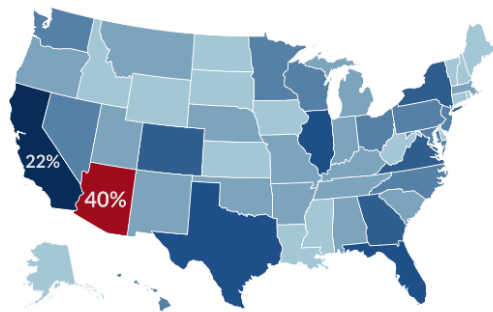**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**
Online

Arizona Online Student Experience | Executive Summary 2020

This report summarizes Arizona Online student experiences and key takeaways from the 2020 Arizona Online Technology and Student Experience Survey[1] findings. Arizona Online undergraduate students were invited to respond to a survey about their interactions with advisors, faculty and students, perceptions of program quality, access to course materials, use of technology, financial well-being, and academic-life balance. Results are analyzed as it relates to the 2018[2] survey findings and can be used to enhance the Arizona Online student experience and their success.

The survey elicited a 22% response rate (N=576) with characteristics comparable to the Arizona Online undergraduate population[3]. Table 1 in the appendix compares student demographics and academic characteristics between survey respondents, Arizona Online, and Arizona main campus undergraduates.
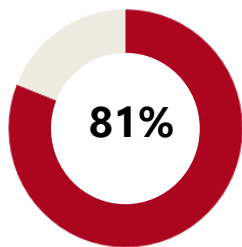
ARIZONA ONLINE STUDENT PROFILE[4]

Arizona Online continues to attract students from across the United States and abroad, with a strong presence in Arizona (40%) and California (22%).

Just over half of students were from Tucson (52%).

Students also enrolled from 48 states, Armed Service posts in the Pacific and Europe, and 7 countries including Canada, Japan, China, Malaysia, and the U.K.

A majority (81%) of Arizona Online students transferred in more than 15 college credits, compared to just 29% of main campus undergrads.

81%

Transferred 15+ Units

Average Units Transferred

56 Units

15 Units

Arizona Online   Main Campus

The top academic program colleges among Arizona Online students were
Social and Behavioral Sciences, Applied Science, and Eller College of Management.

WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Survey results show that Arizona Online students continue to balance family, work, and active military service while taking courses, consistent with findings from 2018.

- Two-thirds (64%) of students work full-time at 30+ hours per week.
- 34% of Arizona Online students report having children at home.
- Of those, 58% have two or more children.

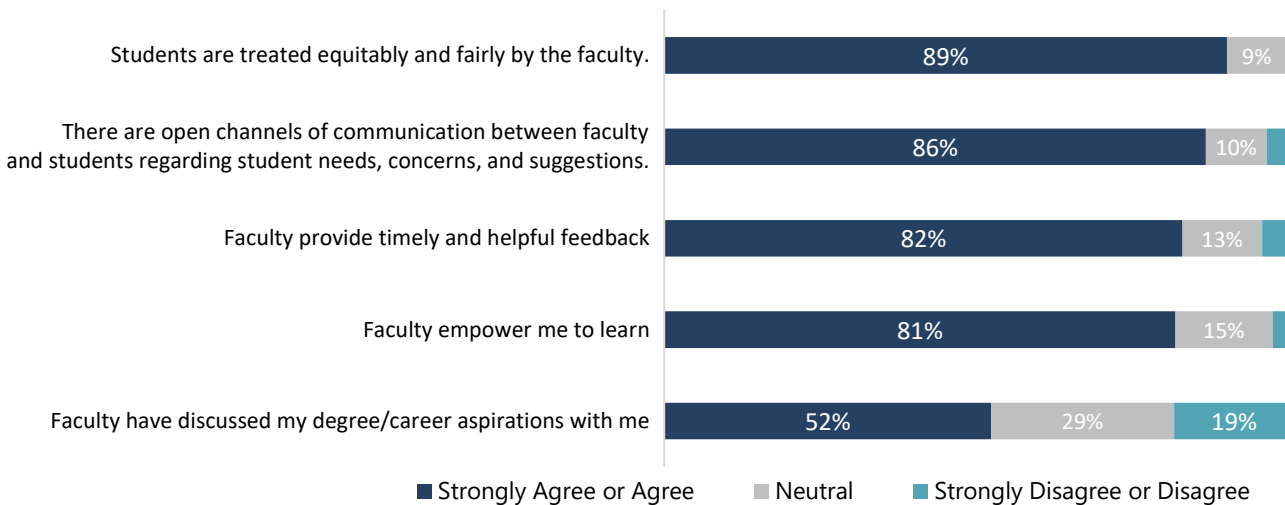1 in 4 students have children at home and work full-time.

