

Priorities Survey for Online Learners

2015-2016

Overview

Upon recommendation by the Office of Institutional Planning and Assessment (OIPA), Student Affairs representatives from each school and leaders from the Office of Student Services decided to administer the *Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL)* in Spring 2016. This survey was administered in lieu of the annual *TTUHSC Student Satisfaction Survey* in order to gain a deeper understanding of our growing population of online learners.

The *PSOL*, which is available through Ruffalo Noel Levitz, is a commercially available instrument designed to measure the satisfaction levels of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in online courses and programs. Not only is the survey intended to measure student satisfaction with various aspects of their experiences, but it is also designed to measure the level of importance of these experiences. From 2012-2015, the *PSOL* was administered to nearly 600,000 students across more than 700 institutions in the United States. For purposes of this survey, TTUHSC results are compared to more than 118,000 respondents across public and private two-year, four-year, and specialty institutions.

Summary of Key Findings

- Overall, 84% of TTUHSC students are somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with their experiences at TTUHSC. This is comparable to online learners across the nation.
- **Strengths** reflect items which students rank with HIGH importance and HIGH satisfaction. For TTUHSC, strengths include: (1) convenience of registration for online courses, (2) adequacy of online library resources, (3) convenience of billing and payment procedures, (4) awareness of whom to contact for questions about programs and services, and (5) accessibility of program advisors by telephone and email. Satisfaction with each of these items, except #1, is significantly higher in relation to the national comparison group. Even though the convenience of registration for online courses is considered a TTUHSC strength, satisfaction with this item is significantly lower in relation to the comparison group.
- **Challenges** reflect items which students rank with HIGH importance and LOW satisfaction. For TTUHSC, challenges include: (1) faculty responsiveness to student needs, (2) quality of online instruction, (3) clarity of student assignments in syllabi, (4) perception that tuition is a worthwhile investment, (5) clarity and reasonableness of program requirements, and (6) timeliness of faculty feedback about student progress. Although considered challenges, satisfaction with #1 and #4 are significantly higher in relation to the national comparison group.
- For TTUHSC students, the following were the most important sources of information in their decisions to enroll at the institution: (1) website, (2) contact with current students and/or recent program graduates, and (3) online catalogs. Least important were printed catalogs/brochures and advertisements.

- The most important factors in students' decisions to enroll at TTUHSC include: (1) convenience, (2) flexible pacing, and (3) program requirements. Least important factors include distance from campus and recommendations from an employer.
- Overall, TTUHSC students would probably enroll at TTUHSC again if given the opportunity. This is significantly higher in relation to the comparison group. More than half (=54%) of TTUHSC students indicate they would definitely enroll again.

Methodology

At TTUHSC, the *PSOL* was administered to students enrolled in distance education programs (N=1,982) in Spring 2016. Students enrolled in hybrid or online courses in traditional programs were not targeted. Therefore, students of interest included those enrolled in the following schools only: (1) School of Health Professions (SHP), (2) School of Nursing (SON), and (3) Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing (GGHSON). The data collection period lasted two weeks (March 21-April 4, 2016).

The initial invitation to complete the web-based survey was sent via email. Two reminder emails were sent before data collection ended. Student Affairs representatives were asked to promote the survey in their respective schools. As an incentive for participation, one \$100 gift card was offered to a randomly selected respondent upon completion of the survey.

Demographics

A total of 525 students completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 26%. (This compares to the average *PSOL* response rate of 20% across institutions.) *Figure 1* illustrates the response rates by school. *Table 1* provides the number of respondents by school and program.

