applying to and enrolling in the University.

The University’s admission program is designed to ensure access and to provide opportunity to interested students. Eastern encourages all interested students to apply for admission and evaluates all completed applications under a standard set of criteria. Admission decisions are based on an assessment of academic preparation and readiness coupled with a sense of each student’s interest in attending Eastern as an institution of first choice, as demonstrated in an essay or interview. The application process, including criteria for admission, is described fully and clearly in the Viewbook and the University catalog, as well as on the University’s web site. Students may apply for full- or part-time admission using a paper application or online via the web site. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis for two semesters per year (Fall/September and Spring/January). The application process is generally completed within two weeks of the time an applicant submits all materials for evaluation.
The Office of Admissions and Enrollment Management is responsible for recruiting full-time undergraduate students and for making admission decisions for all matriculating full-time and part-time undergraduate students. The Admissions Committee is composed of admissions professionals. In reaching its decisions, the Committee focuses on each applicant’s academic preparation and college readiness, as evidenced by completion of a challenging college preparation curriculum, by rank in senior class, and by standardized test scores (SAT or ACT). (International students who apply for admission—whether undergraduate or graduate—must demonstrate their proficiency in English, by achieving a minimum TOEFL score of 550 on the paper version, 213 on the computer-based test, or 79 on the internet-based test.) The Admissions Committee’s preliminary evaluation of applicants is administered consistently using well-defined admission guidelines (see Admissions Guidelines 2009). High school class standing and standardized test scores are weighted at 40% each, with the remaining 20% determined by subjective factors, including performance in college preparation courses, grade point average, rigor of high school, extracurricular activities demonstrating leadership, life experiences, and a personal interview, when appropriate. Applicants rated 7-10 are deemed “excellent,” applicants rated 4-6 are “good,” and applicants rated 0-3 are “fair.” Students in rating categories 1 – 10 are admitted to Eastern.

The School of Continuing Education is responsible for part-time undergraduate enrollment (students enrolled for fewer than 12 credit hours per semester). The SCE recruits and enrolls part-time students in matriculated, non-matriculated, and non-credit status. The admissions criteria for part-time students are the same as for full-time applicants, though additional factors such as employment history and professional training are also taken into account for adult applicants. The School of Continuing Education staff includes a dean, associate dean, assistant dean, program assistant, professional development coordinator, two full time clerical staff, five university assistants, and five part-time student workers.

The Graduate School recruits and makes admission decisions for all full and part time students interested in pursuing a Master’s degree or other graduate work at Eastern. The Graduate School staff consists of the Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies (who also covers undergraduate programs), two full time clerical staff, and one part-time student worker. The dean’s staff also includes an unfilled associate dean position whose work has been distributed to faculty in the school who receive course release time.

Eastern offers two conditional admission options designed to extend an opportunity to enroll to students who may or may not meet the University’s usual admissions standards, but who the University nonetheless believes demonstrate promise and could succeed at Eastern, given the chance.

1. The Summer Transition at Eastern Program/Contract Admissions Program (STEP/CAP) is a one-year academic support program with a required six-week summer session focusing on skills building in English and Mathematics. Applicants are selected based on a thorough review of high school records and assessment of college readiness via an interview.

2. The Summer Proof of Ability Option (SPOA) provides students who are not eligible for standard full-time admission with an opportunity to prove their ability to be successful as full-time matriculated students. These students begin their academic careers in June; if they earn grades of “C” or higher in their Summer course work, they may enroll part-time for the Fall semester. Maintaining grades of “C” or higher in the Fall semester makes these students eligible for full-time status in the Spring semester.

Retention and Graduation. As a public university, Eastern is committed to making a liberal arts education accessible to Connecticut students. Eastern’s ambition to be a university of first choice is not
bound up with notions of exclusivity; rather, the University seeks to include interested students and then provide them with the support that they need to succeed.

All students identified with deficiencies in math and writing are enrolled in developmental coursework during their first semester. Students with disabilities or impairments (whether physical, cognitive, or psychological) that could affect their academic performance can work with the Office of AccessAbility Services to identify reasonable accommodations and to develop an appropriate support plan. Faculty and staff who suspect that a student may have an undiagnosed impairment may refer students to AccessAbility Services for information on assessment of possible learning disabilities.

With help from a 2007-2008 Nellie Mae Foundation Project Compass planning grant, a team of faculty, staff, and administrators conducted statistical analyses to develop a profile of students at risk of withdrawing from the University during their first year at Eastern. An automated data transfer from Admissions applications was developed to populate a logistic regression model that is now able to predict students at risk of leaving Eastern by the end of their first year. This logistic regression model is now being used to evaluate which students need more intensive academic advising and four-year academic planning help from their start at Eastern. This effort is part of the Student Success and Enrollment Management initiatives of Eastern’s new Strategic Plan 2008-2013.

