

# NOEL-LEVITZ PRIORITIES SURVEY FOR ONLINE LEARNERS (PSOL)

## EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

### WHAT IS THE PSOL?

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The [PSOL](#) is a survey from [Noel-Levitz](#) (who also provides the Student Satisfaction Inventory) administered to randomly selected students at MCC who enrolled exclusively in internet courses during the semester of the survey administration. The survey measures both student perceptions of importance and satisfaction in the areas of Academic Services, Enrollment Services, Institutional Perceptions, Instructional Services and Student Services. MCC administered the PSOL for the first time in Spring 2013.

### WHAT SHOULD I KNOW BEFORE I LOOK AT THE RESULTS?

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The response rate for the PSOL was low; only 196 students completed the survey out of 2,000 students invited (a response rate of only 9.8%). Given that, the margin of error for this survey of online students is slightly higher than ideal at  $\pm 6.8\%$  ( $\pm 5.0\%$  or lower is desirable). Also, because of the low response rate, survey data cannot be disaggregated into cross tabs to examine different groups, such as by age, ethnicity or enrollment patterns. In addition, no incentive was offered for students to complete the survey; students were emailed and asked to complete it voluntarily. This is different from other surveys at MCC which are administered in the classroom under the direction of a faculty member and generally have response rates over 60%. Finally, survey items listed below beginning with “campus item” were custom items added by MCC in collaboration with eLearning leadership.

### WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON IN THE PSOL RESULTS?

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For this survey, it is more important to focus on what MCC’s results may tell us about our online students than to dwell on negative comparisons to the national cohort. The national cohort may contain data from many colleges not comparable to MCC. No comparison cohort of large, urban community colleges was available for the PSOL. So, the PSOL results can show us:

- What services online students feel are most **important**
- What services online students are most and least **satisfied** with
- What services **fail to meet expectations** of online students, as measured by a large performance gap between the importance and satisfaction scores (e.g. high importance and low satisfaction)

### HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

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#### Respondent Profile

Compared to the MCC student body, survey respondents were older, more female and less ethnically diverse. Nine out of ten respondents said they primarily take online classes, 21% reported taking their first online courses in Spring 2013 and 34% said their current plan is to complete an online degree program.

#### MCC’s Strengths

These are items in the top half of importance and the top 25% of satisfaction:

1. Campus item: The course syllabus and the information on required textbooks and supplies is helpful.
2. Registration for online courses is convenient.
3. Campus item: Canvas is reliable and performs well.
4. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
5. Assessment and evaluation procedures are clear and reasonable.
6. Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.
7. Campus item: The test proctoring services associated with your online courses are convenient.

## MCC's Challenges

Noel-Levitz defines challenges as items in the top half of importance AND either in the top 25% of performance gap OR the bottom 25% of satisfaction.

1. Faculty are responsive to student needs.
2. The quality of online instruction is excellent.
3. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.
4. This institution responds quickly when I request information.
5. Campus item: Online Course Previews for your course(s) provide enough information.

These additional four items also had large performance gaps, above 1.0, but were ranked slightly lower in importance to students:

1. My program advisor helps me work toward career goals.
2. Channels are available for providing timely responses to student complaints.
3. I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.
4. My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.

## Overall Student Experience

The PSOL asks students three questions about their overall experience at MCC:

- So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?
  - 49% said their college experience at MCC was better, quite a bit better or much better than they had expected. 19% said their experience at MCC was worse, quite a bit worse or much worse than they had expected.
- Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.
  - 74% of students were somewhat satisfied, satisfied or very satisfied with the experience at MCC. 17% were somewhat dissatisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the experience at MCC.
- All in all, if you had to do it over, would you enroll here again?
  - 71% of respondents said they would probably or definitely still enroll at MCC if they could "do it over." 11% said they probably or definitely not enroll at MCC if they could go back and do it over.

## Why Online Students Picked MCC

Students were asked to rate the importance of several factors in their decision to enroll at MCC. The ranking from most important to least is below:

1. Convenience
2. Work schedule
3. Flexible pacing for completing a program
4. Cost
5. Ability to transfer credits
6. Program requirements
7. Future employment opportunities
8. Reputation of institution
9. Distance from campus
10. Financial assistance available
11. Recommendations from employer

## FULL REPORT

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The [full PSOL report from Noel-Levitz](#) in PDF format is available [on the Office of Research and Planning web site](#). In addition, an HTML format of the report can be requested through ORP with the ability to sort results by levels of importance, satisfaction and performance gap. If you have any questions or need help interpreting the results, please contact Dennis Mitchell in the Office of Research and Planning at 480-461-7213 or [dennis.mitchell@mesacc.edu](mailto:dennis.mitchell@mesacc.edu).