2021 OSU Ecampus annual student survey report

Survey introduction

Each spring, Ecampus student success administers the Ecampus annual student survey to all undergraduate students studying at a distance ('DSC' campus code in OSU student information system). This population includes both degree-seeking and non-degree students as well as those who are pursuing a post-baccalaureate (second bachelors) degree or undergraduate certificate. In May, 10,833 students were invited to participate in the 2021 Ecampus annual student survey. A total of 1,120 students responded to the survey, generating a response rate of 10.3%. The 2021 survey focused on in-depth questions about student services and academic advising, course design and instruction, and sense of belonging. This report is broken up into six sections—respondent demographics, overall satisfaction, academic support and success, course design and instruction, belonging, and a summary of takeaways.

Respondent demographics

The majority of respondents (67%) fall within the age range of 25 – 44 years old (Figure 1), however the number of credits completed at OSU varies greatly among students (Figure 2). More respondents identified as female (63%%) than male (31%). More than two-thirds of the population identifies as White (68. %), followed by Asian (8%), Hispanic/Latino (7%), Black or African American (2%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (2%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (1%), Middle Eastern or North African (1%), and those who preferred not to identify (11%)

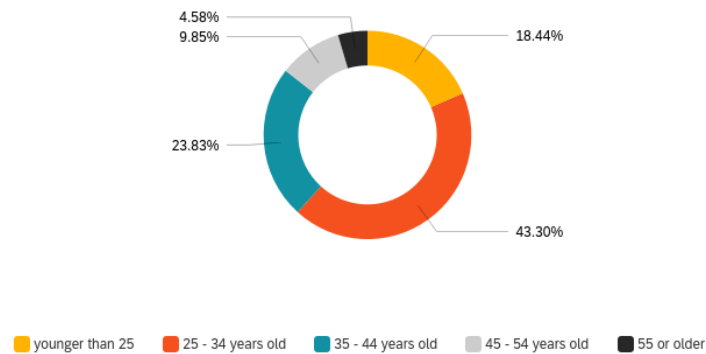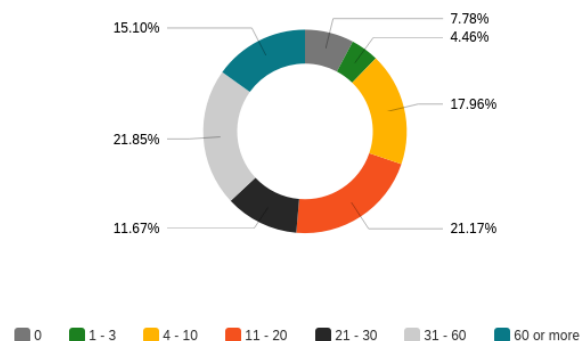Figure 1. Current age of respondents

4.58%
9.85%
18.44%
23.83%
43.30%

younger than 25   25 - 34 years old   35 - 44 years old   45 - 54 years old   55 or older