As part of the Student Success initiatives in the Strategic Plan, academic support services have been centralized in an Academic Services Center in the Library. This initiative served to promote student success by consolidating the services offered by a number of previously disjointed and scattered offices in one location at the center of campus, and substantially expanded the number of hours per week services are available, as well. All students now have access to centralized advising and free tutoring in mathematics, writing, and other disciplines. Project Compass funding was used, in part, to help establish a centralized Academic Services Center (ASC), with a new Mathematics Achievement Center, a new Writing Center, centralized General Tutoring and the Advising Center. Funding from a Title III grant also supported the ASC beginning in AY 2009-2010.

Eastern has begun a number of initiatives to help first-year students in their transition to college work. With the implementation of the new targeted first-year advising program, described in the Student Success initiatives of Eastern’s new Strategic Plan, all first-year students are to be provided comprehensive advising and four-year academic planning counseling by Student Development Specialists at the Advising Center. Students are assigned a faculty advisor when they declare a major, so a student who enters his or her first year with a declared major would have access to two advisors. The University provides enhanced advising services for STEP/CAP students in their first year to ensure that they are meeting university requirements. First-year students also enroll in the First Year Program, which promotes the development of close bonds with a small learning community through the Fall semester clusters (in which small groups of students take two or three courses together); the peer mentors assigned to the first-year clusters are able to offer new students additional guidance as they begin their college careers. In their second semester, students enroll in a small interdisciplinary colloquium (LAP 130), which fosters further connections with a small group of students and close contact with a faculty member. Beginning in Fall 2010, every first year student will participate in the first year program.

Eastern also provides additional supports for student athletes. In appropriate semesters, student athletes are given preference for early registration. Their academic performance is monitored by the Athletics department, which also provides academic advising over and above that which athletes receive from their faculty advisors. Student athletes earning grades below a “C” can be assigned mandatory study hall hours, which are monitored by the Athletics department. Data has been collected regarding the six-year and four-year graduation rates, first- and second-year retention rates, and average GPA for first-year and
second-year student athletes as compared to non-athletes beginning with the 1995 cohorts. In every category, student athletes graduate, are retained, and have GPA’s higher than the general student body. Continuing students at risk for dismissal based on poor academic performance are subject to review by the Advisement Center and Dean’s Offices. At this stage, individual student academic performance is considered. In cases where significant progress has been made toward reaching good academic standing (e.g. an improved GPA, even if the cumulative GPA is below acceptable standards), a decision to permit an additional probationary semester may be granted.

**Student Services.** In addition to the services dedicated to promoting students’ academic success, noted above, Eastern provides a range of services to support students in their lives outside of the classroom. In keeping with its mission as Connecticut’s public liberal arts university, Eastern offers a broad and deep array of student services to meet the needs of its increasingly residential student population. The primary function of the Division of Student Affairs is to advance the mission of the University through programs that embody Eastern’s Core Values. The Division’s offices have established learning outcomes, core value plans, and operating plans aligning their work with the University Strategic Plan. Job descriptions for all professional staff who work with students are developed with reference to CSU-SUOAF and CSU-AAUP collective bargaining agreements and in accordance with procedures developed by the Council on Employee Relations. The Office of Human Resources and the Office of Equity and Diversity assure that applicants meet the minimum requirements as required by the job description and ensure that the search processes are conducted in accordance with EEOC guidelines.

In order to prepare incoming students for the transition to college life, all new first-year students are required to attend Student Orientation, Advisement and Registration (SOAR) during the summer before their first semester. SOAR is an overnight program designed to introduce incoming students to life on campus, to help them meet other incoming students, and to complete registration for Fall semester courses. Students attend a number of information sessions and there is a parent program as well. Eastern also hosts a Fall Welcome Weekend for incoming students. Welcome Weekend is a one and one half day program that takes place the weekend students move onto campus, and is a continuation of the Orientation experience. The Welcome Weekend includes workshops and networking events as well as evening activities for students. While these orientation activities are required of new first-time students, transfer students are also invited to participate. A second advisement, registration, and orientation program is offered in January to accommodate new transfer students and students being readmitted to the University.

