2022 RNL Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL) Report

In May of 2022, OSU Ecampus facilitated the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL) with a targeted group of newly matriculated students. In total 4,126 Ecampus students whose first enrollment was in AY22 – Summer 2021, Fall 2021, Winter 2022, and Spring 2022 – were invited to participate in the PSOL. The response rate was relatively low with only 262 complete responses (6.2%). 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

Over 80% of respondents fell within the 19 – 44 age range with the largest group being 25 – 34 (31%). Outside of that larger group 12% fell within the 45 – 54 range, and the remaining 8% were either 55 or older or 18 and under. In terms of gender and race/ethnicity, we observe a fairly homogenous group with 60% of respondents identifying as female and 33% as male. The remaining group identified as transgender, genderqueer, or preferred not to respond. Nearly two-thirds of respondents identified as White (65%), followed by Asian or Pacific Islander (9%), multi-racial (8%), Hispanic (7%), Black or African American (4%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%).

There was a near even split between those who were enrolled full-time (47%) and those enrolled part-time (53%) at OSU Ecampus. Nearly half of respondents indicated they were employed full time, 22% employed part-time, and 29% indicated they were unemployed at the time. All undergraduate colleges with Ecampus programs were represented—College of Agricultural Sciences (14%), College of Business (12%), College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences (5%), College of Education (1%), College of Engineering (31%), College of Forestry (3%), College of Liberal Arts (23%), College of Public Health and Human Sciences (3%), and the College of Science (9%).

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:
- Registration for online courses is convenient
- This institution responds quickly when I request information
- Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me

-   My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail

Challenges identified for OSU Ecampus:
-   Adequate financial aid is available
-   I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid
-   Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress
-   Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment
-   Instructional materials are appropriate for program content
-   Program requirements are clear and reasonable
-   The quality of online instruction is excellent

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 10 campus items that OSU Ecampus added to the 2022 facilitation of the PSOL along with importance, satisfaction, and 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) and negative gap scores are indicated in red, positive gap scores in green.

Table 1. Campus item scores

Item	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
Admissions processes are easy to navigate	6.38	5.85	0.53
I have access to faculty hosted office hours	6.13	5.75	0.38
I have access to success coaching from a distance	5.92	5.98	0.06
I have access to health and wellness resources	5.60	5.15	0.45
I feel supported by Ecampus staff	6.27	5.78	0.49
I have made a connection with at least one person who helps me feel connected to the institution	5.61	5.12	0.49
Orientation programming was helpful in setting me up for success	5.69	5.37	0.32
I have access to financial aid officers to answer my questions	6.10	5.52	0.58
I have access to resources to plan financially for my education	6.08	5.22	0.86
I have access to classes that use low or no cost textbooks and course materials	6.38	5.75	0.64

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 5.33 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.

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)	4.72	5.17
Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far. (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = very satisfied)	5.44	5.78
All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here? (1 = definitely not; 7 = definitely yes)	5.82	5.88

Overall, it seems that students are satisfied with their experience as an OSU Ecampus student, however there are many areas that require attention 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 identity and prioritize aspects of the student experience to improve.