



PennState
World Campus

Academic Development Services



Online Learning Readiness Survey
World Campus Undergraduate Students
2024

Executive Summary

The Assessment

The SmarterMeasure Learning Readiness Indicator (SmarterMeasure) is a web-based assessment which measures a learner's readiness for succeeding in an online and/or technology rich learning program based on non-cognitive indicators of success. The primary goal of administering the SmarterMeasure assessment to new World Campus students is to help students identify their strengths as an online learner and to gain a better awareness of academic skills where additional support and resources may be beneficial. The secondary goal is to help students devise a plan to strengthen non-cognitive target areas identified in the results of their SmarterMeasure assessment, and to learn about the resources available to help them meet their academic goals at World Campus. The seven scales measured by the assessment include:

- Individual Attributes - motivation, procrastination, willingness to ask for help, etc.
- Life Factors - availability of time, support from family and employers, finances, etc.
- Learning styles - based on the multiple intelligences model.
- Technical Competency - skills with using technology.
- Technical Knowledge - knowledge of technology terms.
- On-screen Reading Rate and Recall
- Typing Speed and Accuracy

Discussion

The results of the SmarterMeasure assessment, along with previous academic performance, and background factors, can be used to identify students who may need additional academic support and resources. Data indicates that reading and typing skills, as well as non-cognitive factors such as a student's perception of their academic skills are areas that need to be addressed to increase the likelihood of retention and success.

Reading and typing skills can directly impact the amount of time students need to spend interacting with course content and completing assignments. Students who are not used to reading college-level material may struggle understanding content within a course. This can result in longer periods of time for students to gain content mastery and progress through a course. Below benchmark keyboarding skills can negatively impact productivity, time management, study time, and class participation. A 2006 study by Lubbe, Monteith, and Mentz (p. 290) found that self-regulated learners had better keyboarding skills than less self-regulated learners. Additionally, studies by Snyder, et al., (2014) and Weerdenburg, et al., (2018) illustrated that students lacking keyboarding skills put greater demands on short-term memory by searching for keys on the keyboard. They concluded that keyboarding skills are essential to reduce the load on working memory.

Student Success Plan

World Campus Academic Development Services employs a comprehensive approach to assist students in applying their results from the SmarterMeasure assessment to prepare for online learning at World Campus. The plan includes the following components:

1. Increase the usage of the SmarterMeasure assessment by integrating it into the World Campus New Student Orientation.
2. Expand outreach to students through one-on-one consultations, group webinars, asynchronous resources, and enhanced communication via Starfish.
3. Provide resources designed to strengthen students' knowledge, skills, and abilities, helping them succeed in their courses and maintain enrollment at World Campus.

Data Collection

Penn State World Campus began offering the SmarterMeasure assessment to incoming undergraduate students admitted to the World Campus during the 2010-2011 academic year. Initially, the assessment was part of a series of tasks that students were required to complete before starting classes. However, completion rates were low. To address this, the assessment was incorporated into the New Student Orientation (NSO), which is offered asynchronously through Canvas. Although participation in the SmarterMeasure assessment was not mandatory, embedding it in NSO led to a significant increase in completion rates. In 2018, World Campus made NSO mandatory for all undergraduate students. SmarterMeasure continued to be included in NSO, resulting in further increases in completion rates. Today, the completion rates for the SmarterMeasure assessment consistently exceed 70% (OAR-12084, 2019).

The results of the SmarterMeasure assessment are shared with students immediately upon completion, in the form of a detailed report. This report provides information about each scale and sub-scale included in the assessment and offers positive reinforcement to the students. Additionally, the appendix of the report lists resources that can help students improve their online learning skills.

Each week, Academic Development Services receives a report of all students who have completed the SmarterMeasure assessment. In this report, assessments are flagged based on the number of scales and sub-scales that fall below a predetermined threshold. Students with one or more flags receive an email invitation to participate in a consultation with a support specialist. The purpose of this consultation is to use the SmarterMeasure assessment to identify areas where the student may need additional support and to provide them with resources that will aid their success in online learning. Since October 2019, over 800 students have participated in these consultations.