"With a busy schedule which includes work, kids, and being a part-time student, I am confident I made the best choice by choosing the University of Arizona Online."
-Junior, 35, Geographic Information Systems

18% Arizona Online students are affiliated with the military with most on active duty.

Active Duty	43%
Veteran	36%
Other Military Connected	21%

INSTRUCTOR INTERACTIONS

Students offered favorable ratings for instructor interactions overall, but only half of students (52%) had discussed career/degree aspirations with faculty. There were no significant changes between 2018 and 2020.

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
Students are treated equitably and fairly by the faculty.	89%	9%	
There are open channels of communication between faculty and students regarding student needs, concerns, and suggestions.	86%	10%	
Faculty provide timely and helpful feedback	82%	13%	
Faculty empower me to learn	81%	15%	
Faculty have discussed my degree/career aspirations with me	52%	29%	19%

■ Strongly Agree or Agree ■ Neutral ■ Strongly Disagree or Disagree

81% said Arizona Online met their expectation of excellent online instruction.

"My professors have been great at communicating with me when something seems off and try their best in helping me advance academically! I really appreciate that!"
-Junior, 40, Information Science and Society

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Students expressed in open-ended comments a desire to see instruction that was specifically oriented towards engaging online students more intentionally, such as live lectures or discussion groups.
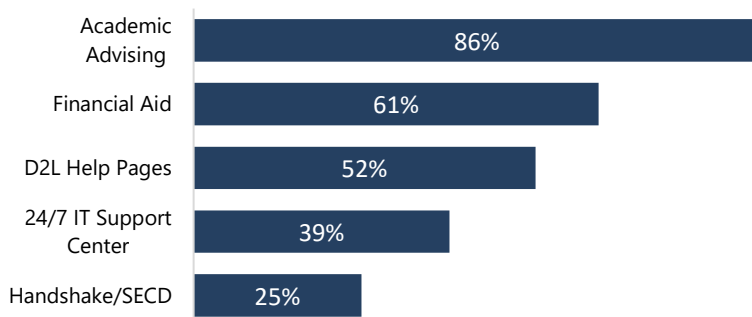
"I do not enjoy the recording of on-campus lectures for online courses. It is hard to differentiate what applies to me and what doesn't." - Freshman, 22, Pre-Business

"Having a good lecturer and a power point does not mean it will translate to a good lecture online. The teacher and student have to connect." - Senior, 64, General Studies

ADVISING AND CAMPUS SERVICE USE

4 out of 5 students indicated advisors helped them feel more comfortable seeking help and gave them a clear idea of what courses to take. Academic Advising was reported as the most frequently used campus student service.

Top 5 Used Student Services

Service	Percentage
Academic Advising	86%
Financial Aid	61%
D2L Help Pages	52%
24/7 IT Support Center	39%
Handshake/SECD	25%

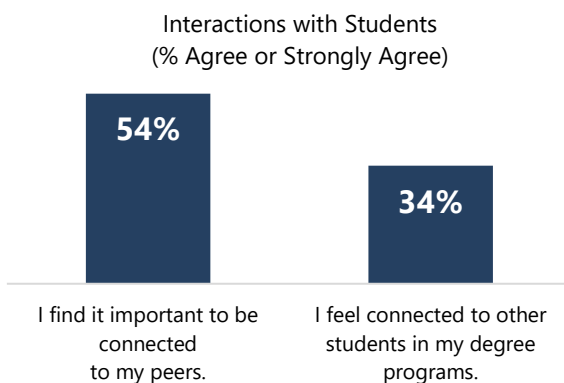A sizable number of students were not aware of valuable campus services supporting online instruction.

About 20% were unaware of
- 24/7 IT Support Center
- Disability Resource Center
- D2L Help pages

CONNECTEDNESS TO PEERS AND SENSE OF BELONGING

As in 2018, online students continue to find peer connections the most challenging aspect of transitioning online.

While over half of students think peer connection is important, only one-third felt connected to other students.

Interactions with Students (% Agree or Strongly Agree)

	Percentage
I find it important to be connected to my peers.	54%
I feel connected to other students in my degree programs.	34%

87% of all students felt they belong at the University of Arizona

This rate was higher (94%) among students who felt connected to other students compared to those who did not (74%).

