

2015 Online Enrolled Student Survey Benchmark Report Valdosta State University Executive Summary

In April 2015, Eduventures, in collaboration with the Dewar College of Education and Human Services (COEHS), surveyed fully online students attending Valdosta State University (VSU) during the Spring 2015 term. VSU respondents represented approximately 1% (267 people) of the more than 27,000 respondents nationwide. The 267 VSU respondents represent 15.1% of the 1,769 fully online students who were enrolled at VSU in Spring 2015. Based on the VSU sample size, there is a +/-5.5% margin of error with all VSU-reported percentages.

The profile of the VSU respondents is presented below along with profiles of the subcategories of respondents by college. Survey results were organized by the COEHS Center for Program Assessment, Analytics, and Evaluation into five topic areas: 1. *Demographic and Enrollment Information*; 2. *Selecting Valdosta State University*; 3. *Online Preferences*, 4: *Valdosta State University Perceptions and Resources*; and, 5. *Study Habits and Course Performance*. Significant findings from this survey are organized into these topic areas and included below.

Note: Respondents were categorized into colleges using self-identified subject areas. Respondents enrolled in colleges other than one of the three colleges below are reported in the full survey report but excluded from this executive summary. This category of "Other Responses" consisted of 11 respondents, of which six respondents resided within the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Since these 11 respondents are not a representative sample of any one college and too small of a number to draw any conclusions, these responses have been removed from the executive summary when reporting by college.

Profile of VSU Survey Respondents by Total and College

Key:

Students majoring in a program located within the College of Arts and Sciences = CAS

Students majoring in a program located within the Langdale College of Business Administration = COBA

Students majoring in a program located within the Dewar College of Education and Human Services = COEHS

- Reason for attending school: earn more money (61%), professional advancement (58%)
 - CAS: (58%), (34%) COBA: (62%), (62%) COEHS: (64%), (71%)
- Perception of VSU when deciding where to enroll as compared to other institutions considered: more affordable (68%), better value-for-the-cost (68%)
 - CAS: (75%), (71%) COBA: (47%), (70%) COEHS: (68%), (66%)
- Belief that lower tuition and costs would increase the quality of the student experience at VSU (52%)
 - CAS: (47%) COBA: (68%) COEHS: (50%)
- Relied on the College websites to make decisions about where to enroll (59%)
 - CAS: (57%) COBA: (50%) COEHS: (61%)
- Significant academic success factors: clear course objectives/expectations (67%), easy-to-use technology (61%)
 - CAS: (68%), (67%) COBA: (67%), (72%) COEHS: (65%), (56%)
- Definitely (58%) or probably (17%) would have enrolled at a different institution had his/her program not been offered online or in a hybrid format at VSU
 - CAS: (51%), (15%) COBA: (62%), (24%) COEHS: (62%), (16%)
- Typically completes coursework between 4pm-8pm (55%) and/or 8pm-11pm (69%)
 - CAS: (53%), (64%) COBA: (25%), (70%) COEHS: (60%), (72%)
- No tuition assistance (58%)
 - CAS: (48%) COBA: (57%) COEHS: (66%)

- Previous experience with online courses (60%)
 - CAS: (63%) COBA: (62%) COEHS: (55%)

Demographic Information

- Age ranges of respondents: 24 or Younger (8%), 25-34 (38%), 35-44 (25%), 45-54 (18%), 55 or Older (6%), Prefer Not to Answer (5%)
 - CAS: 24 or Younger (8%), 25-34 (26%), 35-44 (31%), 45-54 (21%), 55 or Older (6%), Prefer Not to Answer (8%)
COBA: 24 or Younger (5%), 25-34 (52%), 35-44 (14%), 45-54 (19%), 55 or Older (10%), Prefer Not to Answer (0%)
COEHS: 24 or Younger (7%), 25-34 (44%), 35-44 (25%), 45-54 (17%), 55 or Older (5%), Prefer Not to Answer (3%)
- Enrolled at graduate level (70%)
 - CAS: (56%) COBA: (29%) COEHS: (88%)
- Employed status: Full-Time (78%), Part-Time (12%), Unemployed (8%), Other (2%)
 - CAS: (71%), (11%), (15%), (3%) COBA: (76%), (0%), (14%), (10%) COEHS: (82%), (14%), (4%), (1%)
- Georgia resident (84%)
 - CAS: (79%) COBA: (95%) COEHS: (84%)

Profile of Survey Respondents: College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)

- Over half (52%) of CAS respondents identified within the CAS are pursuing the subject area of public administration, as self-identified by the respondent.
- Nearly half (48%) of CAS respondents decided to return to school to explore new ideas and opportunities.
- In contrast to other colleges, over half of CAS respondents (51%) felt an online education at VSU is somewhat higher or much higher quality than other institutions.