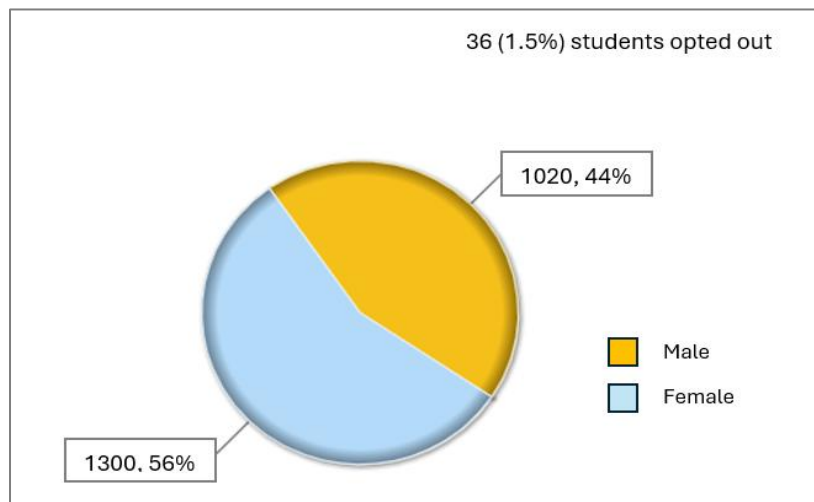
The results presented here are based on data collected from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024. During this period, a total of 2,587 students began the assessment. Out of these, 2,356 students completed the assessment, reflecting a 16.6% increase from the previous year. The overall completion rate was 91%, remaining unchanged from 2023.

Demographics

Data was collected from September 2023 to August 2024. It is important to note that students may skip or “opt-out” of any question.

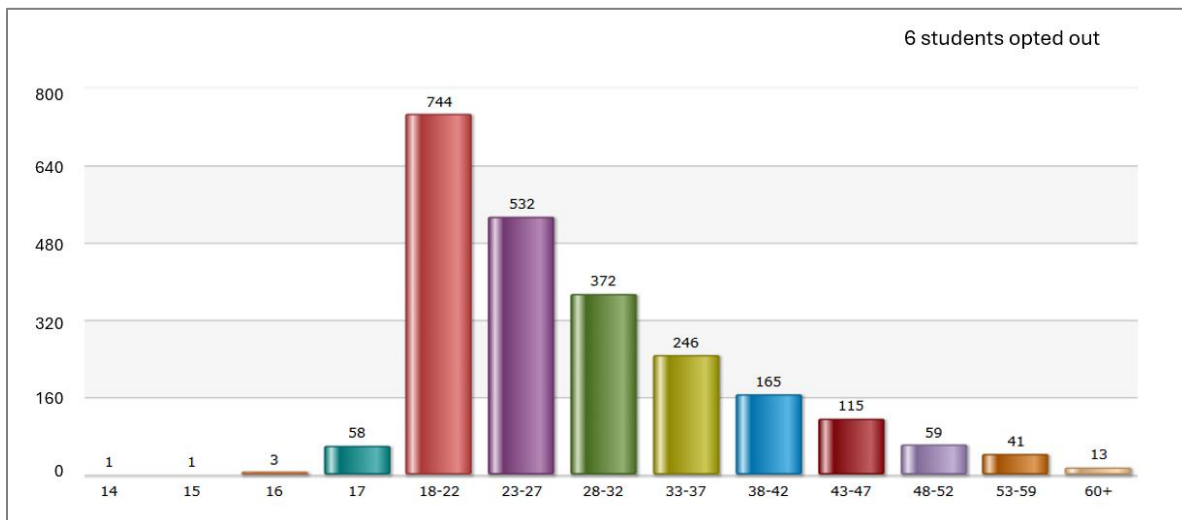
Gender Distribution (n=2320)

The distribution of male/females taking the SmarterMeasure remains consistent. This past year, there were slightly more females (56%) than males (44%) completing the assessment, representing a 2% change (increase in females/decrease in males) compared to 2023 data.



