

Ruffalo Noel Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)

2020 Results for Oregon State University Ecampus

Introduction

The PSOL was facilitated for students who were enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year. Special caution should be taken in reviewing these results given both the COVID-19 global pandemic and low response rate for this particular survey. A total of 6,688 OSU Ecampus students were invited to complete this survey. The target population was undergraduate, postbaccalaureate and non-degree seeking students who were studying at a distance. At the time the survey closed, 245 students had responded, a 4% response rate. This response rate is far lower than the average response rate Ecampus sees when surveying current students, ranging from 10 to 13%.

The PSOL is specifically designed for students enrolled in distance learning and online programs. The assessment measures satisfaction levels of online learning in five primary areas—academic services, enrollment services, institutional perceptions, instructional services, and student services. The data collected through the PSOL contributes to a national databank that allows RuffaloNL to provide national averages and benchmarking data for institutions that use the assessment. This report summarizes data collected through the PSOL for OSU Ecampus students in 2020, starting with overall satisfaction, covering survey items, and finally providing an overview of demographics.

Overall satisfaction

In looking at overall satisfaction with the online learning experience at OSU Ecampus, the PSOL uses three questions (Table 1) on a 7-point Likert type scale. Overall, OSU Ecampus students are satisfied with their experiences as much, or more so, than their national counterparts.

Table 1. Overall satisfaction.

Question	OSU Average	National Average
So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?	5.20	5.17
Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.	5.78	5.79
All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?	5.91	5.86

Survey items

The PSOL also provides institutions with insights around strengths and weaknesses based on student satisfaction compared to indicated importance. There are a total of 36 survey items in which students are asked to share how important that item is to them as well as how satisfied they are with that item at OSU. This combination of questions generates a gap score, informing a list of strengths—items ranked as high importance and high satisfaction—and a list of challenges—items ranked as high importance and low satisfaction (Table 2). The remaining items are considered neither a strength or challenge.

Table 2. Strengths and challenges.

Strengths (in no particular order)	Challenges (in no particular order)
My program advisor is accessible by telephone and email.	Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.
Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.
Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.	Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.
Registration for online courses is convenient.	Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
Adequate online library resources are provided.	The quality of online instruction is excellent.
Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.
The Ecampus website meets my needs as a current student.	
I can access information and services outside of my work day	

A summary of scale items in each of the five categories listed above is provided below in Table 3, including gap scores for each category.

Table 3. Scale summary.

Scale category	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap Score
Academic services	6.37	6.00	-0.37
Enrollment services	6.41	5.80	-0.61
Institutional perceptions	6.42	5.66	-0.76
Instructional services	6.33	5.69	-0.64
Student services	6.28	5.70	-0.58

The PSOL also asks students which factors were most significant in their decision to enroll at the institution (Table 4).

Table 4. Factors to enroll

Factor	Score
Convenience	6.57
Flexible pacing for completing a program	6.55
Work schedule	6.47
Reputation of institution	6.33
Future employment opportunities	6.23
Cost	6.22
Ability to transfer credits	6.20
Program requirements	6.14
Financial assistance available	5.75
Distance from campus	4.94
Recommendations from employer	3.83

OSU Ecampus was able to customize 10 survey items on the PSOL. These are often reserved for special data or aspects of the online learner experience that each institution would like to collect and explore. Campus items with importance, satisfaction and gap scores are presented below in Table 5.

Table 5. Campus item scores

Campus item	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap Score
The Ecampus website meets my needs as a current student	6.61	6.23	0.38
I have access to relevant career development resources from a distance	6.24	5.39	0.85
I have access to success coaching from a distance	5.76	5.74	0.02
I have access to health and wellness resources	5.42	4.90	0.52
I feel supported by Ecampus staff	6.27	5.83	0.44
I have made a connection with at least one person who helps me feel connected to the institution	5.84	5.03	0.81
I can access information and services outside of my work day	6.67	6.1	0.57
I have access to the support I need during the COVID-19 pandemic	6.08	5.62	0.46
I have access to resources to plan financially for my education	6.10	5.20	0.90
I have access to classes that use low or no cost textbooks and course materials	6.40	5.68	0.72

Two additional questions appeared for students in the demographics section, but were meant to better understand students' awareness of how to search for scholarships opportunities (Figure 1) and interest in engaging in undergraduate research (Figure 2). Both questions were timely given recent university wide initiatives to address student success.

