2019 Oregon State University Ecampus annual student survey report

Survey introduction

Each spring, Oregon State University 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. In May, 8,755 students were invited to participate in the 2019 Ecampus annual student survey. Students were contacted via their OSU email accounts multiple times before the survey closed. A total of 981 students responded to the survey, generating a response rate of 11.2%.

The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 25 – 44 years old (67.12%) (Figure 1), however the number of credits completed at OSU varies greatly among students (Figure 2). More respondents identified as female (60.95%) than male (36.21%). More than two-thirds of the population identifies as White (68.75%), followed by two or more races (8.04%), Asian (7.29%), Hispanic/Latino (5.95%), Black or African American (1.93%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.49%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.30%).

Figure 1. Current age of respondents

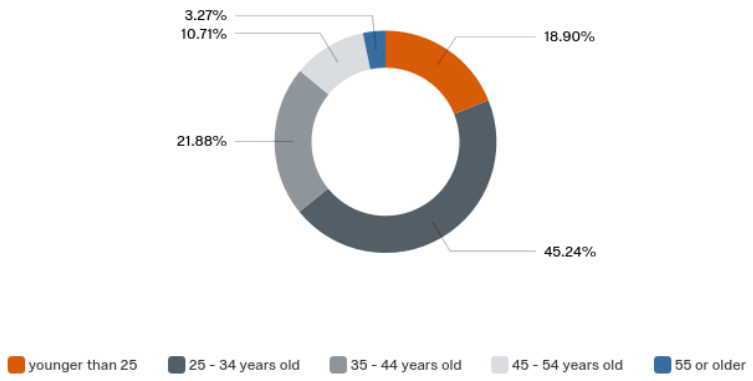
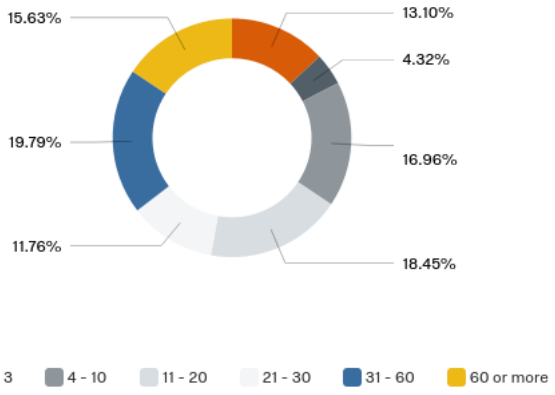
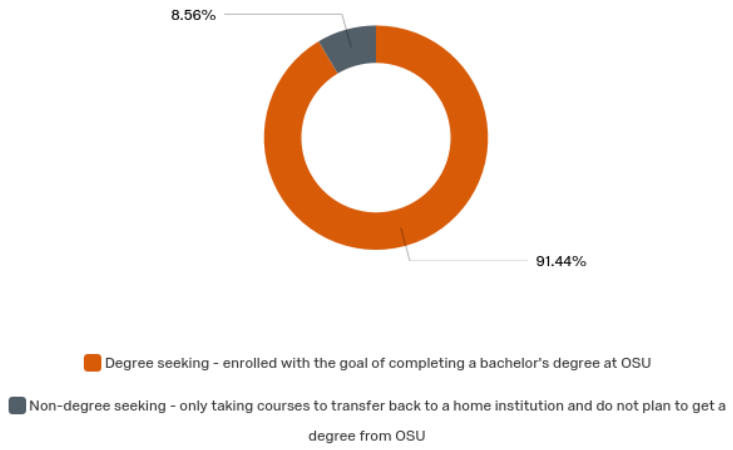


Figure 2. Credits completed at OSU



Survey respondents were overwhelmingly pursuing a degree at OSU (91.44%) (Figure 3), however we continue to see significant growth in non-degree enrollment each year and plan to survey and monitor this population more intentionally in the future.

Figure 3. Degree seeking status at OSU



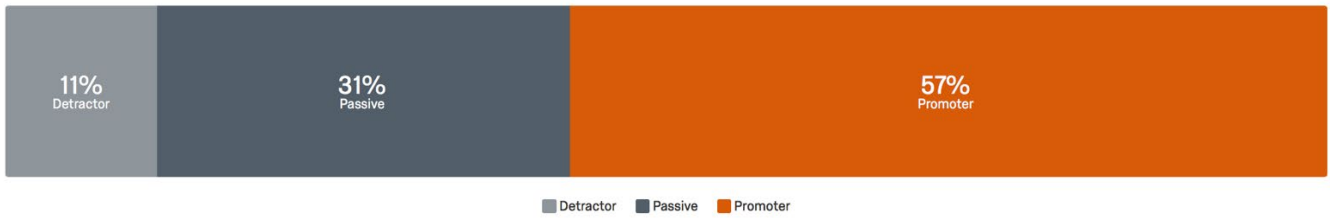
Responses by college are as follows: College of Agricultural Sciences (129), College of Business (40), College of Earth, Oceanic, and Atmospheric Sciences (42), College of Engineering (156), College of Forestry (52), College of Liberal Arts (156), and College of Public Health and Human Sciences (29).

