Why We Participated in the Survey

In order to better understand how the student body utilizes and engages with technology in learning, this past year, the University of Alberta participated in the ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology.

The 15th annual survey carried out by the EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research aims at gaining insight into how undergraduate students interact with technology, and how these tools can aid student success. With more than 64,000 students surveyed from 130 institutions across 9 countries, the quantitative findings represent that students are typically pleased with their technology experience, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t room for improvement. This was the first year that the University of Alberta took part in the survey, which is one of the largest and longest running explorations of students’ experiences, behaviors and preferences when it comes to technology.

These survey results allow us to build upon our mission to continually and increasingly support teaching and learning, while simultaneously moving the Digital Learning Environments portfolio forward.

The University of Alberta surveyed close to 700 students from a number of departments and faculties across the University. Our intentions for taking part in this year’s survey were two-fold. First, to gain legitimate insights into how our students are utilizing technology for school purposes, and secondly, to see how our services, tools, and student satisfaction compares to other institutions.

Participating in the ECAR survey is also another step towards supporting various goals in our five year strategic plan. First and foremost, the results allow us to build upon our mission to continually and increasingly support teaching and learning, while simultaneously moving the Digital Learning Environments portfolio forward. The more information we gather on which tools students have access to and are using for learning objectives, how they’re using them, and what they’re bringing into their learning environments, the better we can understand and determine where to focus our efforts and initiatives. This will help us as we carry out the third phase of our plan, which is to refocus and drive towards a new direction for our academic community.

The following pages highlight the University of Alberta’s findings, and summarize what our students had to say about their perspectives on how technology impacts their academic experience, and how they use it to augment their success. The results center around four main themes, beginning with a device breakdown to determine how primary mobile tools impact a student’s learning experience. To no surprise either, 99% of those surveyed said that they owned two or more Internet-capable devices, thus emphasizing the reliance and importance that students place on their ability to connect. The results go on to outline student’s rating their satisfaction of University provided IT services, how they engage with technology in learning, and how useful students find the tools and resources that are offered to them through their education.
Student Profile

Building an understanding of the student experience.

668
Students surveyed

92%
Are full-time students

99%
Own 2 or more Internet-capable devices

86%
Live off campus
IT Services Satisfaction Ratings

Overall Technology Experience Rating

Learning Management System

The number below indicates the percentage of students that rated the LMS satisfaction as “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied”.

How often did you use your learning management system?

47% All of my courses

18% Most

4% Half

8% One

22% None

WiFi Ratings Around Campus

The numbers below indicate the percentage of students that rated the WiFi service as “Excellent” or “Good” in each of the specified locations.

38% Student Housing

29% Outdoor Spaces

72% Campus Libraries

74% Classroom Spaces

*Results of applicable students only

32% Of students reported BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) was utilized in their high school.
Device Breakdown

What impact do these three devices have on a student’s learning experience?

Desktop Computers

- 50% Of students say desktops are “Very Important” or “Extremely Important” for academic success.
- 42% of those Have access to a desktop
- 20% Use the Institution’s desktops
- 61% Own desktops
- How often are desktops used by students in their courses?
  - All of my courses: 26%
  - Most: 16%
  - Half: 14%
  - At least one: 26%
  - None: 18%

Laptop Computers

- 92% Of students say laptops are “Very Important” or “Extremely Important” for academic success.
- 91% of those Have access to a laptop
- 2% Use the Institution’s laptops
- 98% Own laptops
- How often are laptops used by students in their courses?
  - All of my courses: 71%
  - Most: 20%
  - Half: 16%
  - At least one: 21%
  - None: 1%

Smart Phones

- 44% Of students say smart phones are “Very Important” or “Extremely Important” for academic success.
- 98% of those Have access to a smart phone
- 0% Use the Institution’s smart phones
- 99% Own smart phones
- How often are smart phones used by students in their courses?
  - All of my courses: 26%
  - Most: 20%
  - Half: 16%
  - At least one: 21%
  - None: 1%

University of Alberta EDUCAUSE Student Technology Survey Results
Engagement with Technology

In the past 12 months, have you taken any courses that were completely online?

