Summary Report For Georgia Southern University

ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2013


This summary report summarizes key research findings published by the EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research. The international survey data is compared to responses by Georgia Southern students on key measurements. The report is for the expressed purposes of Georgia Southern University’s assessment and strategic planning efforts.

Prepared by the Office of the Vice President for Information Technology & Chief Information Officer
Introduction

Since 2004, ECAR has conducted research among higher education institutions to investigate the technologies that matter most to students by exploring technology ownership, use patterns, and perceptions of technology among undergraduate students. The objectives for this year’s study were to:

1. Create a profile of undergraduates’ ownership and use of technology for academics.
2. Report what undergraduates say about how technology help them to achieve their academic outcomes.
3. Assess students’ perceptions of how well institutions and instructors use technology to enhance the academic experiences.
4. Track trends of student behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions about e-learning.
5. Benchmark student behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions about using their own devices at the college/university.
6. Identify longitudinal technology trends in higher education
7. Provide higher education institutions with actionable recommendations about how to meet or exceed student’s preferences and expectations for technology in academics.

In 2013, the ECAR technology survey was sent to approximately 1.6 million students at 251 college/university sites, yielding 113,035 (7%) respondents across 13 countries. Georgia Southern University has participated in this research since 2007. In 2013, a stratified sample of 7762 undergraduate students based on class was surveyed, yielding 602 responses (8%). 65% of the students reported white ethnicity, 21% black/African American, 3% Hispanic, 1% American Indian, 3% Asian/Pacific islander, 2% other, and 5% no response. 216 respondents were male, 376 female, and 10 unknown. Students self-identified their class: 136 freshmen, 132 sophomores, 150 juniors, 173 seniors, and 12 others.

This ECAR report identifies three main themes and highlights of the research. Georgia Southern University student’s responses were typical of other students in the survey:

1. Students’ relationship with technology is complex – they recognize its value but still need guidance when it comes to using it for academics.
2. Students prefer blended learning environments.
3. Students are ready to use their mobile devices for more academics.
4. Students value their privacy, and using technology to connect with them has its limits.

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Students value the ways in which technology helps them achieve their academic goals and prepares them for their future academic and workplace activities.

Responses from Georgia Southern Students

- **Technology helps me achieve my academic outcomes**
  - Strongly agree: 25%
  - Agree: 49%
  - Neither: 19%
  - Don't know: 2%
  - Somewhat disagree: 4%
  - Somewhat agree: 1%
  - Strongly disagree: 1%

- **Technology makes me feel more connected to professors**
  - Strongly agree: 16%
  - Agree: 43%
  - Neither: 23%
  - Somewhat disagree: 11%
  - Somewhat agree: 5%
  - Strongly disagree: 2%
  - Don't know: 1%

- **Technology will have prepared me for the workplace**
  - Strongly agree: 12%
  - Agree: 46%
  - Neither: 22%
  - Somewhat disagree: 10%
  - Somewhat agree: 11%
  - Strongly disagree: 5%
  - Don't know: 5%

- **Technology better prepares me for future educational plans**
  - Strongly agree: 26%
  - Agree: 47%
  - Neither: 18%
  - Somewhat disagree: 5%
  - Somewhat agree: 10%
  - Strongly disagree: 2%
  - Don't know: 5%

**Agree or Strongly Agree – All Institutions.**

- Helps me achieve my academic outcomes: 76%
- Better prepares me for future educational plans: 76%
- Will have prepared me for the workplace: 61%

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Students who are positive about their technology use and experiences are more likely to say their instructors have adequate technology skills.

Georgia Southern Students vs MA Public Institutions vs All US Institutions

Instructors effectively use technology.
Although not fully mainstream, blended learning persists as the preferred modality.

**Learning environment that student learn the most in.**

- Courses with no online components
- Courses with some online components
- Courses that are completely online
- No preference

**Learning environment preferred.**

- Courses with no online components
- Courses with some online components
- Courses that are completely online
- No preference

**Number of blended courses in the past year.**

- None
- A few
- About half
- Nearly all
- All

**Skip classes when lecture materials are online.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither
- Don't know
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither
- Don't know

Inner = GSU
Middle = Public MA institutions
Outer = All U.S. Institutions

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Mobile device access to institutionally provided services, applications, and websites is up, though performance ratings are waning compared to 2012.


Undergraduates own two to three Internet-capable devices, and ownership of smartphones and tablets jumped the most (among all devices) from 2012-2013.

Number of Internet-Capable Devices among Georgia Southern Students

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Laptops are still cited as the most used and most important device for academics, but more students are beginning to use smartphones and tablets for academic purposes.

Georgia Southern Student Computer Ownership

- 23% own a desktop computer (91% Windows, 7% Mac, 3% Linux)
- 25% own a tablet (63% IOS, 7% Windows, 30% Droid)
- 81% own a smartphone (56% IOS, 40% Android, 1% Windows)
- 95% own laptops (77% Windows, 21% Mac)
Students prefer face-to-face instructions, e-mail, and CMS/LMS (FOLIO) as ways to communicate more with their instructors.

Georgia Southern Students: Which Forms of Communication do you wish your instructors used less... or more

![Chart showing preferences for communication methods]

Students prefer to keep their social and academic lives separate, and they maintain those boundaries in their use of technology.

56% of GS students prefer to keep their academic and social lives separate.

37% indicated they wished their faculty member used less social media.

64% of GS students responding indicated they wished their faculty would use more email.
Students hold high expectations for anytime, anywhere access to course materials and for using their personal digital devices inside and outside class.

Georgia Southern Students: Which resources/tools do you wish your instructors used less... or more of?

Georgia Southern Students: How important are the following resources/tools to achieving your academic success?
In-class use of smartphones and tablets is not yet common; students say they are often prevented or discouraged from using these devices while in class.
Georgia Southern Students Quick Reference Sheet

Student Computer Ownership:
95% own laptops (77% Windows, 21% Mac)
25% own a tablet (63% IOS, 7% Windows, 30% Droid)
81% own a smartphone (56% IOS, 40% Android, 1% Windows)
23% own a desktop computer (91% Windows, 7% Mac, 3% Linux)
58% own a printer

Student Perceptions of the value of Technology:
92% of students believe their use of a laptop is very important to their academic success.
17% of students believe their use of a tablet is very important to their academic success.
39% of students believe their smart phone is very important to their academic success.
67% of students say that technology makes them feel more connected to the institution.
57% of students indicated technology makes them feel more connected to other students.
60% of students indicated that technology promotes their involvement in campus activities.
38% indicated that technology makes their education more affordable.
90% of students indicated it was important that they be better skilled at using technology.
58% of students indicated that technology will have prepared them for the workplace.
73% of students say that technology better prepares them for future educational plans.

Students use of computers provided by the University are used for:
81% Access to printing
69% General Convenience
53% Access to library resources
52% Access to specialty software
43% Access better internet connection
8% Do Social networking

Students Perceptions of their instructors use of technology:
66% of students believe that most or all of their instructors effectively use technology
57% of students believe that their instructors have adequate technical skills.
62% of students believe that their instructors use the right kind of technology.
39% of students believe that their instructors provide adequate technology training.

Students Perceptions of technology and learning:
85% of students indicate that FOLIO is important to achieving academic success
67% of students indicate they learn most from courses with at least some online component.
Only 8% of students prefer courses that are completely online.
49% of students indicate they are more involved in courses that use technology.
59% of students indicate that technology make them feel more connected to faculty.
74% of students indicate that technology helps them achieve their academic outcomes.