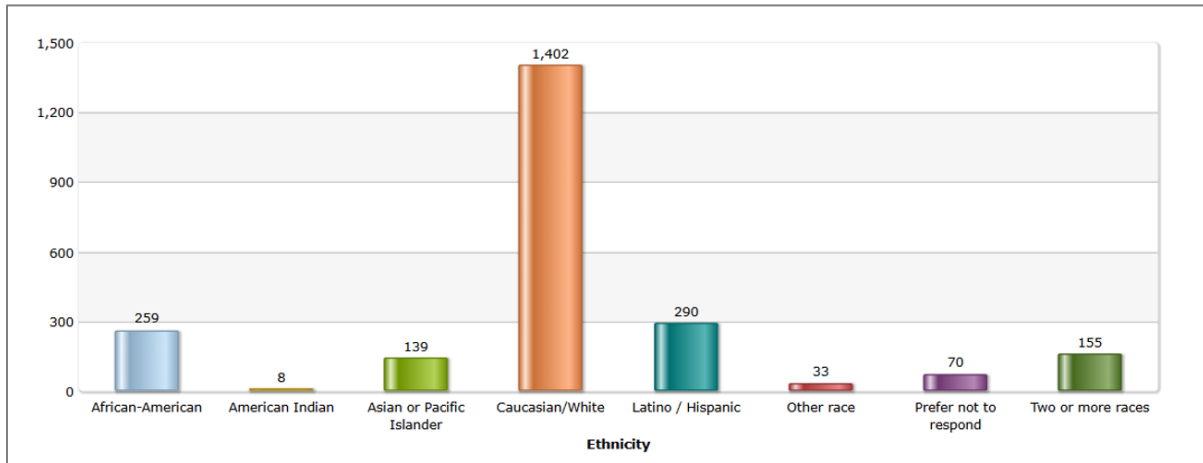
Age Distribution (n=2350)

The age distribution for students completing the assessment remains consistent with 70.1% of students falling into the 18-32 age range. The volume of students in the 18-22 age range (31.7%) increased compared to the 2022-2023 (29.1%) and 2021-2022 (30.5%) reporting periods.



Ethnicity Distribution (n=2356)

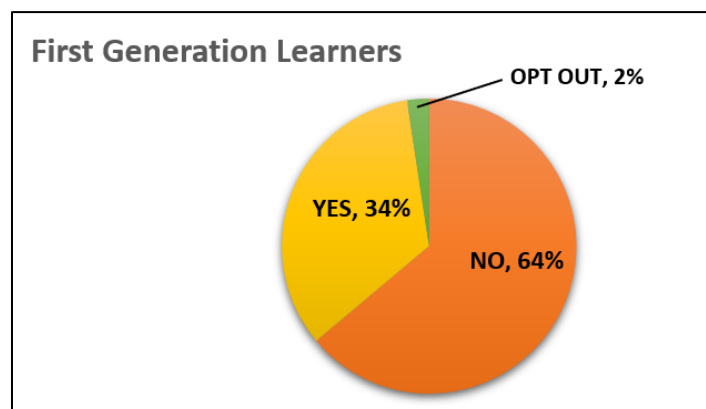
The distribution of ethnicities among students who completed the assessment shows a decline in the percentage of Caucasian/White students for the fourth consecutive year, reflecting a decrease of 4.6% since 2021. In contrast, the number of Hispanic/Latino students who completed the assessment rose by 1.5%, resulting in an overall increase of 2.6% since 2021. African American students also showed a modest increase of 0.8%, contributing to a total increase of 4.2% since 2021. Additionally, the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students completing the assessment increased by 0.3% during this reporting period.



	Causasian/White	African American	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic or Latino
2023-24	59.5%	11.0%	5.9%	12.3%
2022-23	61.8%	10.2%	5.6%	10.8%
2021-22	63.4%	8.8%	9.6%	10.1%
2019-21	64.1%	6.8%	7.5%	9.7%

Volume of Participants Identifying as a First-Generation Learner

The percentage of first-generation learners taking the SmarterMeasure assessment has remained steady over the years. In 2024, 34% identified as first-generation learners, showing a slight increase from 32% in 2023 and 33% in 2022.



Resources

Lubbe, E., Monteith, J., & Mentz, E. (2006). The relationship between keyboarding skills and self-regulated learning. *South African Journal of Education*, 26(2), 281-293.

OAR-12084. (2019). SmarterMeasure Evaluation Update. Internal Outreach Analytics & Reporting report: Unpublished.

SmarterServices. (2025). *Descriptive analytics report* (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024) [Data set]. Penn State World Campus. Unpublished.

SmarterServices. (2025). *Full export report* (September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024) [Data set]. Penn State World Campus. Unpublished.

Snyder, K. M., Ashitaka, Y., Shimada, H., Ulrich, J. E., & Logan, G. D. (2014). *What skilled typists don't know about the QWERTY keyboard*. DOI: 10.3758/s13414-013-0548-4.

Weerdenburg, M., Tesselhof, M., van derMeijden, H. (2018). Touch-typing for better spelling and narrative-writing skills on the computer. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. Doi: 10.1111/jcal.12323