Figure 1. Awareness of how to search for scholarship opportunities

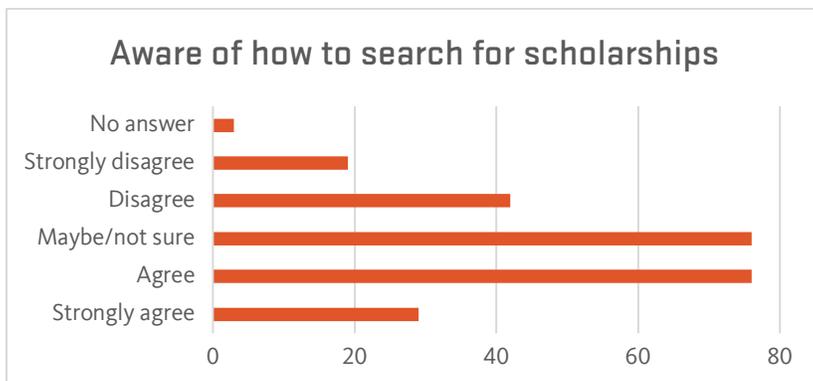
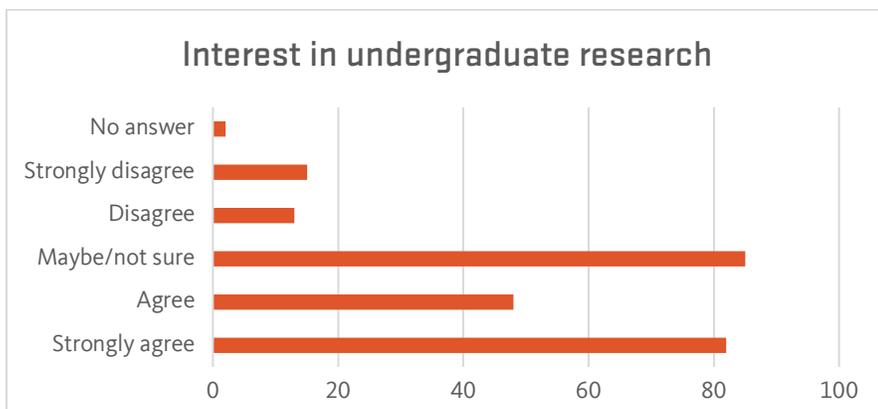


Figure 2. Interest in participating in undergraduate research.



Demographics

As mentioned above, this survey generated a response rate lower than expected based on previous surveys of Ecampus students. Demographic data is presented in the figures below.

Figure 3. Sex of survey respondents.

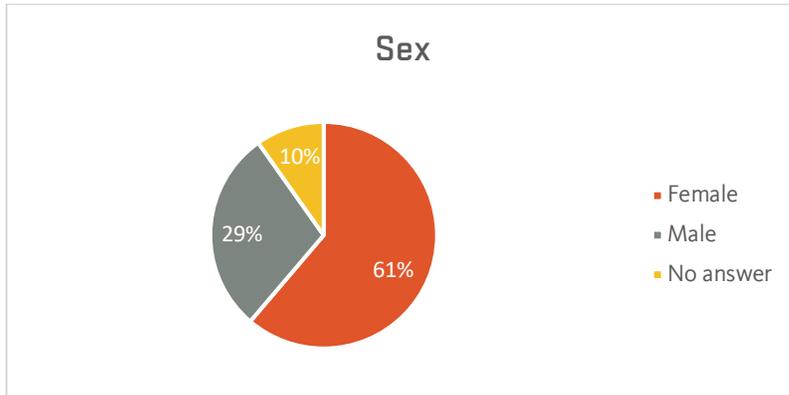


Figure 4. Race/Ethnicity of survey respondents.