Figure 2. Credits completed at OSU

15.10%
7.78%
4.46%
17.96%
21.85%
11.67%
21.17%

0   1 - 3   4 - 10   11 - 20   21 - 30   31 - 60   60 or more
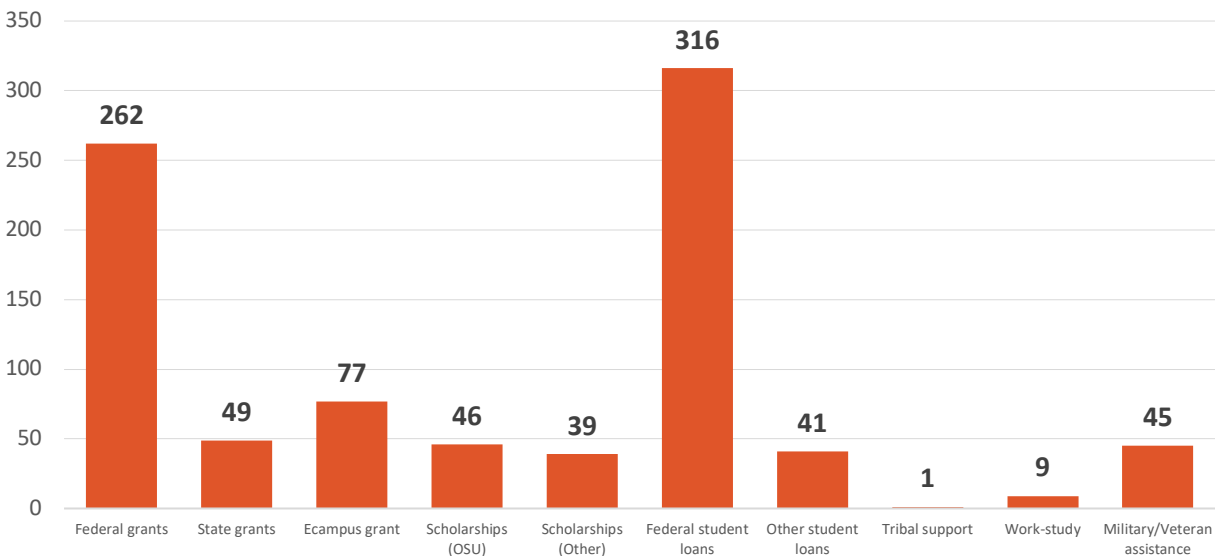
Survey respondents were overwhelmingly pursuing a degree at OSU (87%), however we continue to see growth in online non-degree responses (12%). A new question this year revealed that 94% of our respondents have taken all of their courses online, 3% have taken a combination of online and on-campus courses at OSU, and the remaining 3% started as a Corvallis or Cascades campus student and are now enrolled as an Ecampus student. The top three reasons for selecting OSU Ecampus for their degree were flexibility and/or accessibility of online courses (33%), reputation of OSU or degree program (19%), and the variety of online degrees offered (13%).
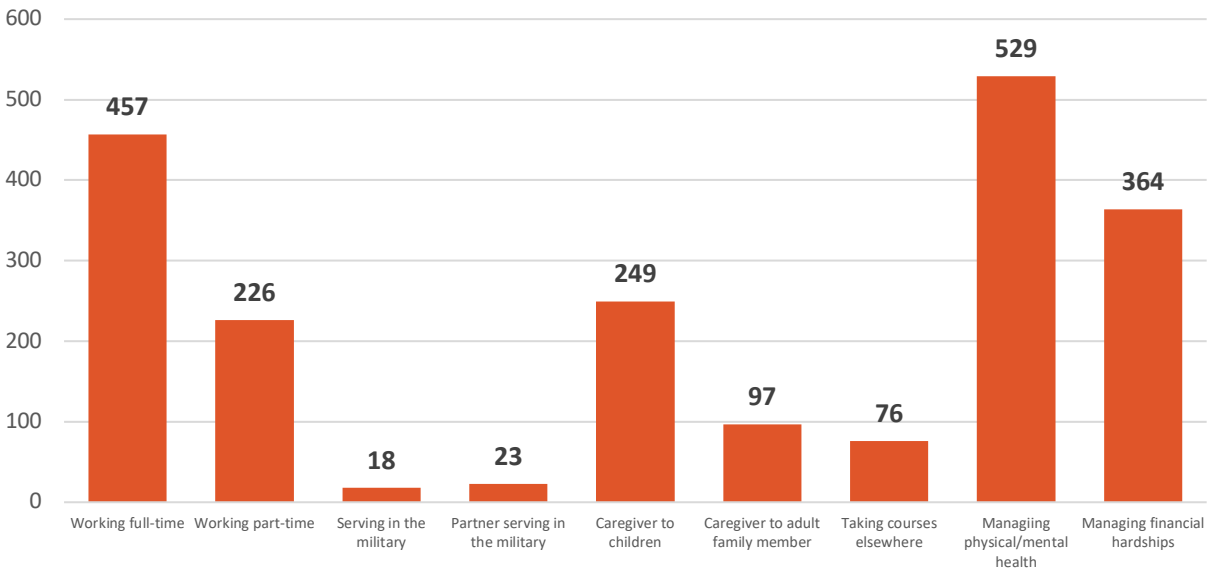
When asked which types of financial aid students had received during the academic year (Figure 3), students indicated being funded primarily by federal loans and grants, followed by the Ecampus grant, then various forms of state grants, internal and external scholarships, and military/veteran assistance. Very few students reported receiving work-study funds or financial assistance from their Tribes. Additionally, 10% of respondents reported receiving benefits through their employer to attend school.