Students’ physical and emotional needs are served through many programs and offices on campus. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Office of Wellness Promotion, AccessAbility Services, Health Services, Residential Life, the Interfaith Campus Ministry, The Office of Judicial Affairs, the Women’s Center, the Intercultural Center, the Center for Community Engagement, the Veterans Center, student clubs and a host of intramural and campus wide wellness programs engage students in making responsible decisions, and/or keep them connected to the broader university community. The University has made a number of adjustments in the location and delivery of services in recent years. Since the last accreditation report Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) were strengthened and moved to a stand-alone building in 2006 in order to provide greater confidentiality for students. The Office of Substance Abuse Prevention changed its name and focus to the Office of Wellness Promotion to better reflect the programmatic nature of the services provided, and moved from Health Services to Wood Support Services Center. At the same time, the Office of Judicial Affairs and the Center for Community Engagement moved to the same area as Wellness Promotion to create a link between the offices.
The Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office works to assist students by reducing or removing financial barriers that would otherwise prevent them from attending college. The staff of the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office is committed to serving students who, due to financial limitations, would otherwise be unable to attend college. The office administers federal, state and institutional student aid programs with assistance offered to students in the form of grants, loans, student employment, scholarships and VA benefits.

Student safety is a high priority at Eastern. Residence halls may only be accessed using key fobs, and comprehensive video surveillance of entrances to buildings, lobbies, the parking garage, and exterior areas provides added security. Eastern’s police force is professionally certified and operates 24 hours a day. The Department of Public Safety utilizes a community policing model, which ensures that students get to know and learn from officers through residence hall programs, campus-wide sponsored events, bike patrols and foot patrols. Students may request an escort from all points on campus; emergency phones are directly linked to the Police Department and are tested regularly. A shuttle service operates from 10 am to 11 pm during the week and with limited hours on the weekends. Crime statistics are posted on the University website and are available in printed form throughout campus. A state-of-the-art voluntary emergency alert system was implemented in Fall 2008 that allows community members to receive alerts in the medium of their choice—cell phone, e-mail, text message, or home phone.

With 62% of the University’s full-time undergraduate students living on campus in 2009 (including 90% of the first-year class), a high-quality residential environment has become an essential element of Eastern’s public liberal arts mission. The Housing and Residential Life program is an integral partner in the University’s effort to provide a positive educational experience that fosters the retention and graduation of students. Housing and Residential Life services provide a nurturing, safe, enriching environment that fosters lifelong learning and allows students to grow intellectually and socially. Students are exposed to an interactive living-learning experience that provides hands-on opportunities to interact with others in residential communities designed to make their college experience meaningful. Resident Assistants are expected to develop educational, social and community service programs tailored to specific student learning outcomes. More than 935 programs are developed through these requirements each year. Programs offered by Residential Life include the SWEEP Retention Initiative, Dean’s Cup, and Weekend Programming (FAD).

Eastern has been able to make substantial investments over the last 15 years in order to make its facilities more comfortable and attractive for students. The extensively renovated 90,000 square foot Student Center reopened in Fall 2007, and offers a fitness center, a theater, a large multipurpose room, a food court, the campus bookstore, programming space, and offices for student groups and staff. The Women’s Center and Intercultural Center were incorporated into the Student Center for better accessibility and increased student involvement. A process for phasing in wireless internet access in all residence halls was begun in Fall 2009 and completed in the spring 2010. Basic cable for TV is available free of charge in all residence halls, and residence hall internet service will be greatly enhanced and eventually bundled with the basic cable. This outsourcing of internet service will greatly reduce the strain on the university network while providing enhanced services to students. Further discussion of the University’s facilities and technological infrastructure can be found under Standard Eight.

Culture and Arts are an important part of students’ educational experiences, and the campus hosts events throughout the year to expose students to many facets of art, music, theater, history, politics, literature, and culture. The Arts and Lecture Series and the University Hour series present fascinating and provocative lecturers, speakers, and performers that expand students’ horizons. Individual academic departments also sponsor frequent speakers and performances. The University’s Akus Gallery presents the work of emerging and established artists, and collects and preserves artwork and related materials relevant to the permanent collection and exhibition programming. Eastern’s Performing Arts Department
sponsors performances by University students and faculty as well as by local performers, including the Willimantic Orchestra. Students can learn more about upcoming events through the comprehensive university calendar.

The Department of Athletics, Intramurals, and Recreation offers programs and facilities that emphasize the development of diversity, leadership, physical fitness, personal wellness and widespread preparation—all of which contribute to the overall educational experience and total development of the individual. The Department of Athletics developed a six-year strategic plan in 2002 and evaluates its offerings and programs through its annual report to the President. Student athletes are provided a means for evaluating the coaching staff, administration and support staff, facilities, schedules and amenities provided. As a member of the NCAA (Division III), each year Eastern submits an Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) report and a financial aid report, and also certifies the eligibility of each of its student athletes.

