



## Institutional Research Research Brief

### *Non-Returning Student Survey*

*January 2007*

In Fall 2006, the *Student Experience and Opinion Survey* was distributed to students who were enrolled at ECU in Spring 2005, but did not return in Fall 2006. The purpose of this survey was to determine the primary reasons students chose not to return to ECU, as well as to determine in what ways ECU could assist in their re-enrollment.

Approximately 10% of surveyed students responded. Of those, 75% are women; 24% are men. Ninety-percent of respondents are White, 4% Black, 3% Other, 1% Native American, 1% Asian, and 1% Hispanic. The dispersion of respondents across age is fairly consistent: 21% are 18 to 20 years; 21% are 21 to 24 years; 14% are 25 to 29 years; 21% are 30 to 39 years; 17% are 40 – 49 years; 7% are 50 years or older. Fifty-one percent of responding students were part-time in Spring 2006; 44% were full-time. Ninety percent of respondents are in-state students.

The majority of respondents (67%) primarily take classes at the Richmond campus followed by Corbin (11%), and Danville (8%). During spring 2006, fifty-four percent of respondents live in their own home; fifteen percent lived at home with parents or relatives; 14% lived in off-campus room or apartment; and 13% lived in a residence hall. Forty-four percent of respondents lived within 25 miles of their primary ECU campus; 18% lived within 25 – 49 miles; 17% within 50 – 99 miles; 14% within 100-199 miles; and 7% lived further than 200 miles from their primary ECU campus.

When asked the primary reasons for not returning to ECU in Fall 2006, three main themes emerged: Economic Issues, Family/Children Responsibilities, and Class Offerings. The most frequent response reported for not returning to ECU centered on economic issues, mainly the rising cost of attending college. Like many, one student did not obtain financial aid “My financial aid was denied and couldn’t afford to attend without it.” For others, the pressure of working two jobs to pay for college was too much. Another reason offered is dissatisfaction with increasing tuition/costs of attendance. For example, one student states, “Tuition is too expensive – did not have the money for another course.” Another says, “Tuition went up and I believe it’s still going up; I couldn’t afford it any more.”

Many respondents offer family and children as reasons for not returning. Interestingly, the most frequent responses in this particular category are either “I got pregnant,” or “I had a baby.” Other responses include taking care of small children, taking care of a sick relative, spending more time with family, and getting married.

The third most frequent reason reported for not returning is course availability. Respondents indicate they did not return because courses they needed were not offered at the appropriate time, day, or location. For example, one states, “EKU was not offering any classes required for my degree that I had not already taken;” or “I could not get into the class I needed.” Students also indicate their dissatisfaction with course offerings at the extended campuses, such as:

- “The Danville campus was very limited to classes in the business field offered at night.”
- “I couldn’t finish my degree in Corbin and didn’t have the time or money to travel to Richmond.”
- “I required few classes to graduate, but they are very specific and rarely available as evening or online classes.”

The survey sought from respondents suggestions to how ECU might assist them in returning.

The findings of this survey are truly interesting; however, it should be noted that with a 10% response rate, the reliability of these findings as representative is questionable. Institutional Research is researching the possibility of adding this survey to their recurring fall project list. With additional time and resources, we anticipate strengthening the response rate of this survey and ultimately provided longitudinal attrition data.