Figure 3. Financial aid received at OSU

Students also reported a number of personal obligations in addition to enrolling in courses at OSU Ecampus (Figure 4). Overwhelmingly, Ecampus students report managing their physical and/or mental health as a significant personal obligation. Likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, far less students reported working full or part time (33%) this year compared to the 2020 survey (61%) and many students reported managing financial hardships (18%) this year.
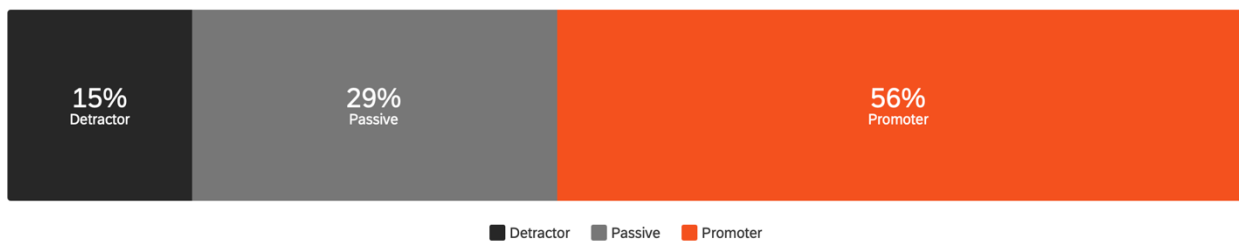
Figure 4. Personal obligations

Responses by college are as follows: College of Liberal Arts (197), College of Engineering (190), College of Agricultural Sciences (177), College of Forestry (58), College of Earth, Oceanic, and Atmospheric Sciences (44),College of Business (40), College of Science (32), and the College of Public Health and Human Sciences (26).

Overall satisfaction

OSU consistently tracks student net promoter scores—the likelihood that a student would recommend OSU to a family member or friend. This is measured on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not likely at all and 10 being extremely likely. Overall, students reported an average net promoter score of 8.28, with 56% of respondents falling into the category of 'promoter'. This score continues to indicate that OSU students have found value in their experience at OSU.

Figure 5. Net Promoter results

Academic support and success

Participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to satisfaction with direct student services and support received as a distance student at OSU. Satisfaction is measured on a 5-point Likert type scale (1=very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat satisfied, 5=very satisfied).
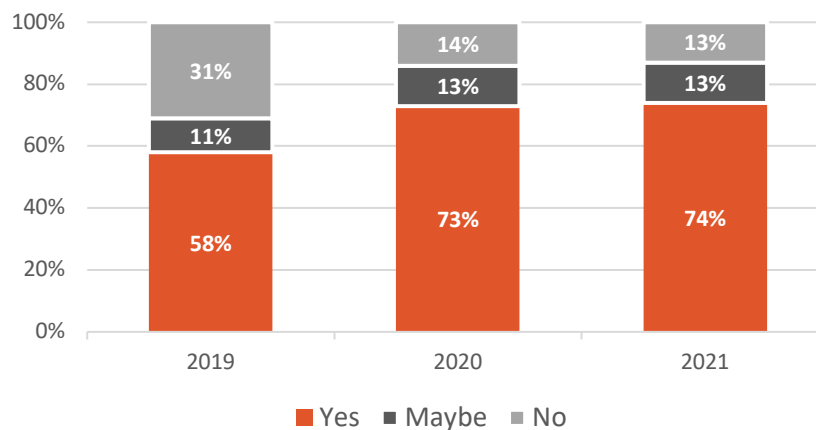
Overall, students are satisfied with the support they receive from OSU Ecampus staff (4.20), but students were also asked about their satisfaction with a number of other academic supports and services. Table 1 shows satisfaction with various aspects of academic advising, indicating strong satisfaction with these services.

Table 1. Satisfaction by service/unit

Aspects of academic advising	Satisfaction
My advisor provides useful information to help make informed decisions about my academics	4.46
My advisor addresses my questions/concerns adequately	4.53
I receive useful resources and referrals to help me be successful	4.36
Advising appointments are available at times that work for me	4.53
My advisor responds to my inquiries in a timely manner	4.58

One result of the 2019 annual student survey was a need to find more creative and effective ways to increase student awareness of the coaching services provided by the Ecampus Student Success Team. A significant increase in awareness of success coaching services among degree-seeking participants was observed between the 2019 and 2020 annual surveys and those remain stable in the 2021 survey (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Coaching awareness annual comparison

A new question this year, drafted by the Ecampus Student Success Team, asked students what student success looks like for them. Students were asked to select up to three items from the list in Table 2.

