

2026 RNL Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL) Report

Executive Summary

In August of 2026, OSU Ecampus facilitated the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Priorities Survey of Online Learners (PSOL) with a targeted group of newly matriculated students. The PSOL is used specifically to benchmark nationally with other institutions who are serving online learners and that facilitate this assessment. In total 2,853 Ecampus students whose first enrollment was in AY26 – Summer 2025, Fall 2025, Winter 2026, and Spring 2026 – were invited to participate in the PSOL. This year we received 182 completed surveys, generating a response rate of 6%. This report covers key findings, along with respondent demographics, strengths and challenges, campus items, and recommendations.

Key findings

- Overall satisfaction reached 78%, four percentage points above the 74% national benchmark.
- Eighty-six percent indicated they would enroll again if given the opportunity to reconsider, 10 percentage points above the 76% national benchmark.
- Convenience, transfer-credit acceptance, and flexible pacing were the three most frequently cited enrollment factors, each selected by at least 90% of respondents.
- Strengths centered on instructional materials, course availability, library access, faculty office hours, wellness resources, orientation, and online learning resources.
- Challenges clustered around instructional quality and responsiveness, clarity and timeliness of academic processes, admissions and transfer credit processing, and financial aid and affordability.
- Sixty-seven percent agreed or strongly agreed that additional financial aid would allow them to enroll full-time or more often.

Bottom Line Indicators

When asked about satisfaction, 78% of OSU students were satisfied with their OSU experience, compared to 74% nationally. And when asked how likely they were to enroll again if they had it to do over, 86% of OSU students indicated they would enroll at OSU again, compared to 76% nationally.

Top 5 Factors to Enroll

Convenience and ability to transfer credits are especially critical to respondents. This underscores the importance of maintaining adaptable online structures and continued investment in improving course articulation processes and efficiencies. OSU's strong reputation remains a differentiator, but other decisive factors are surfacing, according to the top 5 factors to enroll at OSU Ecampus:

Convenience (92%), Ability to transfer credits (91%), Flexible pacing for completing a program (90%), Cost (85%), and Reputation of institution (84%).

Strengths and Challenges

The PSOL asks students to respond to several statements by indicating the importance of that item to their student experience and to what degree they are satisfied with that item at OSU. The combination of those scores creates a gap score that is used to identify strengths (satisfaction score is equal to or higher than the importance score) and challenges (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 common items used by other clients facilitating this assessment.

Strengths identified for OSU Ecampus:

- Instructional materials are appropriate for program content
- There are sufficient offerings within my program of study
- Adequate online library resources are provided

Challenges identified for OSU Ecampus:

- The quality of online instruction is excellent
- Registration for online courses is convenient
- Faculty are responsive to student needs
- Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable
- Program requirements are clear and reasonable
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress

The PSOL allows for 10 customized ‘campus items’ to be included in this gap score analysis. These scores are not included in benchmarking data as they vary between institutions.

Campus item strengths:

- I have access to faculty hosted office hours
- I have access to mental health and wellness resources
- Orientation programming was helpful in setting me up for success
- I have access to OSU provided resources that support my online learning success

Campus item challenges:

- Admissions processes are easy to navigate
- Transfer credits are articulated quickly
- I have access to financial aid officers to answer my questions
- I have access to resources to plan financially for my education

Two additional campus items were included in a different section of the survey, but pertain to the strengths and challenges presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Strengths and Challenges

	Strongly agree	Agree	Maybe/Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
If I had access to additional financial aid, I would be able to enroll full time/more often.	44%	23%	16%	11%	6%
My college provides opportunities for me to engage in activities and programming from a distance.	34%	41%	18%	4%	3%

Recommendations

- 1. Strengthen financial planning and financial aid access.** Expand proactive support for budgeting educational expenses, understanding aid options, and connecting with financial aid staff. Prioritize clear, online-accessible guidance and timely opportunities for individualized assistance.
- 2. Reduce friction in admissions and transfer credit articulation.** Review the end-to-end student experience from application through matriculation, with particular attention to handoffs, status communication, processing timelines, and transparency.
- 3. Protect and build on the flexibility that drives enrollment.** Continue to prioritize convenience, flexible pacing, and sufficient course availability in program planning and scheduling.
- 4. Advance a consistent standard for online teaching responsiveness and feedback.** Develop or reinforce shared expectations for faculty responsiveness, timely feedback, assessment clarity, and communication of student progress. Pair expectations with professional development, examples of effective online teaching practices, and mechanisms for identifying recurring student pain points.