

2020 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. In May, 9,476 students were invited to participate in the 2020 Ecampus annual student survey. Students were contacted via their OSU email accounts multiple times before the survey closed. A total of 1,190 students responded to the survey, generating a response rate of 12.5%. The 2020 survey focused on three themes—career services and resources, student to faculty communication, and sense of belonging—in addition to foundational questions that remain on the survey each year. This report is broken up into six sections—respondent demographics, overall satisfaction, academic support and success, course design and instruction, belonging and engagement, and a summary of takeaways.

Respondent demographics

The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 25 – 44 years old (67.95%) (Figure 1), however the number of credits completed at OSU varies greatly among students (Figure 2). More respondents identified as female (63.95%) than male (32.51%). More than two-thirds of the population identifies as White (68.59%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (7.80%), two or more races (7.26%), Asian (7.16%), Black or African American (2.24%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.85%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.53%).

Figure 1. Current age of respondents

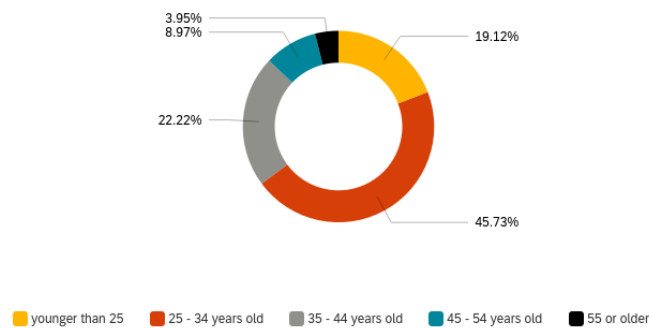
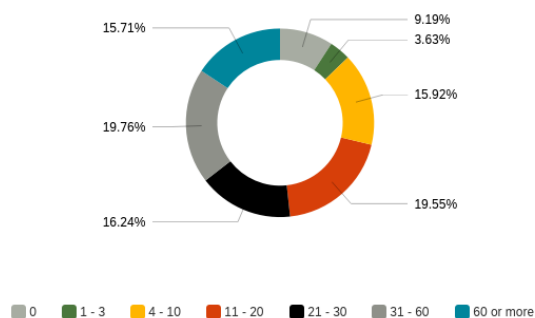


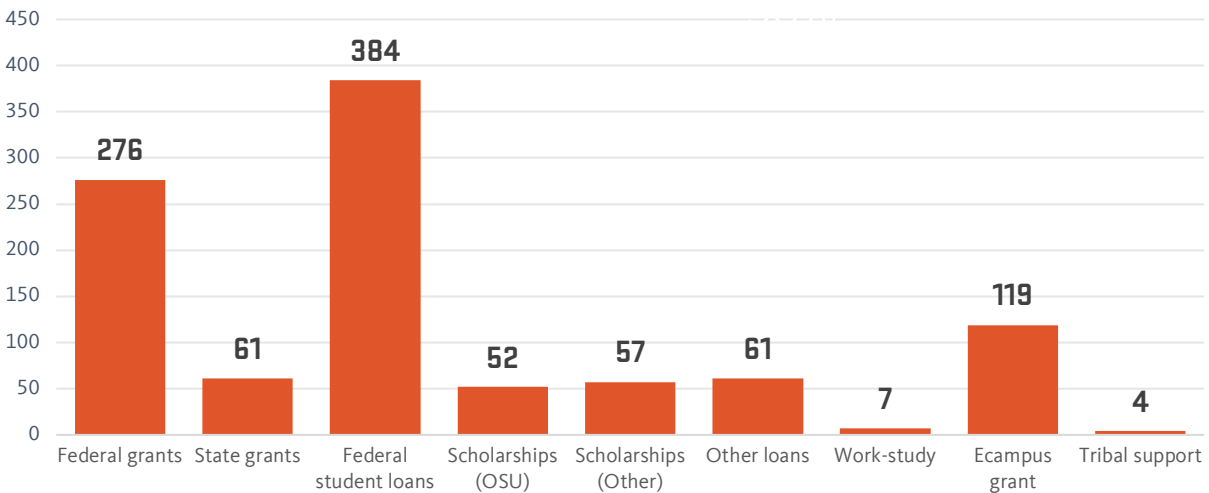
Figure 2. Credits completed at OSU



Survey respondents were overwhelmingly pursuing a degree at OSU (89.08%), however we continue to see significant growth in online non-degree enrollment each year.