Currently, there are 61 clubs recognized by Eastern’s Student Government Association and registered with the Office of Student Activities. These organizations fall into every category of interest, from religious (Hillel and 180 Christian Fellowship), to academic (Honors and Education Club), to cultural (Unity Group and West Indian Society), to service (People Helping People). Some 26% of the full-time student body belongs to one or more club. Clubs and organizations are supported financially from the student fee, which is distributed by the Student Government Association as well as through their own fundraising efforts. The average GPA of students participating in club and organizations is 3.01 compared to 2.86 for non-participants. Groups receive support from a program advisor in the Student Activities Office.

The University presents students with numerous leadership opportunities (both voluntary and paid). Students fill a number of positions in which they provide leadership to their peers, including Resident Assistants in the dormitories, Student Orientation Counselors in the Summer orientation program, First Year Program Peer Mentors, Admissions Student Ambassadors, and Peer Advisors for Student Success (PASS). Students also serve in Student Government and a number of campus committees (including the Campus Activity Board and the Student Athlete Advisory Council), lead a variety of clubs organizations, and organize a range of community service programs. The Office of Student Activities organizes several programs to help students explore and develop their leadership potential. The Club and Organization series is made up of four sessions per semester and focuses on enhancing leadership abilities in the context of running an organization. Pathways to Leadership is a three-tiered program designed to encourage students to explore their individual leadership development potential. Students engage in a series of sessions throughout the academic year that enhance their Liberal Arts experience by exploring topics in line with the University’s Core Values. The LEAD to Succeed series is open to all students and includes four sessions each semester on topics such as Communication, Personal Goals, Leadership styles and Public Speaking.

Offices across campus work to help students position themselves to move successfully into a career upon graduation. The Office of Career Services offers several programs and resources to actively engage students and alumni in the lifelong process of career development by promoting self-awareness, career exploration and experiential learning. The University’s Strategic Plan calls for the development of a Liberal Arts Work! Initiative, in which all students will complete a structured pre-professional experience prior to graduation. With more than 50% of Eastern students being in the first generation of the family to attend college, the Liberal Arts Work program is intended to help students develop professional skills, understand career options and develop ambitious goals. When fully implemented, students will be able to complete the requirement through a variety of credit bearing and non-credit bearing experiences. The Advising Center staff and faculty advisors connect students to other services that may be useful in developing their career path, including the Career Services office, the Intercultural Center, the Women’s...
Center and the Office of AccessAbility. Finally, the Alumni Affairs office helps coordinate panels of visiting alumni who speak to students about what steps they took to develop their career paths and give advice on developing successful career trajectories.

**Student Rights and Responsibilities.** Student rights and responsibilities are established in the Student Code of Conduct and Statement of Judicial Procedures. The Code of Conduct is reviewed and updated every three years and applies to all institutions in the CSU system. Student conduct violations are administered fairly and consistently in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The Code is found in the Student Handbook and is accessible on the University’s website in a knowledge based searchable format.

Eastern respects students’ right to privacy with respect to personal information contained in educational records. Record retention and disposition is controlled by Office of the Public Records Administrator and Connecticut Statute. Student educational records may only be disposed of following receipt of approval from the Office of the Public Records Administrator. Policies regarding disclosure of student records are outlined in the Student Handbook. In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, each student has the right to inspect and review his or her educational record. The Student Handbook outlines the procedure for inspection and review and explains where those records can be found. A student who believes that his or her educational records are inaccurate or misleading may request through a hearing procedure that the University amend the record. Students who believe that their privacy rights have been infringed may lodge a complaint to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act Office.

Members of the Eastern community enjoy comprehensive complaint and appeal rights. Students’ complaint and appeal rights are outlined in the Student Handbook. In addition to the rights guaranteed under FERPA (detailed above), a student may appeal for a change in a final grade, may appeal the outcome of a judicial hearing or a finding of academic misconduct, and may appeal academic dismissal. Beyond the strictly academic sphere, Eastern offers mechanisms for students to appeal assessed fees and fines and to file complaints of harassment, discrimination, racism and acts of intolerance, and sexual misconduct or assault.

The University takes several steps to ensure that students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Code of Conduct. All students received electronic notification via University e-mail annually informing them that the student handbook can be found on the University website. Student Orientation Counselors focus on expectations and procedures during the summer orientation program and Residence Life and other Student Affairs staff continue the dialog with mandatory residence life meetings throughout the academic year. Grievance procedures in cases of sexual harassment and discrimination are outlined in the Office of Equity and Diversity website and can be found in the Student Handbook.