"I wish that there were more opportunities for students to engage with each other in class. [...] Genuine interaction with individuals would make the completion of schoolwork more team oriented."
Junior, 34, Applied Science

FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

Two out of three Arizona Online students say the cost of college is a good investment and foresee the ability to support themselves financially after graduation.
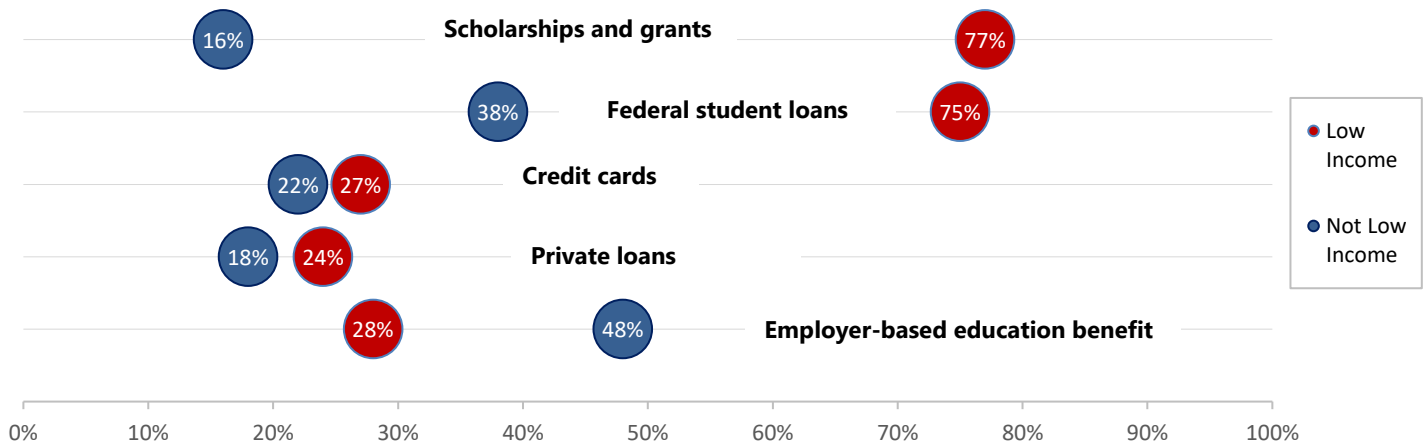
The primary sources of education funding for Arizona Online students were employment (59%), loans (45%), grants (31%), family resources/support (19%), and employer tuition discounts (18%).

A high proportion of **lower income students**[5] were enrolled at Arizona Online compared to main campus.

- In spring 2020, 46% of online students were lower income compared to 35% of main campus undergraduates.
- Low income students reported greater worry paying for school, monthly expenses, and overall financial stress.
- A greater percentage of lower income students relied on grants, federal and private loans, and credit cards to pay for school than their peers.
- Lower income students were less likely to cite employer-based tuition programs as a financial source.

Differences in Sources of College Expense Funding by Financial Status

Scholarships and grants: 16%, 77%
Federal student loans: 38%, 75%
Credit cards: 22%, 27%
Private loans: 18%, 24%
Employer-based education benefit: 28%, 48%

Legend: ● Low Income ● Not Low Income

SATISFACTION

Overall, Arizona Online students continued to report high levels of satisfaction.

93% would recommend Arizona Online to others.

72% rated Arizona Online better than their previous fully online higher education institution.

Instructors, advisors, and course quality were the top three reasons students cited for rating Arizona Online better.

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[5] Identified as being Pell-eligible or recipient in any term

APPENDIX

Table 1. Student Demographics and Academic Characteristics

		AZO Survey Respondents (N=576) %	AZ Online Undergrad (N=2,623) %	AZ Main Undergrad[1] (N=29,347) %
Gender	Women	62	56	54
	Men	38	44	46
Race/ Ethnicity	African American	6	6	4
	American Indian	2	2	1
	Asian	5	4	5
	Hispanic	26	24	27
	Pacific Islander	1	<1	<1
	Multiracial	3	5	5
	White	53	54	50
	Other/Unknown	4	5	1
Background	First Generation[2]	57	52	30
	Pell Student[2]	46	44	35
	Veteran[4]	8	10	3
	Arizona Resident[3]	44	40	66
	Median Age	31 years	29 years	20 years
Academic Class	Freshman	14	12	20
	Sophomore	18	19	23
	Junior	31	32	24
	Senior	38	38	33
	Median Transfer Units	57 units	56 units	0 units
	Avg Transfer Units	56 units	56 units	15 units
Academic Program College[5]	Ag & Life Sciences	7	7	9
	Applied Sci & Tech	19	20	<1
	Arch, Plan & Lands	1	1	2
	Education	3	1	3
	Engineering	1	1	8
	Humanities	2	2	3
	Science	11	10	21
	Soc & Behav Sci	26	23	18
	Letters Arts Sci	9	11	3
	Eller College	14	15	17
	Non-Degree Seek	4	4	<1
	Public Health	4	3	2

Notes:
1. Census Spring 2020
2. Identifies students who were ever identified as first generation or Pell-eligible or recipient in any term
3. In-state residency used for Main campus; Preferred address state used for Arizona Online students since residency is not verified for online students.
4. Based on UAnalytics veteran flag
5. Lists of colleges with programs offered through Arizona Online