When asked why students chose OSU, respondents indicated that our ranking and brand recognition (25%) as well as degrees offered (20%) were top reasons, followed by flexibility and ability to work (18%), cost (7%), and miscellaneous categories (8%). Miscellaneous responses included the university being military friendly, convenience of online modality, being an alumni, location of the university, and ability to carry out parental responsibilities while attending school.

This report is broken up into six sections—overall satisfaction, student support, course design, instruction, and program information, followed by a summary of takeaways.

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 8.41, with more than half of respondents falling into the category of 'promoter'. This is a strong indication that OSU students have found value in their experience at OSU.



Student support

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 7-point Likert type scale (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=somewhat dissatisfied, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat satisfied, 6=satisfied, 7=very satisfied).

Service	Average score
Overall satisfaction with support from OSU Ecampus staff	5.83
Overall satisfaction with Ecampus proctoring services	5.47
Tutoring vendor meeting expectations	3.24
Overall satisfaction with online library resources and services	5.96

Student satisfaction with tutoring provided is concerning and indicates a need to focus on exploring why satisfaction is low and seek out ways to improve the tutoring experience for OSU Ecampus students. When asked how we could improve tutoring, respondents shared negative experiences that fell into three categories—platform being difficult to use and outdated, quality of tutors available in answering specific or difficult questions, and availability of tutors in various time zones. Ecampus will seek out vendors who have modern and accessible platforms that integrate into the LMS, recruit high quality tutors that students can connect with and schedule individually, and can consistently deliver 24/7 tutor availability.

While overall satisfaction with Ecampus proctoring services was positive, students who provided responses to the open-ended question about improving proctoring indicated three focus areas—online proctoring vendor issues, cost, and improving proctoring communications/instructions and website. Ecampus is currently exploring ways to address these issues and progress has already been made in clarifying and improving the proctoring website and database communications.

In terms of student success, the survey asked students about course completion and awareness of coaching services to assist students with success strategies. Only 25% of survey respondents indicated they had started a course and did not complete it sometime in the last academic year (summer 2018 – spring 2019). When asked what OSU could have done to help them complete that course(s), 59% of students indicated that nothing additional could have been done. For those who cited something that the university could have done to help, improved professor engagement and instruction (11%) topped the list, followed by more flexibility (3%), and improved academic advising (3%).

When degree-seeking students were asked if they were aware of free success coaching services offered by Ecampus, 57.5% answered ‘yes’, 31% answered ‘no’, and 11.5% answered ‘maybe’. This demonstrates a need to find more creative and effective ways to increase student awareness of coaching services moving forward.

Course design

Participants were asked a series of questions regarding satisfaction with elements of course design as well as overall satisfaction with course design in courses they have taken online through OSU. Satisfaction is measured on a 7-point Likert type scale (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=somewhat dissatisfied, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat satisfied, 6=satisfied, 7=very satisfied).

Students reported an overall satisfaction rate of 5.67 with course design, but shared that they tend to notice when content is outdated and would like to have increased opportunities to interact and engage with faculty and instructors in courses.

Course design element	Average score
Look and feel of courses in Canvas	4.22
Clear navigation and organization	4.03
Variety of methods to deliver course content	3.96
Interactive experiences with other students	3.80
Interactive experiences with faculty	3.72
Innovative visual design	3.79

Instruction

Survey questions on instruction were divided into two overarching categories of instructional elements and instructor/faculty actions, with various subcategories within each. Students were asked to share their satisfaction with instructional elements and instructor/faculty actions on a 7-point Likert type scale (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=somewhat dissatisfied, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat satisfied, 6=satisfied, 7=very satisfied).

Instructional element	Average score
Clear grading criteria	4.46
Clear instructions for completing assignments	4.21
Clear response times to questions/emails	4.25
Multimedia course content (i.e., video/audio)	4.10
Supplemental course materials	4.15
Encouraging/engaging students to ask questions	4.25
Constructive feedback provided in a timely manner	4.02
Quizzes to check for understanding	4.24
Tests/exams effectively assess the learning outcomes for the course	4.18
Mid-term grades are posted before the drop/withdraw deadlines	4.27

Instructor/Faculty...	Average score
Provide information about how to reach them/availability is clear	4.51
Responsive to me when I have questions	4.17
Set clear expectations about assignments/assessments	4.05
Interact with students in the class on a regular basis	3.86

Students were then asked to respond to an open-ended question recalling their best online experience and what the instructor did that made that experience stand out. We continue to see patterns in student expectations around faculty engagement, responsiveness, and providing timely feedback.

- Responsiveness & timely feedback: 35% of respondents mention that timely responses to questions and feedback on their work formed part of their best online experience.

- Professor connection with student: 24% of respondents mention having a memorable experience with a professor who connected with them by being caring, understanding, and offering helpful feedback.
- Interactive lecture & professor engagement: 18% of respondents desire improved lectures from professors/instructors and more engagement within the course from instructors.
- Other minor themes: Course clarity (5%) and multiple learning resources within a course (less than 1%).