**Appraisal**

**Admissions.** Eastern’s reputation and designation as the state’s public liberal arts university has become increasingly recognized and understood by students, parents, high school personnel, and the general public. The University is committed to providing access and opportunity to prospective students who demonstrate that they are prepared and ready for college and who view Eastern as their university of choice.

The number of applications, offers of admission, and enrollment yield rates for full-time undergraduate students have all increased in recent years as indicated in the Standard 6 Data First forms; part-time undergraduate and graduate enrollments have been less stable but continue to be essential elements of the holistic enrollment management program. Embracing the holistic enrollment management program has helped focus initiatives and resources and has allowed for more effective budget planning. Eastern’s 2008-2013 Strategic Plan and revised mission focus on providing access to a diverse group of learners,
and helping students graduate in a timely fashion with appropriate support services. In many ways, the Strategic Plan reaffirms and extends Eastern’s long-time commitment to educational accessibility for all qualified students. With the support of the Connecticut Department of Higher Education’s Connecticut College Access and Success program (ConnCAS), Eastern’s STEP/CAP program has been working for more than 20 years to help minority, low-income, and first-generation students meet the University’s admission requirements through a summer transition program offering intensive preparation in Mathematics and writing. STEP/CAP and SPOA (another special admission program) have yielded some success in breaking down barriers to admission.

Retention and Graduation. Eastern has made progress in improving retention and graduation rates, though there continue to be areas of concern, particularly for minority students. Eastern participated in the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange’s (CSRDE) 2009-2010 survey. Eastern’s first- to second-year retention rate for all students in the 2008 cohort was 78%, better than the 74.2% average for schools in Eastern’s selectivity group (“moderately selective”), and a bit better than the 77% average for COPLAC institutions (see Nash Report draft in the electronic workroom). While Eastern’s retention rate for African-American students (92%) was considerably above the CSRDE average (71.3%), the University noted with concern that the retention rate for Hispanic students at Eastern (69%) was below the CSRDE average of 75.6% for the 2008 cohort. Historical data for the past six years suggest that the first- to second-year retention rate for all minority students has generally been in line with that for white students—somewhat lower in some years, and somewhat higher in others. Year-to-year fluctuations likely reflect small numbers in some cohorts.

### Retention Rates of First-Time, Full-Time Degree-Seeking Freshman Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry Cohort</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Native-American</th>
<th>Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2006</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2005</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2003</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2002</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eastern monitors graduation rates closely. Here too, the University is somewhat ahead of its peers, but is not yet where it would like to be. Data from the 2009-2010 CSRDE survey of moderately selective schools show that Eastern’s four-year and six-year graduation rates are higher than average overall, and also higher than average for Black students, but lag behind for Hispanic students. The overall four-year graduation rate for the 2005 cohort in the CSRDE survey was 22.2%, while Eastern’s figure was 31%. Eastern’s six-year graduation rate for the 2003 cohort, using CSRDE calculations, was 50% for all students (compared to a CSRDE average of 47%), 39% for Black students (compared to a CSRDE average 35.4%), and 39% for Hispanics (compared to a CSRDE average of 42.4%).

When comparing its graduation rates to those of the COPLAC institutions it considers its closest peers (rather than to the larger group of all “moderately selective” schools represented in the CSRDE survey), Eastern sees room for improvement. While the University was a bit above average in most measures in the CSRDE survey, its 51% six-year graduation rate compares less favorably to the COPLAC average of 54% and to the 57% achieved by Keene State University, which Eastern considers one of its “benchmark” schools.
The tables below provide historic six- and four-year graduation rates using Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) calculations. The accompanying charts display the six- and four-year graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students relative to White students and to the overall cohort of students (Asian-American and Native American students have been excluded from the charts because there were frequently not enough of these students to provide meaningful figures). Though there is considerable fluctuation from year to year, four- and six-year graduation rates are rising, on the whole. Those rates are not as high as the University would like to see them, however, and gaps persist between graduation rates (particularly four-year graduation rates) for Black and Hispanic students and for their White peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Entry/Graduation</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2003 / Graduation in 2009</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2002 / Graduation in 2008</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2001 / Graduation in 2007</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2000 / Graduation in 2006</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1999 / Graduation in 2005</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1998 / Graduation in 2004</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1997 / Graduation in 2003</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1996 / Graduation in 2002</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1995 / Graduation in 2001</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four-Year Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Entry/Graduation</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian-American</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2005 / Graduation in 2009</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2004 / Graduation in 2008</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2003 / Graduation in 2007</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2002 / Graduation in 2006</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2001 / Graduation in 2005</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2000 / Graduation in 2004</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1999 / Graduation in 2003</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1998 / Graduation in 2002</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 1997 / Graduation in 2001</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>N ≤ 10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eastern is pursuing a number of initiatives to raise retention and graduation rates, with an emphasis on increasing the four-year graduation rate. The comprehensive advising program, for instance—with dual advising during the first year and centralized advising for Undeclared majors from the Advising Center’s Student Development Specialists—will help to increase the retention rate between the first and second years. The Student Success and Enrollment Management initiatives of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, in conjunction with grant funding from the Nellie Mae Foundation and the new Title III program, are providing an effective framework for identifying students’ academic profiles and needs for support services. These initiatives position the University to pursue well-planned, regular, data-driven assessment and evaluation of its admissions procedures and its academic support services.