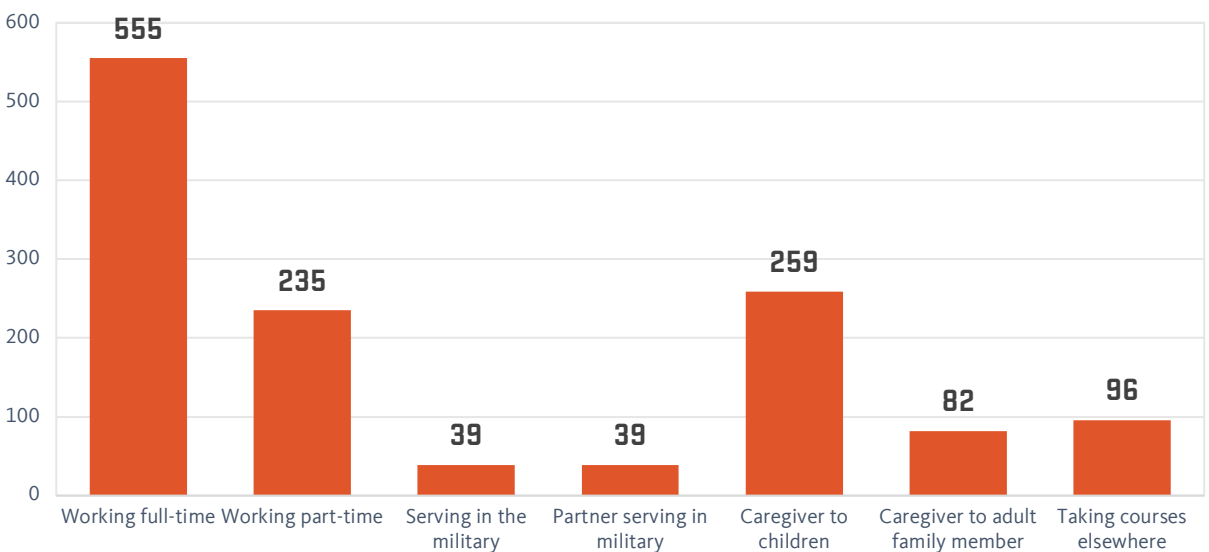
When asked which types of financial aid students had received during the academic year (Figure 3), students indicated being funded primarily by federal grants and loans, followed by the Ecampus grant, then various forms of state grants, internal and external scholarships. Very few students reported receiving work-study funds or financial assistance from their Tribes.

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 working full or part time and caring for children or other adult family members while managing online coursework.

Figure 4. Personal obligations

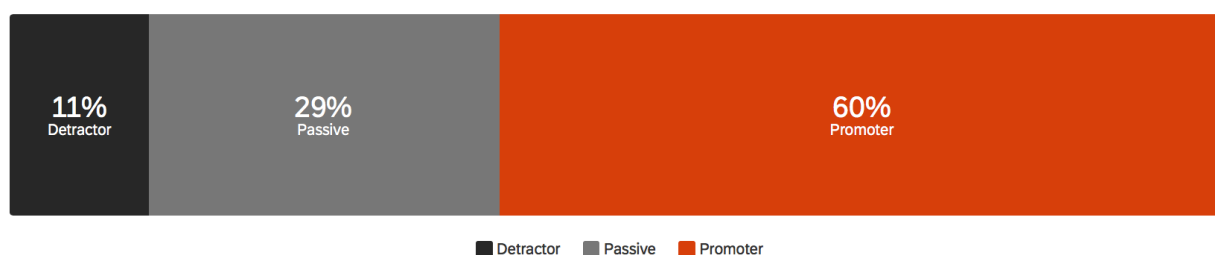


Responses by college are as follows: College of Agricultural Sciences (169), College of Business (58), College of Earth, Oceanic, and Atmospheric Sciences (61), College of Engineering (204), College of Forestry (57), College of Liberal Arts (213), College of Public Health and Human Sciences (45) and the College of Science (14). The University Exploratory Studies Program had 7 responses.

