

11-14-2001

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### Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "11/14/2001 - EIU4 To Help Freshman.pdf" (2001). 2001. 194.  
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# NEWS

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01-265

November 14, 2001

For Immediate Release:

## EIU4 TO HELP FRESHMEN MAP OUT FOUR-YEAR JOURNEY TO DEGREE

CHARLESTON - Those who begin a trip by meticulously planning out each detail might find EIU4 to be just the ticket for their journey into higher education.

Beginning in Fall 2002, Eastern Illinois University will offer incoming first-time freshmen the opportunity to map their route to guaranteed four-year degree completion. And if, despite following carefully planned directions, a student fails to graduate during that period of time, the university promises to pay his or her remaining tuition.

Students must heed caution, however. Only those with determination and a firm knowledge of the major they seek will qualify for this incentive program.

While Eastern looks at EIU4 as a marketing tool, intended to entice students to the university, the program also addresses the growing -- and costly -- national trend of students taking five years or more to complete what have traditionally been four-year academic programs.

On average, an EIU student earns his or her degree in 4.7 years and graduates with 138 hours worth of credit. Given the rising cost of tuition throughout the country's colleges and universities -- not to mention housing and student fees -- an additional year of higher education can cost a student thousands of extra dollars.

According to Blair Lord, EIU's provost and vice president for academic affairs, reasons

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Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

for this extension of time-to-degree vary. For example, the average college student now changes his or her major three times during an academic career, and frequently, classes taken for one major don't transfer over to another.

Others, out of intellectual curiosity, take as many courses in as many subjects as they can in order to keep their options open.

As an institution of higher learning, Lord continued, Eastern supports and encourages students interested in subjects outside their chosen field. "There certainly are students who take the phrase 'liberal education' quite seriously, and we're delighted to be able to serve them," he said.

But, he added, "EIU also feels it has an obligation to its students to help ensure academic progress."

EIU4 assists interested students by providing them with "precise, sequentially designed degree plans." Support from academic counselors and the EIU4 coordinator, who will monitor participants' progress, will help keep students focused, while departments continue to pay special attention to course scheduling in order that specific courses are offered when needed.

Students will also be able to monitor their own progress via on-line audit and Web-based grade systems.

If, for any reason, a student becomes ineligible for EIU4 (i.e., failure to take prescribed courses, failure to pass a course or courses, withdrawing from a course or courses), he or she "simply won't be eligible for program benefits," Lord said. The student will not be penalized for failure to comply with the program's stringent guidelines; however, he or she will no longer have the four-years-to-graduation guarantee, either.

Currently, EIU4 is not available to students majoring in teacher certification programs or options, in the engineering cooperative program or in the environmental biology option. In addition, students who are unable to declare a major their first semester at EIU or to complete the designated number of hours each semester (15 to 18) should not apply for EIU4.

To inquire further on Eastern Illinois University's EIU4 program, contact the Office of Admissions at 1-800-252-5711 or (217) 581-2223.