Profile of Survey Respondents: Dewar College of Education and Human Services (COEHS)

- Thirty-four percent of VSU respondents within the COEHS are pursuing the subject area of curriculum and instruction, as self-identified by the respondent.
- Thirty-six percent of COEHS respondents devoted 5-10 hours per week toward their studies. This percentage is much higher than for other college respondents, driving the mean percentage for VSU respondents to 28% and making VSU's overall percentage statistically significantly higher than non-VSU respondents (21%). The percentages of respondents from other colleges who devoted 5-10 hours per week toward their studies are as follows: 19% for CAS respondents, 19% for COBA respondents, and 9% for other respondents.
- A statistically significantly higher percentage of VSU respondents selected "being able to apply what I learn in my job" as a factor that the respondent believes would significantly contribute to his/her academic success aside from his/her own academic skill and discipline as compared to non-VSU respondents (56% and 35% respectively). This selection, however, was statistically significantly different because of COEHS respondents. Sixty-five percent of COEHS respondents identified this selection as a factor as compared to 43% for CAS respondents, 44% for COBA respondents, and 40% for other respondents, driving up the mean percentage for VSU respondents in this factor to 56%.

Profile of Survey Respondents: Langdale College of Business Administration (COBA)

- In contrast to overall VSU responses, the majority of COBA respondents were pursuing a bachelor's degree (71%).
- The percentages of overall VSU respondents within the subject area of business (8%) constituted a statistically significantly lower percentage as compared to non-VSU respondents (24%).
- Over half (57%) of COBA respondents decided to return to school to finish a degree he/she previously started.

- In contrast to CAS and COEHS respondents, where about 37% of respondents are married with children and have dependents living at home, 38% of COBA respondents are single with either no children or no dependents living at home.
- A smaller percentage (15%) of COBA respondents intentionally only considered non-profit schools as compared to other colleges (38% for CAS and 27% for COEHS respondents). Instead, three-fourths of COBA respondents did not have a preference.
- Over three-fourths of COBA respondents only seriously considered enrolling in an online/hybrid program (76%). This percentage is much higher than CAS and COEHS respondents (56% and 69% respectively).
- Over three-fourths (78%) of COBA respondents believe that “courses being on the right pace” significantly contribute to academic success aside from their own academic skill and discipline. This percentage is much higher than CAS and COEHS respondents (52% and 50% respectively).

University-Level Summary Results by Topic Area

Demographic and Enrollment Information

- With nearly 70% of VSU respondents pursuing a graduate degree program, this percentage differed significantly from non-VSU respondents (34%).
- Thirty percent of VSU respondents are enrolled in a program with a subject area of education, 20% from library sciences, 16% from public administration, and 8% from business, as self-identified by the respondent. The program’s subject area, as identified by the respondent, was used to assign respondents to specific colleges for the purposes of this report.
- Most VSU respondents (60%) have taken at least one online course prior to enrolling at VSU, with the majority of those candidates taking for-credit college courses at another college (89%). This percentage is statistically significantly different from non-VSU respondents where 57% have *not* taken online courses prior to enrolling.
- The majority of VSU respondents are employed full-time (78%) and enrolled part-time (60%). These percentages are statistically significantly different as compared to non-VSU respondents, where 58% were employed full-time and 31% were enrolled part-time.

Selecting Valdosta State University

- With the ability to select all that apply, the majority of VSU respondents from all colleges (59% for VSU overall) selected the college’s websites as the search tool most useful in helping the respondent evaluate which school to attend. This represents a statistically significantly higher difference as compared to non-VSU respondents. The second most frequently selected tool, Google searches, was identified by 36% of VSU respondents. Less than 15% of VSU respondents selected campus-hosted visits, campus visits, or campus fairs.
- Nearly 30% of VSU respondents, a statistically significantly higher difference as compared to non-VSU respondents, intentionally only considered non-profit schools when deciding which college or university to attend.
- Nearly 40% of VSU respondents also considered at least one of the following institutions when deciding which school to attend: Georgia State University (18%), University of Georgia (15%), or Georgia Southern University (14%). Respondents were able to select up to three institutions, excluding VSU.

Online Preferences

- When considering which type of program to enroll in, 64% of VSU respondents only seriously considered online/hybrid format programs.

- Over half of VSU respondents (58%) definitely would have enrolled at a different institution if his/her program weren't offered in an online/hybrid format at Valdosta State University. This represents a statistically significantly higher difference as compared to non-VSU respondents.

