Understanding the Online College Student: Results from the Online College Students Report

September 15th, 2016

Q&A

1. How many of the students commented on the difficulty of perspective schools acceptance of transfer course work being accepted to satisfy graduation requirements (ergo math, diversity requirements)?

We did not cover this in the survey.

2. Completion doesn't align with enrollment growth. What do the presenter contribute this towards? the science & technology degrees ofter require labs to complete. Would that cause online enrollment to be smaller?

Not sure I understand the full question. However, we did later showed two slides that showed that optional features of online programs, such as internships and labs, we far better received compared to required ones. We also noted data displayed were for the full sample with that question and if one was to drill down to a Biology degree, for example, it is likely a lab component, if required, would likely be well received as it is expected in those programs and such experiences would be valued, if not required, by future employers as well.

3. What percentage of the respondents were pursuing Associate level credentials vs Bachelors or higher?

At the undergraduate level, among those who were seeking degree study, 63 percent were seeking Bachelor's degrees. The remaining 37 were seeking Associate degrees.

4. Do students in "fast" classes of 8 weeks (2 per time) realize how much time is involved? How can Universities help students undersand they will spend 25+ hours per week in coursework at this pace.

This was not asked in the 2016 OCS study. We are considering asking this in 2017. You should share the time commitment that you estimate at your institution as you counsel them through the funnel. They will then compare that to what other schools are indicating.

5. Would you classify response time as a chief concern throughout study? WHat if a student gets great response time initially that immediately slows after enrollment?

Absolutely critical. We find in many of our regional studies that this is a crutial aspect of enrollment AND retention. As OCS 2016 revealed, online students want their information quickly and will make their decision likewise.

6. How do EMPLOYERS view online programs/certificates vs. traditional?

In the past employers at a moderate view of online education. In recent years, that has changed drastically. Across our regional studies, when interviewing employers, the majority of them view online educaiton in a favorable light.

7. How many schools are represented in the 1500 sample?

Respondents indicated enrollment or interest at nearly 600 institutions.

8. I appreciate stats on working full time or part time. Another important but also invisible stat is how many hours of unpaid family work our students do (on average) each week. Do you (or intend to) collect data on that? It really informs how we market and design/implement our programs!

This is not included in 2016 data.

9. I don't understand the choice of "I relocated and the program wasn't available", if these are online programs.

This could be a perception from the student that they feel they need to find an online program that is offred by an institution that has a campus near them. An earlier question in the survey showed the desire for students to find programs near their physical location. It also could be tied to the first part of the response that they reclocated and perhaps could not find the time to pick back up with their studies.

10. I suspect that most faculty and administrators first response to students' preference for speed would be something along the lines of "That's not reasonable, and they are just going to have to like it or lump it." HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THAT ARGUMENT?

They do it every summer! But more importantly, they can look at competitors and make that judgement by themselves.

11. I'm interested in using some of this data in a report I'm wokring on an interanl report on distance learning for my institution- can you provide some information about how to cite some of these results/charts?

Suggested Citation: Clinefelter, D. L. & Aslanian, C. B., (2016). Online college students 2016: Comprehensive data on demands and preferences. Louisville, KY: The Learning House, Inc.

12. What about music streaming service ads (Pandora) and online video site ads (like Youtube)?

YouTube was rated as a 3.75 on a 5 point scale of effectiveness, making it middle of the pack in terms of advertising methods. We did not ask about streaming music (such as Spotify), specifically, we did ask about ads of apps. This was rated 3.71 on the same 5-point scale.

13. What are the challenges of being an online student? especially relating to student engagment?

We last asked about challenges in 2015. The leading challenges were "personal motivation/attention/focus challenges", "perceptions of quality of online study", and "cost".

14. What are the indicators to support your projection of a major growth in online enrollment between2018-2020

The steady growth of younger students selecting online education will continue. The increasingly "tech-saavy" of all populations is a contributing factor as well. Finally, the demographics of students with the propecity to work and study at the same time will lead them to online formats.

15. What kind of devices do they consider as mobile? Do they count laptops into that group?

We limited the mobile question series to those who own one of the following: Apple iPhone, Android Phone, Microsoft Phone, another brand of smartphone, Apple Ipad, Amazon Kindle, Android Tablet, Microsoft Surface, Another brand of mobile tablet. If the respondent did not own at least one of these, they did not receive the battery of mobile questions.

16. What role do you think effort and asynchronicity play in rankings of student preference of online student:student interactions?

They do prefer asynchronous activities but the 2015 survey also found that students are not completely opposed to having some sort of synchronous or even hybrid component to their learning. They likely do prefer asynchronous components the best, as seen in the survey, but they are not opposed to other methods. There is no "one size fits all" approach.

17. What was the response rate to this survey?

We are asking our survey panel provider and will answer when we have an answer.

18. Where did the respondents come from?--national?

It was a national survey of all 50 states. Every state had at least one participant.

19. With these fast decisions, are you seeing a lot of "buyers remorse"

We asked past and current online students "How likely is it that you will enroll in another online program in the future". One-third said they will. Another quarter said they were likely. Thirty-five percent said "they might". Less than 10 pecent of respondents said they were not likely or will not (and this, to some extent, could be attributed to the fact that some have completed their educational goals). As such, we believe that these students are generally satisfied with their program and do not feel any "buyers remorse" .