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 8.56, with 60% of respondents falling into the category of ‘promoter’, up from 57% in 2019. This is a strong indication that OSU students have found value in their experience at OSU.

Figure 5. Net Promoter results



Students were asked to share their reason(s) for the rating they provided on the net promoter score question. This was an open-ended question requiring coding to understand themes that emerged in student responses (Table 1). Many themes included notes of both positive and negative feelings, noted by a ‘+’ or “-”.

Table 1. Overall satisfaction – Qualitative themes

Theme	Positive/ Negative
Experiences with faculty, staff, support and resources	+/-
Left out of COVID aid/tuition freeze policy	-
Variety of program options, STEM especially	+
Cost of attendance	+/-
OSU Ecampus reputation	+
Online learning is not for everyone	+/-
Accessible, flexible, practical education	+
Feelings of being an afterthought, lack of caring	-

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). Satisfaction scores, along with results of a Spearman’s correlation test to identify the relationship

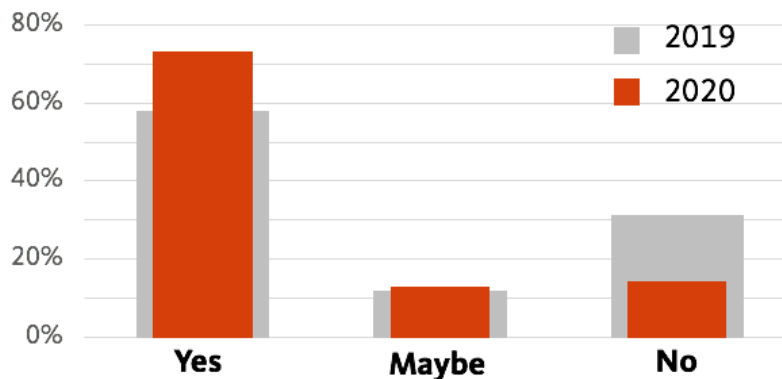
between each support service satisfaction and net promoters scores, are reported in Table 2. Support service satisfaction is positively and significantly correlated with net promoter scores.

Table 2. Satisfaction with direct student services at OSU

Service	Average score	rs score (p<.001)
Overall satisfaction with support from OSU Ecampus staff (n=1138)	4.47	.414
Overall satisfaction with academic advising (n=1053)	4.46	.539
Overall satisfaction with Online Writing Suite (n=117)	4.64	.529
Overall satisfaction with Career Development Center (n=143)	4.21	.528

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 (Figure 6), noting more 15 percentage point increase in students who indicated ‘Yes’. Success coaching was showcased in many of the marketing teams communications on social media and with current students. In addition to a communication push, a redeveloped online orientation was launched in January of 2020, which included a coaching session primarily focused on educating students about coaching and other support services offered at OSU.

Figure 6. Coaching awareness annual comparison



An exploration into current use, satisfaction, and needs around career services and resources was conducted with the 2020 annual student survey. Data revealed that very few Ecampus students (14.3%) have used services provided by the OSU Career Development Center (CDC). Of those who have engaged with the CDC, the most useful services were the website, Handshake (online job board and network), and the college specific career advisor, however this varied greatly by college. The least useful services were Standout (mock interviewing tool) and Focus2 (career assessment tool). When asked how important it would be for Ecampus students to have access to a list of career services (pulled from National Association of Colleges and Employers toolkit), students indicated that more personalized advice and exploration, help with their job search, and access to workforce and job demand data were high priorities.

Course design and instruction

Students indicated strong satisfaction with both overall course design (4.37) and quality of instruction (4.27) on a 5-point Likert type (1=very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat dissatisfied, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat satisfied, 5=very satisfied). When asked about what stood out to them when considering their best online experiences with instructors, student responses fell into a number of themes (Table 3).

Table 3. Best online experiences with instructors - Qualitative themes

Theme	Occurrence
Instructor provided quality feedback and prompt responsiveness	32%
Instructor care and understanding	15%
Instructor was interactive and present	13%
Instructor provided relevant course content, materials and assignments	12%
Miscellaneous comments	11%
Instructor demonstrated strong communication skills and patterns	9%
Instructor provided quality course structure and organization	8%

In an exploration of how often students reach out to faculty for various reasons (Table 4), low rates of outreach are observed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=about half the time, 4=most of the time, 5=always). Additionally, the tools heavily relied upon by students to communicate with faculty are email, Canvas inbox, and using the comment or question option in the Canvas gradebook (Table 5).