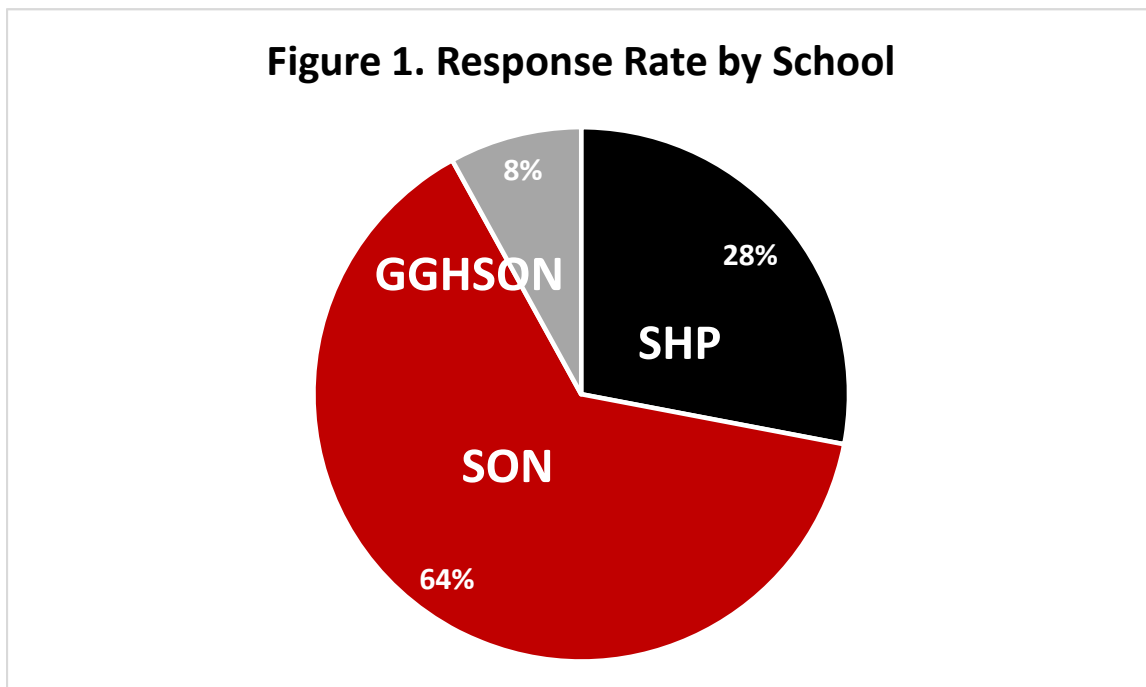


Table 1. Number of Respondents by Program

School of Health Professions	
Bachelor of Science in Clinical Laboratory Sciences (Second Degree)	7
Bachelor of Science in Clinical Services Management	13
Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences	11
Master of Rehabilitation Counseling	43
Master of Science in Clinical Practice Management	37
Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy (ScD)	18
Transitional Doctor of Physical Therapy (tDPT)	18
School of Nursing	
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN)	147
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Second Degree)	32
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Veterans to BSN)	0
Master of Science in Nursing	144
Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing	
Bachelor of Science in Nursing-El Paso (Traditional/Accelerated)	34
Bachelor of Science in Nursing-El Paso (RN to BSN)	4

Note: Some respondents did not indicate a specific academic program.

Results

Quantitative Data. For the 26 standard survey items, students were asked to indicate the level of importance of each item using a 7-point scale. They were also asked to indicate their level of satisfaction using a 7-point scale.

	Level of Importance	Level of Satisfaction
1	Not important at all	Not satisfied at all
2	Not very important	Not very satisfied
3	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat dissatisfied
4	Neutral	Neutral
5	Somewhat important	Somewhat satisfied
6	Important	Satisfied
7	Very important	Very satisfied

The standard survey items fall under one of five comprehensive scales. A description of each scale is provided below:

Scales

- 1) **Institutional Perceptions** assesses how students perceive TTUHSC in general.
- 2) **Academic Services** assesses the services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include advising, course offerings, technical assistance, online library resources, and tutoring services.
- 3) **Instructional Services** measures students' academic experiences, instructional materials, faculty/student interactions, evaluation procedures, and the quality of the instruction.

- 4) **Enrollment Services** assesses the processes and services related to enrolling students in an online program, including financial aid, registration, and payment procedures.
- 5) **Student Services** measures the quality of student programs and services, including responses to student requests, online career services, and the bookstore.

Appendix A provides the scale report developed by Ruffalo Noel Levitz. It lists institutional results for each item by scale, as compared to the national comparison group. From left to right, the report includes:

- Strengths^a (i.e., **green star**) and challenges^b (i.e., **red flag**);
- Scale name or item text;
- Average importance score for students;
- Average satisfaction score for students, followed by the standard deviation (SD);
- Performance gap^c;
- Average importance score for the comparison group;
- Average satisfaction score for the comparison group, followed by the standard deviation (SD);
- Performance gap^c; and
- Difference^d in satisfaction between your students and the comparison group.

Appendix B provides a special report developed by Ruffalo Noel Levitz. It lists each item by scale for TTUHSC overall and individual TTUHSC schools. The report includes:

- Strengths^a (i.e., **green star**) and challenges^b (i.e., **red flag**) for the institution;
- Scale name or item text;
- Average importance score for students;
- Average satisfaction score for students, followed by the standard deviation (SD); and
- Performance gap^c.

