Latest Online College Students Research Shows Changing Attitudes and Expectations of Online Education

Findings from The Learning House, Inc. and Aslanian Market Research report reveal that colleges need to adapt to a more sophisticated online student.

LOUISVILLE, KY (PRWEB) June 20, 2017 -- New research about college students studying fully online calls for universities to update strategies to win over students in the face of growing competition.

The Learning House, Inc., a leading academic program manager (APM) that enables universities to thrive in today's competitive higher education landscape, and Aslanian Market Research, the premier organization dedicated to online and adult higher education market research, today unveiled findings from the Online College Students 2017: Comprehensive Data on Demands and Preferences report.

The sixth edition of this annual report surveyed 1,500 students who are seriously considering, currently enrolled in or have recently graduated from a fully online program. The report seeks to help higher education leaders and policymakers better understand both the traits of online college students and what they’re looking for in their educational experience.

The research revealed that online learners have a strong desire for interaction with classmates and instructors. More than half of the survey respondents say that interaction with their academic community is important to them. Seventy-two percent of online students attend schools within 100 miles. About 25 percent say having more contact with their instructors and more engagement with classmates would improve the caliber of their online courses.

The report also notes an increase in the number of online students who are applying to more than two colleges or universities, and 23 percent of those surveyed said they would consider more schools if they could repeat their search. With more choices, schools need to work harder to stand out among online student shoppers.

The school selection process seems to be an impulsive one. When asked after the fact, 59 percent would change parts of their initial search. The most frequently cited change would be better understanding of the total cost and reputation of their program.

One of the 10 key findings signals that visibility and interest in competency-based education is significantly increasing. Eighteen percent of online students have enrolled in competency-based programs, and even more importantly, 53 percent would definitely consider such a program. Stackable certificates that add up to a degree were also of interest to respondents, demonstrating that students are embracing alternative pathways to earning their degree.

“Online learning is no longer new, and online students are becoming savvier consumers. It's no longer enough to offer flexibility and convenience,” said Todd Zipper, president and CEO of Learning House. “Institutions need to offer the right program, at the right price, in the right modality, and with the right support services in place to create a welcoming community that helps students achieve their career ambitions.”

The report also reveals that most online students utilize career services to achieve their goals. Surprisingly, the research found that 77 percent of online college students who have career services offered at their school are
taking advantage of these services, likely related to their reasons for enrolling. Nearly 80 percent of students said their primary motivation for enrolling in an online program was to advance or change their job.

Report Recommendations

The report recommends that online programs better reflect student career and educational goals. Since online students are so career focused, understanding which programs will best educate students for the job market is critical to online program success. While business and healthcare programs remain the stalwarts of online education, computer science and IT are increasing in popularity for graduate students, and arts and humanities programs are also making gains for undergraduate students.

Admissions offices should place greater emphasis on their responsiveness by giving online students fast responses. Admissions officials also should provide online students with upfront figures on financial aid and transfer credits.

Schools must adapt their online access to accommodate mobile technology. Research shows that 80 percent of online students use a mobile device during their program search. It also shows that 40 percent use mobile devices to access online coursework.

“Because of an increase in the number of online programs and a projected plateau in online enrollments by 2019 and 2020, there has never been a better time for institutions to re-evaluate their programs,” said Carol Aslanian, president of Aslanian Market Research. “Our findings will help higher education leaders navigate an increasingly competitive market by understanding how and why students select online learning programs.”

Online College Students 2017: Comprehensive Data on Demands and Preferences provides updates to findings from all of the reports of the same name. To download a copy of the full report, please visit: www.learninghouse.com/ocs2017. To view and download the infographic, please visit: www.learninghouse.com/ocs2017-infographic. To register to join the authors of the report for a free, live webinar on Thursday, July 20, please visit: www.learninghouse.com/ocs2017-webinar.

Report co-authors David Clinefelter and Carol Aslanian will also speak about the survey results at the Connect Higher Education Summit on June 27-28 in Louisville, Kentucky.

About The Learning House, Inc.
The Learning House, Inc. helps people improve their lives through education. The academic program manager offers a full suite of education services, including: Online Program Management (OPM), Corporate Solutions, The Software Guild, Learning House International, and Advancement Courses. Built on a foundation of data-driven decision-making, thorough market research, and robust technology services, Learning House is focused on delivering high-quality, relevant just-in-time education services to meet the needs of a dynamic, global market. Through its partnerships, Learning House helps universities acquire more students, produce more graduates, and deliver better outcomes and helps companies attract, develop, and retain a happier, more skilled workforce.

About Aslanian Market Research
Aslanian Market Research (the market research unit of EducationDynamics) conducts market demand studies, institutional audits, program and marketing reviews, and professional development seminars and workshops for colleges and universities seeking information and data on how to expand adult and online student enrollments.
Throughout the last 25 years, its staff has worked with hundreds of colleges and universities of all types — public, private, large, small, rural, suburban, and urban — in every region of the U.S. Its seminars have provided thousands of college administrators with practical, hands-on tactics that they can implement at their institutions at minimal cost for maximum impact.

About EducationDynamics

EducationDynamics is a proven leader in helping higher education institutions find, enroll, and retain students. The organization maintains its industry leadership through a deeply rooted philosophy of serving our schools best by serving students first. This commitment has been at the heart of its success since it began more than a decade ago, and it continues today as we proudly serve more than 1,200 colleges and universities of all types and sizes.

###

Media Contact:
Alyssa Miller
alyssa(at)ammediaworks.com
973-615-1292
Contact Information
Alyssa Miller
alyssa@ammediaworks.com
http://www.edgeedtech.com
+1 (973) 615-1292

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.