Eastern has begun to take a disciplined, increasingly data-driven approach to understanding the factors affecting student success. The University recently developed a new report that makes it possible to identify “risk assessment” rates for all course sections in every discipline, broken down by semester and by instructor. This report calculates the percentage of students earning grades of “D” or “F” or withdrawing from a course, and makes it possible both to compare the different sections of a course in a given term and to develop long-term comparisons of students’ performance in a given course. This report has already been used in combination with other data gathered as part of Project Compass to assess student performance in developmental Math and English composition courses.

The logistic regression model associated with the Project Compass grant initiative has provided a well-organized framework for evaluating how Eastern meets its students’ academic support services needs (see Project Compass logic model document). Faculty and staff working on the Project Compass grant initiative have met weekly to review the progress made in meeting student needs and in developing more effective ways to get students the academic support services they require. Eastern has a well-defined system of assessing student needs for support in mathematics and writing and for providing targeted advising to students most at risk of withdrawal during the first year. Eastern’s improved diagnostic
techniques of predicting students at risk of withdrawal, Student Success initiatives in the new Strategic Plan 2008-2013, and grant funding from the Nellie Mae Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education (Title III) will make it possible for all incoming students to get targeted, enhanced first-year advising, and necessary support services to develop their skills in Mathematics and writing. Increased Title III grant funding for career development and counseling will also engage students in experiential learning opportunities to focus their talents appropriately.

Even in its procedures for academic probation and dismissal, Eastern focuses on helping students improve their academic performance so that they can remain enrolled and successfully graduate. Students are not dismissed without a trial period to see if appropriate academic support strategies can help to improve the student’s performance. The University keeps longitudinal records for students placed on academic probation, and these data are used to evaluate the success or failure of support strategies. The fact that students can appeal a dismissal decision creates a further opportunity to refer them to appropriate support services or to develop strategies to improve their academic performance and increase their chances of graduating after being placed on probation.

**Student Services.** Eastern offers its students a wide range of services offering support and guidance in academics, career planning, personal growth, and technology. Student services are provided in a deliberate, comprehensive, and professional manner consistent with the University’s mission and with the needs and goals of the students. In addition to the services designed to foster students’ academic success, discussed above, the University provides a range of services to support students in their lives outside the classroom. Health services are accessible and comprehensive, and most are provided free of charge or at reduced cost to Eastern students; the staff is well-trained and well-suited to working with the student population.

All of the University’s Student Services initiatives are designed with an eye towards promoting Eastern’s mission as a public liberal arts university. Eastern’s programs and services are developed and evaluated with regard not simply to their inherent quality, but also to their capacity to promote student success, as measured by retention and graduation rates. Even ancillary support services and campus programming aim at making Eastern a place where students succeed and thrive. Eastern has established diversity goals, for instance, which provide a basis for evaluation as the University develops and pursues initiatives to enhance the educational experience for all students.

Eastern’s 2008-2013 Strategic Plan has provided the University with an opportunity to evaluate its current programs and services and to develop new ways of addressing student needs. The various Strategic Plan initiatives—which enhance the liberal arts experience, support exemplary academic programs, support a learning-centered campus, and provide institutional support—all have an impact on the delivery of student services. The University must exercise caution to ensure that new initiatives do not overtax offices whose staff are already stretched. Student support service offices must now connect their work to the Strategic Plan and determine what is no longer connected to the University’s vision and mission. Significant progress is being made towards periodic comprehensive assessment of all student service offices using established assessment tools. All but four offices have undergone a comprehensive Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) assessment, with the last four scheduled for the fall of 2010. Campus offices will consider the development of learning outcomes in accordance with CAS guidelines and/or the recommendations outlined in the American College Personnel Association’s *Learning Reconsidered 2*.

Student Services budgets have generally been maintained without large cuts, though individual offices face continuing strain due to extremely limited staffing. Career Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Health Services, Financial Aid, and the Student Center/Student Activities Office are particularly
affected in this respect. The state’s current hiring freeze has contributed to, but is not the sole cause of the staffing constraints.