Program information

Students were asked about satisfaction with their major/program using a 7-point Likert type scale (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=somewhat dissatisfied, 4=neutral, 5=somewhat satisfied, 6=satisfied, 7=very satisfied).

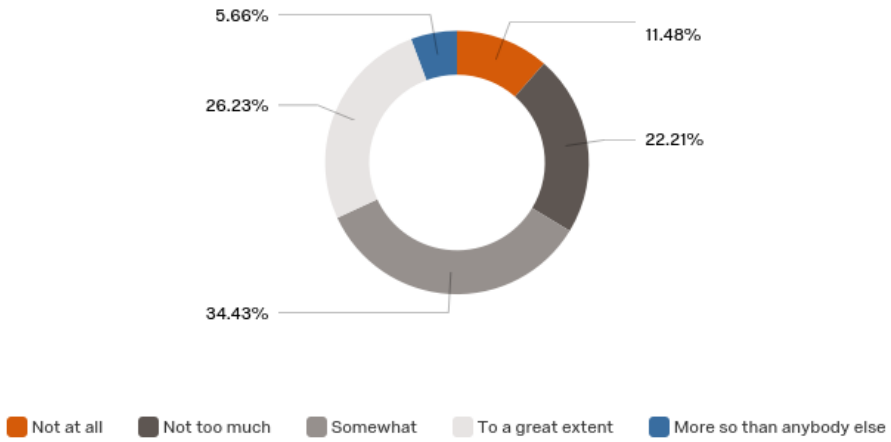
Major/Program element	Average score
Courses are offered when I need them	4.03
Usefulness of texts/materials chosen for courses	3.92
Access to texts or materials at a low cost	3.59

Students were then asked what aspects of their major/program needed improvements. As seen in previous survey questions about course design and instruction, students are overall satisfied with those experiences, however those themes surfaced in program feedback and improvement recommendations.

- Course development: 16% of respondents desire improved courses. Respondents indicate course organization, content, and lectures need to be improved.
- Improved/updated video lectures: 11% desire improved video lectures and updated course material.
- More courses/electives: 10% of respondents desire more course offerings, specifically electives.
- Cost of course materials: 8% of respondents indicate that the cost of textbooks and course materials should be more affordable.
- Professor feedback: 7% of respondents desire more personalized and timely feedback from instructors/faculty.
- Other minor themes: TA accountability (3%), flexibility (3%), peer-to-peer interaction (2%), improved advising and degree planning (6%), tutoring (1%), career/experiential learning opportunities (3%).
- No change needed for improvement: 13% of respondents indicate no change needed for improvement to their major/program.

Academic advising is done by major, program or college and not a direct service provided by OSU Ecampus, therefore while questions around academic advising are included in the student services section of the annual student survey, findings are summarized under Program information in this report. When asked how much students rely on academic advisors to help them achieve success at OSU, respondents indicated that while advisors were an important resource, their reliance on them was varied. Measured on a 5-point Likert type scale (1=not at all, 2=not too much, 3=somewhat, 4=to a great extent, 5=more so than anybody else), the mean response was 2.92 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Student reliance on academic advisor



When asked for additional comments regarding their experience with academic advising, respondents were mostly positive and provided some valuable insights.

- Positive feedback: 43% of respondents express some sort of positive feedback regarding their advising experience. Most indicate responsiveness, expertise, and ability to find the answer to their questions.
- Poor advising experience: 12% of respondents report a poor advising experience due to a lack of communication, availability, and program advice. Others indicate an overall poor experience with their advisor relationship and find them to be rude.
- Advisor use: 8% of respondents view advisors as only useful for registration and override purposes.
- Other themes identified: Advisor turnover (4%), advisor caseload (3%), and degree planning (1%).

Summary of takeaways

Overall, students appear to be satisfied with their experience at OSU and the university and online experience is meeting their needs. It's clear that OSU continues to offer a high-quality student experience, but will focus on some areas of improvement for the next year.

We will continue to encourage faculty to engage with students in meaningful ways within their courses and to explore ways for students to build community with one another. Faculty engagement is a theme that surfaces in many student-facing assessments each year and online students appear to crave interaction with faculty more than the traditional on-campus population. Timely feedback on work and adequate response times to questions or comments are critical to the student experience and Ecampus will continue to highlight these as best practices in faculty trainings.

Ecampus will need to explore ways to improve the online tutoring and remote proctoring experience for students at a distance. Tutoring issues—a platform that is difficult to navigate, low quality tutors, and inability to assist with difficult content—are top of mind for the student success team as they work to improve this experience. Proctoring issues—costs, remote proctoring, and improved

communications and website—will be prioritized as we work to evaluate the current proctoring options available to students.

Moving forward, Ecampus will continue to collect data throughout the year on student stop-outs, financial barriers, impact of student success initiatives, and sense of belonging in distance students. Conducting a deeper analysis of annual student survey data by major and student population is a divisional priority and will be shared internally with key stakeholders.