ETRAC Highlights

The EDUCAUSE Technology Research in the Academic Community (ETRAC) survey was distributed across the undergraduate community in March 2022. The University Registrar's department pulled a random selection of 4000 – 6000 undergrads, pro-rated to their faculties.

138 students responded[1] to the survey[2]. Notable demographics include:
- Student participants in this survey were well distributed amongst academic year, with 33% freshmen, 16% juniors, 26% sophomores, 14% seniors, 9% fifth years, and 2% other undergraduates.
- 113 participants were studying full-time, and 22 part-time.
- 83% of participants were living in off-campus housing vs. 14% on-campus.
- 12% were the first in their family to attend college.
- 12% were working 30+ hours a week while taking classes. 49% shared they were not working at all.
- 19 students shared they had been diagnosed with a disability or impairment.
- *(+ gender was balanced/representative - slightly more female identifying participants overall)*

EQUITABLE STUDENT ACCESS

Devices

For primary devices, 99% of students owned their device, with the majority (77%) of students using a laptop as their primary device, followed by desktop (11%) or hybrid or 2in1 device (6%). Personal preference (62%), work/life balance (64%), academic needs (62%) and availability 43% were selected as top factors for primary device selection. Many students use a smartphone (42%) or tablet (23%) as a secondary device, with most students reasoning their secondary device has features/functions their primary device lacks (25%), or is more convenient for transport (22%).

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[1] Notwithstanding multiple reminders, student participation was about 30% compared to the last survey during the pandemic. Factors for low response rate may include over-surveying students – there was another major survey running until mid-February. Educause introduced a new survey company and tool, and there were some technical difficulties with the service provider that delayed survey launch from early January to mid-March, a time much closer to end of term. Broader communication about the survey and its intent/value would likely have supported a better response rate.

[2] The Faculty of Arts and Science plans to run the survey in the Fall to its students. This may yield a higher response total.

Barriers

57% of students reported losing internet connectivity during a class, exam, or other synchronous activity, 24% selected their device malfunctioned or broke and required repair, support, or replacement, and 23% noted being required to purchase hardware or software for a course but rarely or never using it.

In response to whether they experienced particular situations *and* it caused stress, 45% noted unstable internet connections, 39% having their device malfunction when they needed it, 24% having their device break when they needed it, 22% not being able to run required applications or software, and 20% not having their device properly configured to perform a task.

19 (14%) respondents identified as having a disability. While only 5 (3.5%) respondents disclosed having a disability that needed assistive technologies, there were high responses of students who stated needing specific technologies for academic work, including:
- Closed captions on videos: 42% need it. *12% need it but don't have access.*
- Speech to text software: 24% need it. *9% need it but don't have access.*
- Word prediction software: 23% need it. *8% need it but don't have access.*
- Text to speech software: 18% need it. *7% need it but don't have access.*
- Pentop computer (e.g., smartpen): 35% need it. *5% need it but don't have access.*
- Digital highlighter: 41% need it. *4% need it but don't have access.*

Institutional Services

Asked about institutional services, 33% of students selected visiting a physical campus location (e.g. computer lab) for hardware (e.g. computer, printer) access; *24% visited a special campus location (e.g. a parking lot) for Wifi access*;* and 11% received help from institutions IT support. **79% of respondents in this survey were living in off-campus, non-university housing.*

THE NEW NORMAL

Course Delivery

Responses about online and blended courses were heavily mixed.
- 36% of students said they were just as likely to take online or blended courses in the future; 28% were more likely to take online or blended courses in the future; and 24% were less likely to take online or blended courses in the future.
- Students expanded on their reasons for being more likely to take online or blended courses in future: 11 wrote about commuting and location barriers (cost, living distance), 4 about general freedom and convenience, and 4 about accessibility.

In response to whether they were taking all their courses in their preferred mode(s), 50% said no, 35% yes, and 11% no preference.
- 22% of students prefer a course that is mostly but not completely face to face; 22% prefer a course that is completely face to face; 21% prefer a course that is about half online and half face to face; and 16% prefer a course that is completely online.

- Expanding on why they were not taking courses in preferred modes, 41 wrote about not having the option to select their preference.
- Considering the impact on their learning that taking courses in their non-preferred mode, 32 students wrote about negative impacts on success, stress, motivation, and persistence. In addition, 14 more students spoke specifically to how online courses decreased motivation and focus, and 7 more students wrote about in-person courses negatively impacting accessibility, success, and stress. 10 students expanded on the impact of commuting, finances, and scheduling.

For meeting with other students for academic work, 37% stated preference for meeting mostly face to face, sometimes online; 20% preferred about half face to face and half online; and 17% preferred mostly online. In contrast, with regards to this academic year, students reported meeting 13% mostly face to face, sometimes online; 25% about half face to face and half online; and 25% mostly online, sometimes face to face.

Regarding experiences of effective and ineffective uses of technology in courses: 25 wrote positively about lecture access online and 18 described poor or unprepared setup by an instructor.

DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

For familiarity with data privacy and security policies, 79% of students selected average or higher knowledge of personal data privacy and security policies. However, 85% of students selected average or lower for institutions data privacy and security policies.

For personal data privacy and security, 61% of students learned through searching online, 42% through social media, 37% through news, 36% through friends; 30% through parents.
In contrast, for institutions data privacy and security policies, 46% of students selected they have not learned about it, followed by 33% information provided by the institution, 20% searching online, 19% from teachers.