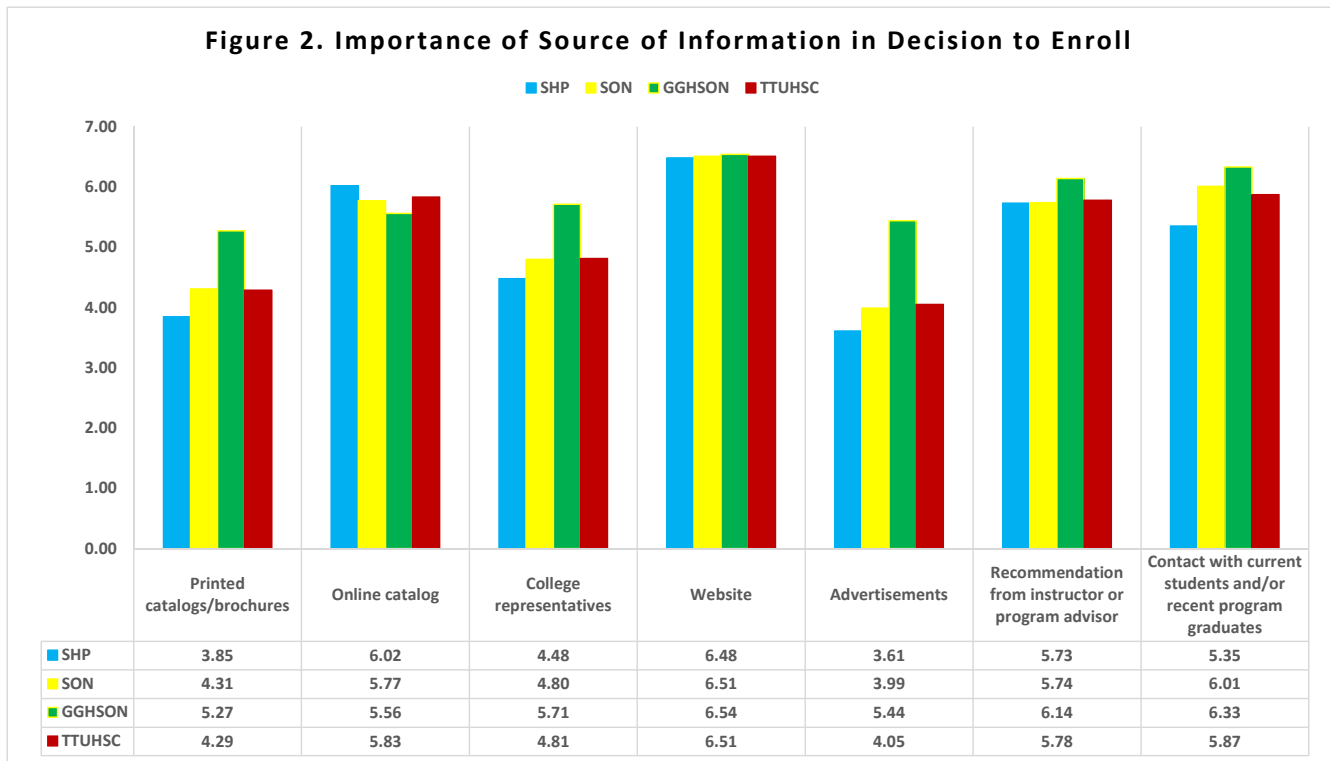
^a **Strengths** are items with high importance and high satisfaction. These are specifically identified as items above the mid-point in importance (top half) and in the upper quartile (25 percent) of the satisfaction scores.

^b **Challenges** are items with high importance and low satisfaction or large performance gap. These are specifically identified as items above the mid-point in importance (top half) and in the lower quartile (25 percent) of the satisfaction scores or items above the mid-point in importance (top half) and in the top quartile (25 percent) of the performance gap scores.

^c A **performance gap** is simply the importance score minus the satisfaction score. The larger the performance gap, the greater the discrepancy between what students expect and their level of satisfaction with the current situation. The smaller the performance gap, the better TTUHSC is doing at meeting student expectations.

^d The far right hand column shows the **difference between TTUHSC's satisfaction means and the comparison group means**. If the mean difference is a positive number, then TTUHSC students are more satisfied than the students in the comparison group. If the mean difference is a negative number, TTUHSC students are less satisfied than the students in the comparison group. *Note: Statistical significance is indicated with an asterisk(s).*

In addition to the data provided in *Appendices A and B*, other results may be of interest. For example, respondents ranked the importance of various sources of information in their decisions to enroll at TTUHSC. *Figure 2* illustrates the results.