Table 4. Reasons for outreach to faculty

Outreach to faculty - purpose	Average score
Questions about an assignment or exam	2.64
For clarification on a course concept	2.60
Regarding difficulty accessing course materials	2.42
Questions about a grade	2.28
For personal issues such as illness	1.99
Recommendations for improving performance in the course	1.96
To interact with the faculty and get to know them better	1.77
Regarding difficulties with classmates, such as group assignments	1.61

Table 5. Tools used to communicate with faculty

Communication with faculty - tools	Average score
Email	3.53
Canvas inbox	2.91
Posting a comment or question via Canvas gradebook	2.24
Web conference (Zoom, Skype, etc.)	1.59
Instant message system (Slack, etc.)	1.55
Phone call	1.24
Text message	1.11

When asked about taking advantage of faculty hosted office hours, either virtual or in-person, only 30.4% of students indicated using this opportunity to connect with faculty. When asked about faculty behavior that made them feel comfortable attending office hours, students shared that instructor friendliness, promptly answering student questions, providing accessible and flexible office hour options, and demonstrating strong communication throughout the course were specifically helpful in encouraging use of office hours. When asked, those who had not taken advantage of office hours shared reasons that generally fell into four categories – office hours conflicted with life and were not accessible to them, hadn't yet needed to use office hours, using other forms of communication to ask for help, and a lack of awareness of if or when office hours were offered.

Belonging and engagement

Sense of belonging is a new success metric that is being tracked 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 five statements 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). The strongest indicators of belonging were instructor and staff support, whereas connections to other students received much lower scores.

Table 6. Sense of belonging scores

Belonging aspect	Average score
I feel a real sense of belonging in my classes	2.86
I feel like I really matter	2.79
I feel a close connection to other students	2.29
I feel like my instructors really care about me as a person	2.92
I feel like the staff are there for me	3.13

Students were also asked about their interest in being matched with various types of mentors. Students were mostly interested in being mentored by either industry professionals (82%) or faculty (75%), followed then by Alumni mentoring (63%). There was relatively low interest in participating in peer mentoring programs compared to others (42%).

When asked about whether or not students would consider engaging more with the university, participants indicated moderate interest in many opportunities. Scores were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=definitely not interested – 5=strongly interested).

Table 7. Engagement interest scores

Engagement opportunity	Average score
Enrolling in a short-term study abroad experience	3.29
Enrolling in a short-term course on the OSU campus	3.19
Enrolling in a short-term field course offered in various locations	3.66
Interested in more opportunities to visit the OSU campus	3.47
Participating in service learning hosted by OSU	3.65

Interested in attending OSU Alumni Association events in my local area	3.19
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Summary of takeaways

Overall, students indicate strong satisfaction with their experience as an online student at OSU and the university is meeting their needs. It's obvious that continued efforts within Ecampus to improve the student experience, identify new services and resources, and offer a high-quality online education are meeting students' needs. Caring and understanding were new themes that emerged in the qualitative data this year. This could be a result of including questions around belonging and that bringing to surface feelings and experiences that were related to caring.

We will continue to support faculty in finding strategies to better connect with students and remain accessible to students who need to communicate...(from qualitative data). It's clear that student connections to faculty and staff are critical to fostering a sense of belonging, which may lead to stronger satisfaction and persistence among students.

Ecampus will need to explore ways to better address the needs of our students around career services and resources. More access to information about career paths tied to academic majors, assistance with the job search, and access to workforce and job demand data by geographic location were identified as top needs and ones that Ecampus will focus on making accessible in the next year.

Moving forward, Ecampus will continue to collect data throughout the year on student stop-outs, financial barriers, impact of student success initiatives, and other aspects of the distance student experience. Deeper analyses of annual student survey data by major and student population is a divisional priority and has been shared internally with key stakeholders. If you would like to learn more about disaggregated data we can share, please reach out directly to Marleigh Perez, director of student success (marleigh.perez@oregonstate.edu).