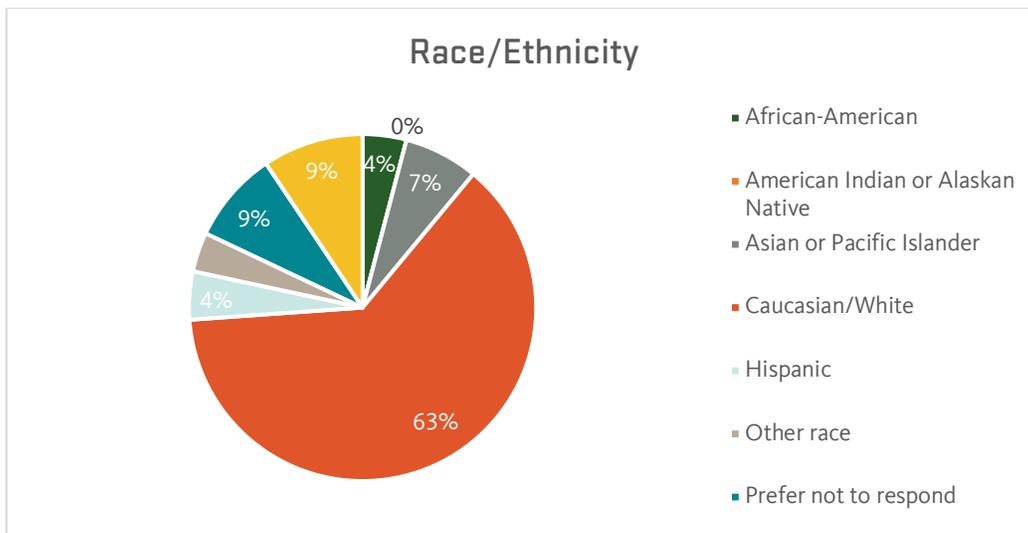


Figure 5. Age of survey respondents.

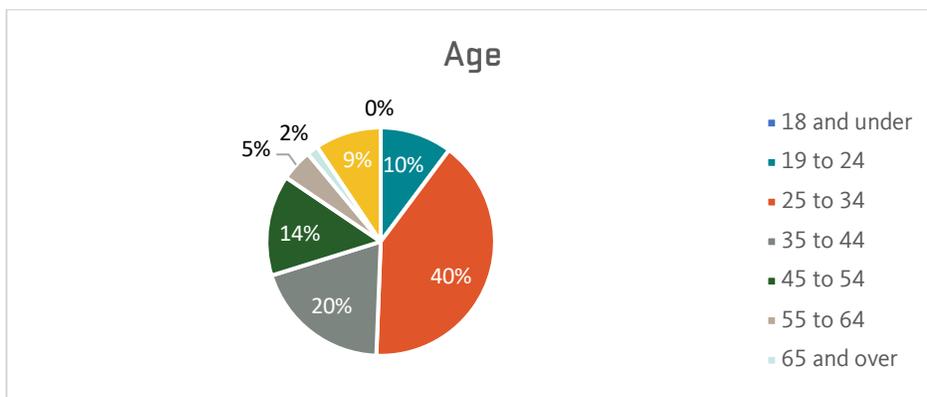
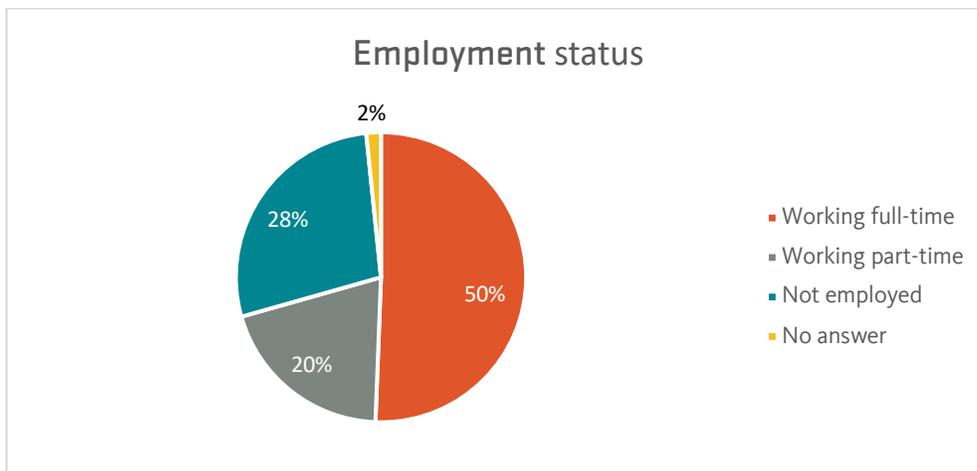


Figure 6. Employment status of survey respondents.



Additionally, 94% of respondents indicated that their educational goal was to complete an online degree, 2% were transferring credit elsewhere, 1% were planning to complete a degree on campus, and 1% were simply trying to complete their course. When asked about current enrollment level, 56% indicated they were enrolled part-time and 42% indicated they were enrolled full-time.

Conclusion

In summary, the survey provided insights into both strengths and challenges that OSU Ecampus faces in serving online learners. Due to a low response rate, results must be analyzed with a keen eye and follow up on certain survey items is recommended. OSU Ecampus will continue to explore ways to more effectively provide career development services, train faculty on expectations and priorities of online learners, and seek out additional financial resources for Ecampus students.

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