After more than 20 years with the same director, the Office of Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office has experienced instability in leadership in the last four years. The office has, nevertheless, made significant strides in automating processes, reducing delays in financial aid awards, and improving communications. The switch to Direct Lending and a Banner upgrade have required significant staff time. The Office of Financial Aid will play an important role in the development of the University’s Enrollment Management Plan as awarding strategies affect Eastern’s enrollment, retention, and graduation goals.

Facilities for students have improved significantly, though challenges remain. While three new residence facilities in the past five years have greatly enhanced the residential experience, several aging facilities are in desperate need of renovation or replacement. In addition, a significant housing shortage is forecast. The Strategic Plan calls for an increase in the number of students who live on campus throughout their academic career at Eastern, but the current residence facilities will not support an increase—in the 2008-09 academic year, housing was at 104% of capacity. The Sports Center is also out of date and insufficient for the current needs of the students, and the University still lacks adequate large programming space. The Master Plan incorporates plans for addressing these facility needs. Despite these constraints, dedicated staff have still managed to provide high-quality services to the University’s students.

Athletic programs at Eastern—whether team sports, intramurals, or aspects of the wellness initiative—are coherent, ethical, and sound. Other co-curricular activities are accessible and comprehensive, though Eastern’s students are not currently taking full advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. There are numerous opportunities for students to become involved on campus, but the student club participation rate stands at 22%, and could be increased. The University calendar is full of events that are varied and engaging, and more than 1,500 student-led activities take place each academic year. The planning process for student groups could be streamlined and enhanced, however, to ensure a diverse spectrum of event offerings. Developing program planning models based on the Learning Reconsidered 2 learning outcomes would encourage a wider variety of student-led co-curricular activities and events and is in developmental stages in accordance with the strategic plan.

Eastern’s Summer orientation program provides information to help students with their transition to college. Beginning in 2009, while students continue to participate in Summer orientation, the Fall Welcome Weekend was changed to a one and one half day schedule, in keeping with national trends. Using small group sessions to deliver the same content that was previously being delivered to large groups has made for a more meaningful experience for our students. Students evaluate the Summer orientation program at the end of each session and have rated it highly, though evaluations have revealed certain blind spots in the University’s approach to student orientation. The overnight Summer program, for instance, while well-suited to residential students, has not served commuter students as well as it could. Similarly, transfer students and new students beginning in the Spring semester have indicated that they have received only limited information about the University and its services. In response to such concerns, Eastern offered a one-day transfer student orientation in the Summer of 2009. While the University could do more to orient transfer and commuter students, its Summer orientation and Welcome Weekend programs seem to do a good job of addressing the needs of first-time residential students, who have become an increasingly large percentage of the incoming student body.

Student Rights and Responsibilities. The Code of Conduct and Statement of Judicial Procedures is administered by the Office of Judicial Affairs, which is staffed by a University Judicial Officer. Students’ Constitutional rights are honored and protected through cautious administration of the Code as well as through training for Residence Life staff. The University Police are certified police officers who
understand and protect students’ rights throughout the criminal and/or judicial process. Student satisfaction with the judicial process is evidenced by the very small number of judicial appeals filed in any academic year. Over the past eight years, the University Judicial Officer has had primary responsibility for administration of the Student Code, delegated by the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Dean of Students or other staff members have served as appeals officers when necessary. Starting in the 2007-2008 academic year, Hall Directors were trained by the Judicial Officer to hear low-level, first-time offenses. An administrative assistant recently was assigned on a shared basis to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Most of the daily administrative tasks have been performed to date by student employees and the Judicial Officer. The Office of Judicial Affairs would benefit from a second staff member permanently assigned who would assist in the administration of the conduct cases. It is important to note that students have the option of choosing an informal or formal hearing and the vast majority chooses an informal hearing where they are empowered to participate in the resolution showing their confidence in the system.

Projection

Admissions. Eastern’s enrollment projections are realistic and attainable. The University forecasts that enrollment will remain stable, with a modest increase in full-time undergraduate enrollment through 2017 attributable to higher retention rates. While part-time and graduate enrollments will continue to be essential components of Eastern’s holistic enrollment management program, they are not expected to increase. Part-time undergraduate enrollment goals set by the Enrollment Planning Committee and supported by the Enrollment Management Committee will be realized through expanded online course offerings.