- All of my courses: 1%
- Not all, but some: 23%
- None of my courses: 76%

How do instructors engage their students with technology?

Each of the below statements begin with, “My instructors typically…”

- ...use technology to engage me in the learning process.
  - Strongly Agree: 12%
  - Agree: 52%
  - Neutral: 21%
  - Disagree: 17%

- ...use technology during class to enhance learning with additional material.
  - Strongly Agree: 19%
  - Agree: 52%
  - Neutral: 17%

- ...encourage me to use my own technology devices during class to deepen learning.
  - Agree: 30%
  - Neutral: 31%
  - Disagree: 22%

- ...encourage me to use online collaboration tools to communicate with the instructor or other students outside of class.
  - Agree: 42%
  - Neutral: 28%
  - Disagree: 13%
Technology Tools and Resources

How useful do students find each of these tools?

Degree planning or mapping tools that identify courses needed to complete your degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Degree audit tools that show the degree requirements completed.

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<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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Self-service tools for conducting student-related business.

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<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Self-service tools for tracking credits, credit transfers, and dual enrollment.

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<td>17%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Accessible Technology

22 Students Responded to this section of the survey.

These students were asked: “How would you rate the University of Alberta’s...”

...awareness of student needs for accessible or adaptive technologies needed for your coursework?

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<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>I am not provided with the technologies I need.</th>
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<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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...support for the accessible or adaptive technologies needed for your coursework?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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Comparing UAlberta to All Participating Institutions

Device Trends

- **Percentage of students that labeled these devices as “Very Important” or “Extremely Important” for academic success.**
  - **Desktop Computers:**
    - UAlberta: 50%
    - All Institutions: 62%
  - **Laptops:**
    - UAlberta: 92%
    - All Institutions: 94%
  - **Smart Phones:**
    - UAlberta: 44%
    - All Institutions: 53%

- **Percentage of students who are using these devices for 50% or more of their classes.**
  - **Desktop Computers:**
    - UAlberta: 55%
    - All Institutions: 63%
  - **Laptops:**
    - UAlberta: 95%
    - All Institutions: 95%
  - **Smart Phones:**
    - UAlberta: 63%
    - All Institutions: 67%

Use of institutions Learning Management System

- **Use the Learning Management System for all of their courses.**
  - UAlberta: 47%
  - All Institutions: 59%

- **Did not use the learning management system at all.**
  - UAlberta: 22%
  - All Institutions: 6%

- **Overall “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with the institutions learning management system.**
  - UAlberta: 74%
  - All Institutions: 73%

27% Of students, across all institutions, rated their technology experience as “Excellent.”

In comparison, UAlberta students put this rating at 18%.
Conclusions and Discoveries

We live in a digital age. Higher education institutions are constantly having to adapt and innovate in order to engage students and increase the level of technology provided for learning opportunities and efficiencies.

Technology enables students to access and complete things through a self-service and mobile context, and campus technology infrastructure continues to influence students’ overall technology experiences.

The results from this year’s report indicates that students prefer a face-to-face learning environment, with some blended learning. This reveals that the classroom experience is still very important to students, and reminds us that we need to continue to concentrate our efforts in this area.

From the results of this survey, we have compiled five primary recommendations, which can be found on the next page. All will require action, two of which will require partnership and support from other on-campus groups, and the remaining three IST can lead independently with our own resources.

As the ECAR summary report notes, “the more evidence that can be collected to understand students’ technological preferences for and relations to technology, the better equipped faculty and IT organizations will be to address current needs and anticipate future student needs.” In 2018, students continue to view technology as an essential factor in their academic experience and success — going forward, this perspective will only continue to increase. With that being said, is it now crucial that higher education identifies how best to leverage technology for student success, based on our own institutional goals, costs, pedagogical approaches, and evidence of impact, because in reality, students are what this institution is all about.
Recommendations for the Future

1. Better understand the needs of students with learning and physical disabilities who require assistive or adaptive technologies.

2. Define and identify student success tools and build awareness to increasing their use.

3. Increase the reach and quality of campus Wi-Fi networks.

4. Continue providing students with access to basic technologies that are most important to their academic success.

5. Ensure that commuter students have the tools and information they need to take advantage of blended and online learning.