

Longitudinal Analysis of the Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) (2019-2025)

I. Executive Summary

This report summarizes the longitudinal findings from the Noel Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) spanning four cycles: 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025. The data provides a comprehensive view of student priorities, satisfaction levels, and key demographic shifts among the online learner population, supporting continuous improvement initiatives required for HLC accreditation.

Major Findings:

1. **Strong Overall Loyalty:** Student loyalty and overall satisfaction remain high, peaking in 2023 and sustaining robust rates in 2025. Seventy percent of respondents in 2025 reported being satisfied or very satisfied, and 73% reported they would definitely or probably re-enroll.
2. **Benchmark Gap:** Institutional satisfaction scores across all five core scales (Academic Services, Enrollment Services, Institutional Perceptions, Instructional Services, Student Services) consistently trail the national PSOL benchmark scores, particularly in Enrollment Services, which saw the largest mean difference in 2025 (WWU: 5.87 vs. PSOL: 6.06).
3. **Major Demographic Shift:** The student body has undergone a pronounced shift from primarily graduate/professional students (291 in 2019) toward undergraduate degree seekers (115 in 2025).

II. Longitudinal Context and Overall Student Vitals

Student satisfaction and retention intent serve as critical indicators of institutional effectiveness and alignment with student needs.

A. Overall Satisfaction and Retention Trends:

The mean scores for overall satisfaction have trended positively over the four years, rising from 5.39 in 2019 to 5.73 in 2025. Importantly, the combined percentage of students reporting being "Satisfied" (6) or "Very satisfied" (7) remained high.

Year	Overall Satisfaction (Mean Total)	Met Expectations (Mean Total)	% Satisfied or Very Satisfied (6 or 7)	% Experience Better than Expected (5, 6, or 7)	% Definitely/Probably Re-enroll (6 or 7)
2019	5.39	4.66	62%	47%	75%
2021	5.46	5.00	63%	55%	71%
2023	5.80	4.82	74%	49%	78%
2025	5.73	5.10	70%	60%	73%

In 2025, 60% of students reported their experience was "Better than I expected," "Quite a bit better than I expected," or "Much better than I expected". This high rate of exceeded expectations suggests institutional efforts are having a positive impact on student experience, rising from 47% in 2019.

B. PSOL Scale Performance Relative to Benchmark

A core area of concern is the satisfaction scores across the five core PSOL scales when compared to the national benchmark (PSOL Satisfaction).

Scale	2019 WWU	2019 PSOL	2021 WWU	2021 PSOL	2023 WWU	2023 PSOL	2025 WWU	2025 PSOL
Academic Services	5.87	5.98	5.79	6.02	6.05	6.04	6.02	6.07
Enrollment Services	6.01	6.07	6.02	6.08	5.94	6.07	5.87	6.06
Institutional Perceptions	5.83	5.91	5.80	5.94	5.99	5.99	5.85	6.02
Instructional Services	5.81	5.90	5.51	5.91	5.95	5.94	5.97	5.98
Student Services	5.76	5.91	5.70	5.95	5.76	5.96	5.76	5.98

In the most recent survey cycle (2025), WWU satisfaction scores were lower than the PSOL benchmark across all five scales. This is particularly noticeable in Enrollment Services, where the WWU was consistently lower than the PSOL benchmark.

III. Areas of Concern

Areas of concern are identified by high "Gap %" figures, representing the difference between the percentage of students who deem an item highly important (6 or 7) and those who are satisfied with the institution's delivery (6 or 7).

Core Challenges

Item Description	2019 Gap %	2021 Gap %	2023 Gap %	2025 Gap %
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	23 %	28 %	14 %	25 %
Program requirements are clear and reasonable.	30 %	22 %	22 %	24 %
The quality of online instruction is excellent.	32 %	27 %	24 %	23 %
Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.	31 %	26 %	30 %	21 %

The longitudinal data reveals three major, persistent areas of concern:

1. Value Proposition (Item 6): "Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment" registered a 25% gap in 2025, rebounding after a temporary dip in 2023. This item ranked highly in importance (ranked #4 in 2025) and suggests a need to better articulate the return on investment for online learners.
2. Clarity and Structure (Item 7 & 11): Both "Program requirements are clear and reasonable" (24% gap) and "Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus" (21% gap) remain significant issues. Item 7 was the #1 ranked challenge in 2023 and continues to show dissatisfaction with clarity in program structure.
3. Instructional Quality (Item 20): Although the gap has narrowed slightly since 2019 (32% to 23% in 2025), "The quality of online instruction is excellent" remains a highly important item (ranked #7) with a large persistent gap.

