

2023 RNL Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL) Report

In August of 2023, OSU Ecampus facilitated the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL) with a targeted group of newly matriculated students. In total 4,154 Ecampus students whose first enrollment was in AY23 – Summer 2022, Fall 2022, Winter 2023, and Spring 2023 – were invited to participate in the PSOL. The response rate, while relatively low with only 304 complete responses (7.3%), was a slight improvement over 2022. This report will cover high level data from this survey and is broken into four sections—Demographics, Strengths and challenges, Campus items, and a Summary.

Demographics

Nearly 90% of respondents fell within the 19 – 44 age range with the largest group being 25 – 34 (46%). Outside of that larger group 22% fell within the 19 – 24 range, and 21% fell within the 35 – 44 range. The remaining were 45-54 (10%), 55 – 64 (1%), and 18 or under (1%). In terms of gender 55% of respondents identified as female, 33% as male, and the remaining either not responding or identifying as transgender, genderqueer, or another category not listed. In terms of race/ethnicity, we observe a homogenous group with 68% of respondents identifying as White, 8% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 7% as Hispanic, 6% as multiracial, 3% as Black or African American, and 2% as American Indian or Alaska Native.

Only 20% of respondents indicated they were enrolled in more than 12 credits, leaving close to 80% who were taking between 1 – 12 credits. Just over half of respondents indicated they were employed full-time (51%), with the rest indicating they were either employed part-time (22%) or not currently employed (26%). Close to 95% of respondents shared that their current plans were to complete an online degree program, with the rest planning to either complete a degree on campus, transfer credits, or just complete current coursework.

Strengths and challenges

The PSOL asks students to respond to a number of statements indicating the importance of that service or experience and their satisfaction with that same statement at OSU. The combination of those scores creates a gap score that indicates either a strength (satisfaction score is equal to or higher than the importance score) or a challenge (satisfaction score is lower than the importance score). These are noted with varying degrees of statistical significance and RNL provides benchmarking data for this set of items that is used consistently by all clients who facilitate the PSOL survey with their students.

Strengths identified for OSU Ecampus:

- Program requirements are clear and reasonable
- Registration for online courses is convenient
- Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable
- Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me
- Admissions processes are easy to navigate

Challenges identified for OSU Ecampus:

- The quality of online instruction is excellent
- Instructional materials are appropriate for program content
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress
- There are sufficient offerings within my program of study
- Transfer credits are articulated quickly
- I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services

Campus items

When using the PSOL institutions have the option to add up to 10 customized statements for students to indicate importance and satisfaction, also creating a set of gap scores. These scores are not available for benchmarking as they vary from one institution to another. The following are the 3 campus items that OSU Ecampus added to the 2023 facilitation of the PSOL, which garnered the largest negative gap scores (Table 1). Both importance and satisfaction are measured on a 7-point Likert type scale (1 = not important/satisfied at all, 7 = very important/satisfied).

Table 1. Campus item scores

Item	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
Transfer credits are articulated quickly	6.53	5.38	1.15
I have made a connection with at least one person who helps me feel connected to the institution	5.81	5.14	0.67
I have access to resources to plan financially for my education	6.27	5.58	0.69

Two additional campus specific questions were included in the demographics section of the survey, both of which are questions about financial aid. Both statements were presented to students with instructions to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point scale. The first statement, *'If I had access to additional financial aid, I would be able to enroll full-time/more often'*, resulted in 57% of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Of the remaining, 25% were unsure, and 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The second statement, *'I am aware of how to look for scholarship opportunities I may be eligible for at OSU'*, 69% either strongly agreed or agreed, 19% were unsure, and 12% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Summary

The PSOL asks three final questions to gage overall student satisfaction with their online experience at Oregon State University (Table 2). Overall, OSU Ecampus scored a 5.55 (up from 5.33 in 2022) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = very satisfied). Similar to

the strengths and challenges, these questions are standard and so are presented with benchmarking data. Additionally, the change from 2022 score is noted in ().

Table 2. Summary scores

Question	Institution score	National norms
So far, how has your college experience met your expectations? (1 = much worse than expected; 7 = much better than expected)	5.01 (+0.29)	5.22
Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far. (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = very satisfied)	5.65 (+0.21)	5.81
All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here? (1 = definitely not; 7 = definitely yes)	5.99 (+0.17)	5.93

Overall, it seems that student satisfaction with their experience as an OSU Ecampus student is improving, however there are some new strengths and challenges to be considered in future planning to further improve the student experience. While this data is important, it's critical to remember that the sample size here is a small given the low response rate. Our actions moving forward will include further exploring the challenges listed above to identify and prioritize aspects of the student experience to improve.