Table 2. Defining student success

Aspects of student success	Count	Percentage
Mastering course material	525	20%
GPA	461	18%
Making progress toward career goals	372	14%
Obtaining healthy work-life-school balance	323	12%

Feeling in control of your work	213	8%
Effectively managing your stress	199	8%
Engaging and participating in a course	170	7%
Graduating on time	111	4%
Managing financial wellness while in school	102	4%
Asking for help when you need it	89	3%

Course design and instruction

Students indicated strong satisfaction with course design elements, quality of instruction, and instructor behaviors, all measured on a 5-point Likert type (1=very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat satisfied, 5=very satisfied) and presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

Table 4. Course design elements - satisfaction

Course design element	Satisfaction
Clear navigation and organization	4.33
Syllabus and course site is up-to-date	4.29
Variety of methods to deliver course content	4.13
Multimedia course content (i.e. video/audio)	4.10
Interactive experiences with other students	3.76
Supplemental course materials are provided	4.14
Variety of assessments throughout the course	4.16
Quizzes or activities to check for understanding	4.23
Tests/exams effectively assess the learning outcomes for the course	4.10
Overall course design	**4.19**

Table 5. Quality of instruction - satisfaction

Quality of Instruction	Satisfaction
Clear grading criteria	4.34
Clear instructions for completing assignments	4.23
Timely response to questions/emails	4.29
Encouraging/engaging students to ask questions	4.27
Constructive feedback provided in a timely manner	4.02
Grades are updated and released before the drop/withdraw deadlines	4.11
Outside resources were offered to those who were struggling (tutoring, counseling, etc.)	3.76

Table 6. Instructor/faculty behaviors - satisfaction

Instructor/faculty behavior	Satisfaction
Instructors provide information about how to reach them and what their availability will be	4.56
Instructors are responsive to me when I have a question	4.39
Instructors set clear expectations about assignments and other assessments	4.29

Instructors interact with students in the class on a regular basis	4.03
Instructors offer office hours to meet with them	4.26
Instructors have policies that are sensitive to needs of non-traditional students, such as reasonable deadlines	4.11

When asked to indicate the two most important aspects of a course that determine their satisfaction, 566 students (31%) selected 'clear navigation, organization, and a logical course design', followed by 391 students (22%) who selected 'interaction with an instructor who is responsive, regularly engaged, and timely in providing feedback', and 385 students (21%) who selected 'content that is interactive and engaging'. Course policies that recognize the needs of non-traditional students was selected by 232 students (13%).

Belonging

Sense of belonging is a success metric that is being tracked annually to better understand how belonging impacts the online student experience and identify areas of improvement in building and sustaining an online student community. Sense of belonging was measured using six statements – the last one added this year – in which students indicated their level of agreement on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree).

Table 7. Sense of belonging scores

Belonging aspect	Average score (change YOY)
I feel a real sense of belonging in my classes	2.83 (-.03)
I feel like I really matter	2.80 (+.01)
I feel a close connection to other students	2.28 (-.01)
I feel like my instructors really care about me as a person	2.99 (+.05)
I feel like the staff are there for me	3.10 (-.03)
I think Ecampus promotes an inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive	3.17 (n/a)

Summary of takeaways

It's clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has had many and varied impacts on the student experience. Survey response rates were lower this year, a trend that we have seen and heard from colleagues across the institution but also nationally. Student satisfaction rates, while they do vary some from year to year, seemed to be impacted by many events throughout the 2020-2021 academic year – pandemic aside, students navigated massive wildfires, snow and ice storms, and many power outages across the nation. It's reasonable to connect all of these events with a shift in personal obligations, noting that less students reported being employed and many reported personal struggles with finances and health. Satisfaction with course design and instruction generally improved, with a few outliers, when compared to 2019 survey data. Sense of belonging appears to be stable with minor changes year over year. Overall, the student experience continues to be mostly positive with some aspects that may improve as we come out of the pandemic.