B. Gaps in Enrollment and Financial Aid Services

Several administrative and support items displayed significant gaps, particularly related to the cost of attendance and process clarity:

Item Description	2019 Gap %	2021 Gap %	2023 Gap %	2025 Gap %
I receive timely information on the availability of financial aid.	9 %	11 %	11 %	21 %
Registration for online courses is convenient.	26 %	15 %	14 %	22 %
I am aware of whom to contact for questions about programs and services.	24 %	23 %	14 %	17 %
Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.	12 %	3 %	13 %	14 %

This data demonstrates that after showing improvement in 2021 and 2023, the gaps related to administrative convenience and financial clarity significantly widened in the 2025 survey cycle. Specifically, timely financial aid information and registration convenience recorded the largest gaps in 2025 among these administrative items (21% and 22%, respectively).

IV. Areas of Promise: Strengths and Improvement Efforts

Areas of promise are identified by small or negative gaps, or by noting substantial positive changes in gap percentage over time. These items demonstrate effective institutional performance or successful intervention strategies.

A. Academic Strengths (Negative or Near-Zero Gaps)

Several campus-specific items, designed to measure academic rigor and critical thinking, showed strong performance, often exceeding student satisfaction expectations (negative gap).

Item Description	2019 Gap %	2021 Gap %	2023 Gap %	2025 Gap %
Throughout the coursework I examined my own views on a topic or issue.	-1 %	0 %	-6 %	-6 %
I was asked to analyze ideas or experiences in depth by examining the parts.	2 %	2 %	0 %	-3 %
The academic program included exploration of ethical decision making.	5 %	2 %	4 %	-1 %
The academic program as a whole required me to synthesize information from multiple courses.	2 %	1 %	3 %	0 %
Student-to-student collaborations are valuable to me.	-6 %	-5 %	-8 %	-8 %

The negative gaps highlights that the academic experience often surpasses student expectations.

B. Improvement in Faculty Feedback

The institution has demonstrated clear improvement in faculty responsiveness:

Item Description	2019 Gap %	2021 Gap %	2023 Gap %	2025 Gap %
Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.	22 %	19 %	19 %	14 %
My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.	10 %	18 %	5 %	2 %
Faculty are responsive to student needs.	18 %	17 %	17 %	13 %

The data highlights an improvement in timely feedback, as the gap was reduced from 22% in 2019 to 14% in 2025. Furthermore, the dramatic drop in the gap for program advisor accessibility from 18% in 2021 to just 2% in 2025 indicates strong institutional performance in connecting students with their program advisors.

C. Longitudinal Gap Analysis for Key Resources

This table tracks essential infrastructure items for online learners, showing stable, low gaps and improvement in technical support.

Item Description	2019 Gap %	2021 Gap %	2023 Gap %	2025 Gap %
Adequate online library resources are provided.	7 %	7 %	5 %	7 %
Appropriate technical assistance is readily available.	16 %	4 %	12 %	10 %

V. Student Demographics and Enrollment Profile

A. Enrollment Status and Primary Online Learners

Year	Primarily Online	Primarily On-Campus	Total Responding
2019	235	120	355
2021	203	16	219
2023	136	10	146
2025	219	12	231

B. Degree Program

Educational Goal	2019 Count	2021 Count	2023 Count	2025 Count
Associates Degree	2	1	1	18
Bachelors Degree	49	53	30	87
Masters Degree	180	90	60	60
Doctorate	126	68	46	61
Total Responding	365	216	141	228

C. Program Concentration and Age Profile

Major	2019 Count	2021 Count	2023 Count	2025 Count
Psychology	0	0	1	21
Business Admin (BA/BAS)	17	10	7	27
AA Liberal Arts	2	1	0	16
ASL English Interpreting	42	44	28	19

Year	<18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65
2019	0	30	133	113	66	12	0
2021	0	14	65	72	44	5	0
2023	0	22	37	44	26	9	1
2025	2	24	62	74	39	16	4

VI. Conclusion

The Noel Levitz PSOL data from 2019-2025 provides strong evidence of institutional engagement and overall student loyalty, critical components for HLC evaluation. However, to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving student body—now increasingly focused on undergraduate degree completion—the institution must strategically address the **persistent gaps** related to value (Tuition, Item 6), instructional clarity (Program Requirements, Item 7; Syllabus, Item 11), and administrative support. The successful narrowing of gaps in areas such as faculty feedback (Item 4) and advisor accessibility (Item 2) provides proof that targeted, data-driven interventions can yield significant improvements. Future HLC arguments should highlight the institution's commitment to adapting to the new undergraduate focus while actively closing these identified systemic gaps.