The University’s enrollment management strategies focus on identifying a desired enrollment profile and taking coordinated steps to achieving it. The Office of Admissions and Enrollment Management will continue its efforts to recruit and enroll a diverse body of students appropriate to Eastern’s mission as a public liberal arts university. These recruitment efforts will be aligned with a variety of strategies designed to foster students’ success, with an aim of improving retention and, consequently, graduation rates. As called for in the 2018-2013 Strategic Plan, Eastern will develop a strategic enrollment management plan that will focus on research and data-driven facts and outcome measures, including a regression analysis formula to develop customized admission profiles to attract students appropriate for the institution; embrace the core values and mission; rely on collaboration, cooperation, and assessment to guide planning and implementation; be rooted in coordinated support for its academic programs; involve strategic financial aid packaging focused on persistence and performance; and integrate residential life and student activities as part of the essential liberals arts experience framework.

Retention and Graduation. Increased academic support for students in first-year advising, as well as increased support available from the new Academic Services Center (which incorporates the Writing Center, the Math Achievement Center, Tutoring Services and Advising Services) should lead to an increase in first-year retention and ultimately in four-year and six-year graduation rates. Implementation of the Student Success initiatives of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan will address issues related to student retention and graduation, including the disparities between minority students and their White peers. Eastern intends to match the average rates for its peer institutions in COPLAC. The University aims to increase the overall first-year retention rate to 82% by 2015 while maintaining a retention rate for Black students that is at least equal to that for Whites; in the same period, Eastern aims to increase the retention rate for Hispanic students from 69% to 73%. Eastern’s overall six-year graduation rate is currently 51% which the University aims to increase to 53% by 2015, with projected six-year graduation rates for White, Black and Hispanic students to 54%, 46%, and 45%, respectively.
The Academic Deans and Academic Support Services administrators meet regularly as part of the Vice President of Academic Affairs’ direct reports team. These meetings provide ongoing opportunity to review policies and to facilitate new methods for streamlining the implementation of the University’s Student Success initiatives, for ensuring consistent application of standards regarding continued academic standing, and for effectively communicating decisions about student status to students and their faculty advisors. The establishment of the Academic Services Center has centralized support for students facing academic probation or dismissal and has increased the efficiency of referrals to the University’s various academic support services (tutoring, counseling, AccessAbility services, etc.).

**Student Services.** The University will continue to provide a broad range of services to support students in their lives beyond the classroom. Further implementation of the Strategic Plan will ensure that co-curricular activities remain a focus of quality broad-based student learning. Many of the initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan incorporate out-of-classroom learning. The campus Master Plan calls for reconfiguring the main campus into a more pedestrian-friendly environment with a Fine Arts Instructional Center at the heart of the campus, along with a greatly enhanced Sports Center. Together with planned residential enhancements, these facilities will support the University’s liberal arts mission and provide for greater opportunities for co-curricular student engagement.

In the near term, the University will face challenges in some student services areas. Until new dormitories can be constructed, Eastern will need to develop strategies to accommodate increased enrollment with existing residential facilities; discussions are underway on this. The University will also need to create and fund more on-campus employment opportunities for deserving students. The Offices of Academic Affairs, University Advancement, and Admissions have been developing strategies to provide more of Eastern’s deserving students with four-year aid awards.

Many student services offices are currently stretched thin due to staffing limitations. While the state’s current hiring freeze is one factor in the strain that many offices feel, it is not the only one: all offices will have to consider which of their activities are most essential to the University’s mission and most in keeping with its core values. To that end, offices in the Division of Student Affairs began including program outcomes and learning outcomes in their planning documents beginning in the 2009-2010 academic year; these offices assess their effectiveness in achieving these outcomes using tools developed in the Summer of 2009. Such assessment will allow offices in the Division of Student Affairs to target their services most effectively given the resources they have. That said, in order to maintain student satisfaction with campus services, the students would clearly benefit from additional staff in some offices when circumstances permit; a staff member will be added to the Office of Judicial Affairs, for example, to ensure that the Student Code of Conduct can continue to be applied equitably.

Eastern will continue to streamline its Summer orientation program to include all of the information that was previously provided in the longer Fall Welcome Weekend. While the University’s incoming student body is increasingly composed of traditional college students (first-time, full-time undergraduates living on campus), commuter students, transfer students, and new students beginning in the Spring semester still represent a meaningful fraction of the student body; the University will seek to improve its orientation services for these students by developing and implementing a more focused approach to commuter and transfer students and one connected to best practices as identified by NODA, the National Orientation Directors Association.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

Eastern assesses its Enrollment Management on an ongoing basis through analysis of success in achieving target goals for student admission, enrollment, retention and graduation. Student participation in and
satisfaction with facilities, intercollegiate athletics, opportunities for leadership and participation, and residential life are evaluated through participation rates, surveys, and focus groups. The Division of Student Affairs has adopted and used CAS standards for assessment of program effectiveness.