

Why Do Students Choose ESU?

A Brief Examination of Responses from the 2013-2014 Graduating Senior Survey
Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
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In Fall 2013 and Spring 2014, undergraduate students who indicated their plan to graduate that semester were invited to complete the Graduating Senior Survey (GSS). Within the GSS respondents were asked, “What did you select ESU?” as an open-ended question. 249 respondents generated 463 reasons they chose to attend ESU. These responses are parsed into broad categories and quantified into the table below. Typical comments for each category are provided below for context.

Category	Percent
Location – Proximity to Home/Work	32%
Program Availability/Quality	22%
Campus Atmosphere/Environment	11%
Cost	11%
Family/Friends Here	5%
Reputation	4%
Faculty	3%
Campus Size/Facilities	3%
Class Size/Student Teacher Ratio	3%
Sports/Athletics	3%
Other	2%
Scholarship	1%

Location – Proximity to Home/Work – 32%

The perfect balance of being far enough away from home to assert some independence, but close enough to still visit family and friends was a major subcategory of comments.

- “Far enough from home, but close enough that I could go home if needed.”
- “It was also close enough to home to go home on the weekends, but far enough distance for being on my own.”
- “It was a perfect distance from my home that I could live away from home yet still come home if I had to.”

The financial savings of being able to commute was also mentioned often in conjunction with location.

- “Costs for school [room and board] in general is expensive so being at home saves me money.”
- “I transferred to ESU my junior year. It was closer to home so I could commute and save money.”

Program Availability/Quality – 22%

Academic program availability and/or quality comments often cited the reputation of a specific program offered at ESU.

- “Excellent nursing program”
- “I chose ESU because of its fantastic English department”
- “It has an excellent Chemistry program and amazing professors.”
- “It has a great Speech-Language Pathology program”
- “I heard it to be known as a great ‘teacher school’”
- “Athletic Training major”
- “The psychology program and faculty sold me on ESU. I love the program”
- “Their Exercise Science department is supposed to be one of the top programs in the country”
- “I chose ESU because as a freshman I was going for Health and Physical Education and was told ESU was a great school to go to for that.”
- “I selected ESU because my major is Early Childhood Education.”
- “Because it had a great education program”

Other responses were less specific, citing “for my major” or variations thereof.

Campus Atmosphere/Environment – 11%

The campus atmosphere/environment, including the scenery and ESU’s welcoming culture, were often cited by respondents.

- “I selected ESU because I felt that it had a very home-like environment. The people here seemed to be very friendly.”
- “I selected ESU for its warm environment and friendly staff. I choose it because of the scenery and the look of the campus.”
- “I selected ESU because I enjoyed the campus and atmosphere when visiting.”
- “I also enjoyed the environment that I felt from other students when I came to ESU for tours as a potential student.”
- “I selected ESU because I really enjoyed the atmosphere”
- “Beautiful campus- liked all the trees on campus”
- “When I visited the campus in 2007, this campus just felt so right.”
- “I fell in love with the school when I first saw it.”

Cost – 11%

Comments indicated that ESU was perceived as an economical choice ranging from generic statements to comparisons to other institutions to specifics on why ESU was economical to them personally.

- “The cheapest state school in the state at the time of enrolling in classes back in 2009.”

- “The price was within my range.”
- “The cost of tuition was manageable.”
- “It is affordable compared to the private school I attended. I will owe a significant amount less by attending ESU.”
- “It is a relatively less pricey state school”
- “Affordable tuition compared to other colleges in Pennsylvania.”
- “The fact that it was a state school that had my major so I would end up with less debt in the end.”

Family/Friends Here – 5%

Many respondents indicated that they chose to attend ESU because they had family and/or friends who either were currently attending or had attended the institution in the past.

- “I had friends going there”
- “Family tradition.”
- “I initially looked at ESU because I had a family member that went here while I was looking at schools. She had a very positive opinion of the school.”
- “Me and three of my friends all chose to go here together.”
- “I had a few friends and family attend the University and they loved the experience.”
- “Both my parents went here and I wanted to follow in their footsteps”
- “Through friends’ suggestions.”

Reputation – 4%

The institution’s overall reputation – often garnered by word of mouth – was also cited by respondents to this survey. Recommendations from those outside of ESU also played a part in student’s choosing to attend this school.

- “I heard the programs here were great and that's why I picked it!”
- “I heard that it was an excellent school.”
- “I heard the reputation of the school is good”
- “It's a well-known accredited college”
- “My advisor promoted the school.”
- “It was recommended by my former professor at the County College of Morris.”

Faculty – 3%

Faculty were also cited as a reason students chose to attend ESU.

- “I was told that the business management major is the second largest major on campus and that most of the professors in the business management major are have their PHD's.”
- “Really great professors that I met on the day I visited.”
- “Great faculty in my major”

- “The faculty here are absolutely wonderful. They are encouraging and very helpful. They want me to succeed.”

Campus Size/Facilities – 3%

Students enjoyed the school’s small size and the amenities provided in institutional facilities.

- “I liked the campus community, size of the school”
- “The quality of... the updated laboratories.”
- “ESU seemed like a nice and small campus”
- “Sci-Tech building”

Class Size/Student-Teacher Ratio – 3%

Class size was also considered when choosing to come to ESU.

- “I chose it for the small class sizes and close relationships with professors and colleagues. At this school I am recognized for my achievements and am not just a number.”
- “I enjoyed that the class sizes were an average size and not limited to lecture classes.”
- “The small class sizes really allowed me to engage with my professors, dispelling one of my fears of college of not being able to interact with the instructor.”

Sports/Athletics – 3%

Specific sports were cited as the reason for selecting ESU.

- “I had the opportunity to run track here for a competitive D2 program.”
- “Got selected for a soccer scholarship”
- “Wanted to be a part of a great athletic program, track and field”
- “I was recruited for the women's soccer team”

Scholarship – 1%

- “Because of the waiver they offered to international students”
- “Board of Governor's Scholarship”

Other – 2%

A few responses did not fit into the broadly defined categories listed above.

- “They took all my credits when I transferred”
- “They accepted my low GPA.”
- “I felt like it was a good choice for a college.”