Valdosta State University Perceptions and Resources

- Thirty-three percent of VSU respondents perceived VSU's school reputation to be far weaker or somewhat weaker than other institutions that were considered by the student when deciding where to enroll.
- The highest rating received from VSU respondents in terms of tools and resources available to students was access to online library materials and research tools (mean score 4.5, five being the highest). This mean score was slightly higher than for non-VSU respondents.
- VSU respondents were statistically significantly less likely than non-VSU respondents to use online videos and tutorials available free on the web (35% and 44% respectively) or tutoring or workshops offered by VSU (7% and 21% respectively) as resources when needing help in an online course. Furthermore, VSU respondents were statistically significantly more likely than non-VSU respondents to consider having conversations with co-workers (32% and 13% respectively), a boss or supervisor (17% and 9% respectively), or fellow classmates (59% and 34% respectively) as resources when needing help with an online course.
- A statistically significantly lower percentage of VSU respondents thought an online education from VSU is a much higher quality than other institutions as compared to non-VSU respondents (19% and 29% respectively).
- Over half of VSU respondents selected lower tuition and rates as a way to improve the quality of their student experience at VSU. The next most frequently selected ways to improve the quality of the respondents' student experience at VSU were to "allow me to take an exam to get college credit for my life and work experience" (41%), "allow me to test out of courses so I can show what I know and complete faster" (40%), and "make it possible to complete my degree/certificate/course faster" (40%).

Study Habits and Course Performance

- Nearly three-fourths of VSU respondents typically complete coursework between 8pm and 11pm at night.
- A statistically significantly higher percentage of VSU respondents (56% as compared to 35% for non-VSU respondents) selected "being able to apply what I learn in my job" as a factor that the respondent believes would significantly contribute to his/her academic success aside from his/her own academic skill and discipline. In contrast, a statistically significantly lower percentage of VSU respondents (3% as compared to 11% of non-VSU respondents) selected "tutoring" as a factor that the respondent believes would significantly contribute to his/her academic success aside from his/her own academic skill and discipline.

Most Frequent Student Comments by College

Student Comments from All Colleges

- Great value for the cost
- Application process for most programs needs to be streamlined. This is mentioned more by undergraduate students than by graduate students. Some graduate students mentioned that they experienced a very easy application process.
- Great program and great experiences
- Peer-to-peer interactions and peers are not as high of quality
- Need quicker responses, more interaction, and clearer instructions from faculty
- General feeling that VSU faculty and staff do not cater to online students. More weekend interaction from faculty is needed and better non-face-to-face customer service from staff.

- Many students mentioned missing face-to-face interaction from faculty and peers. They mentioned they would like more interaction through D2L such as more synchronous Wimba sessions, more asynchronous instructor lectures, and/or more peer-to-peer interaction in a virtual classroom environment.

College of Arts and Sciences:

- Need quicker responses, more interaction, and clearer instructions from faculty
- Peer-to-peer interactions and peers are not as high of quality
- Would like better/more advisor interactions
- VSU faculty and staff prefer face-to-face students
- Can only do online programs due to schedule
- Enjoy face-to-face interaction through D2L
- Not enough faculty to support enrollment in program
- Proud VSU is a traditional, not-for-profit school
- Grateful to be able to attend VSU
- Grateful for support
- Better faculty than at a for-profit institution
- “The site maintenance taking place at 10:00 pm on a Friday in very inconvenient for non-traditional students who work full time. The weekend is when we get a chance to do our work. It might not seem like a big deal but when all you have is Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday losing Friday night is a BIG deal.”

Langdale College of Business Administration

- Would like more interaction from faculty
- Enjoyable experience
- Difficult coursework
- Need better customer service when calling VSU

Dewar College of Education and Human Services

- “If I had it to do over, I would make the same choice, and have already recommended VSU to other potential students.”
- More interaction from faculty and clearer instructions
- “The professors are demanding and the work is difficult...”
- “I miss classes and the networking from face to face lessons.”
- Great program, great experience so far
- Content in the courses are “outdated and not based on current trends in education.”
- Different time zone makes it difficult to work with peers on projects.
- Better advisor interactions
- “GREAT value for what I'm paying.”
- Peer-to-peer interactions and peers are not as high of quality
- Great advisor
- “In general, I do not tend to think of online programs as being suited to my learning style, but I have found that the program I am in at VSU is aimed at helping the students succeed, and I have been very pleasantly surprised.”
- More weekend assistance from university faculty and staff
- “...Valdosta [MLIS] does not require the GRE which made admittance seamless and more cost effective.”

For additional information on survey questions and results, including an electronic copy of this executive summary, please visit <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/education/program-assessment-analytics-evaluation/eduventures-online-survey.php>.