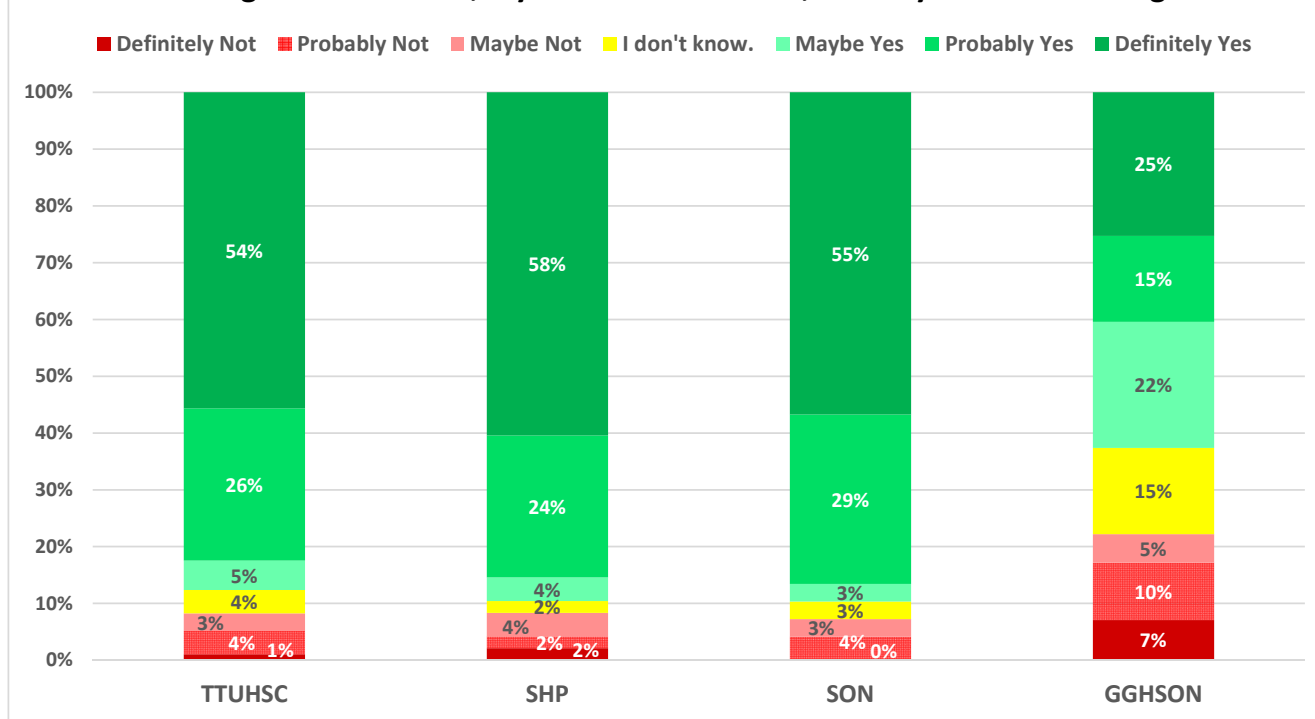
Survey respondents also indicated the importance of various factors in their decisions to enroll at TTUHSC. For the institution as a whole, the most important factors include: (1) convenience, (2) flexible pacing, and (3) program requirements. The least important factors include distance from campus and recommendations from an employer. *Table 2* lists the most important factors in students' decisions to enroll at TTUHSC by school.

Table 2. Most Important Factors in Students' Decisions to Enroll at TTUHSC

SHP	SON	GGHSON
(1) Convenience	(1) Convenience	(1) Future employment opportunities
(2) Flexible pacing	(2) Program requirements	(2) Ability to transfer credits
(3) Work schedule	(3) Reputation of institution	(3) Program requirements

Finally, respondents were asked if they would enroll at TTUHSC again if they had the opportunity to do so. More than half (=54%) of TTUHSC students indicate they would definitely enroll again. *Figure 3* illustrates student responses to this item for TTUHSC and each school.

Figure 3. "All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again?"



Qualitative Data. At the end of the survey, students were given an opportunity to provide open-ended comments. Respondents provided 125 comments. Due to the sensitive nature of some comments, comment reports will be provided to selected institutional leaders only. They will determine how best to distribute them in their respective areas.

Using Survey Data to Promote Continuous Improvement

More often than not, it is difficult to determine what to do with information collected from surveys. It is one thing to collect the data—it is another thing entirely to use the information to promote continuous improvement. The first step in this process is to put the current data into context. Consider the following questions:

- Do these results support other existing data?
- Does additional information need to be gathered? (*e.g., focus groups, interviews*)

Once you have gained an appropriate perspective, identify an area of potential improvement or strength upon which to build. Consider what your desired outcome will be. Then, identify and implement a potential strategy for improvement. After a reasonable timeframe, evaluate whether the strategy has been successful. Did you achieve the desired outcome?

Continuous improvement is a process. Sometimes strategies for improvement will be successful—sometimes they will not. Although the ultimate outcome is indeed important, what is equally critical is the documentation of your efforts to make those improvements. Contact the *Office of Institutional Planning & Assessment* for additional guidance in this process.

References

Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC. (2015). *Ruffalo Noel Levitz 2015-16 Interpretive Guide: Satisfaction-Priorities Interpretive Guide.*

Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC. (2015). *Ruffalo Noel Levitz 2015-16 Interpretive Guide: The Priorities Survey for Online Learners Interpretive Guide.*

*Questions about this report can be directed to the
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