Online Learning Readiness Survey
for World Campus Students
2021

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 are below.

- 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 impact students' comprehension of content within the 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 found that self-regulated learners had better keyboarding skills than less self-regulated learners. The research team posited 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. (Lubbe et al, 2006, p.290).

Recommendations

World Campus Academic Development Services proposes a multifaceted approach to help students utilize their results from the SmarterMeasure assessment to prepare for online learning at World Campus. This plan includes the following:

1. Increase usage of the SmarterMeasure assessment by embedding it within World Campus New Student Orientation.
2. Expand outreach to students that could include 1:1 consultations, group webinars, asynchronous resources, and increased Starfish communication.
3. Provide resources to strengthen students' knowledge, skills, and abilities to help them succeed in their courses and remain enrolled at World Campus.
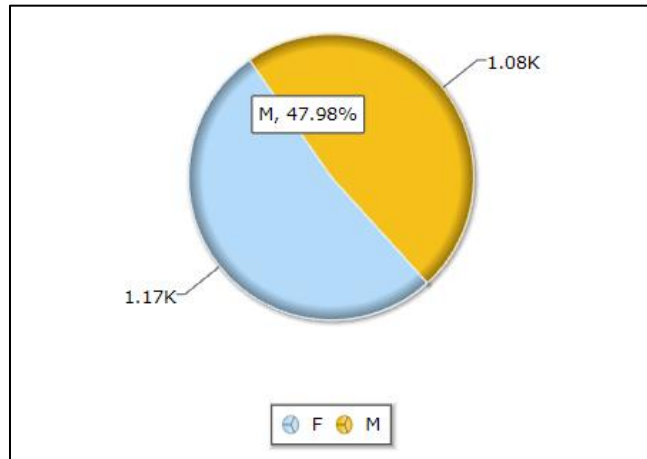
Data Collection

Penn State World Capus began offering the assessment to incoming undergraduate students admitted to the World Campus in the 2010-2011 academic year primarily as part of New Student Orientation (NSO). Although SmarterMeasure assessment completion is not required within NSO, embedding the assessment in the NSO Canvas course has led to significant increases in the completion rates for the assessment. SmarterMeasure completion rates increased significantly in summer 2018 due to the transition to require NSO completion before a student enrolls in courses for his/her first term. Completion rates of the SmarterMeasure assessment have been consistently above 70% since summer 2018 (OAR-12084, 2019).

The results of the assessment are shared with students in a detailed report with positive reinforcement and helpful resources. Academic Development Services receives a weekly report of all students taking the SmarterMeasure assessment. Students with one or more flag(s) are emailed an invitation to participate in a consultation with a support specialist. The purpose of the consultation is to use the SmarterMeasure assessment to identify areas where the student may benefit from additional support and to provide them with resources to help them succeed in online learning. Since October 2019, more than 300 students have participated in a consultation.
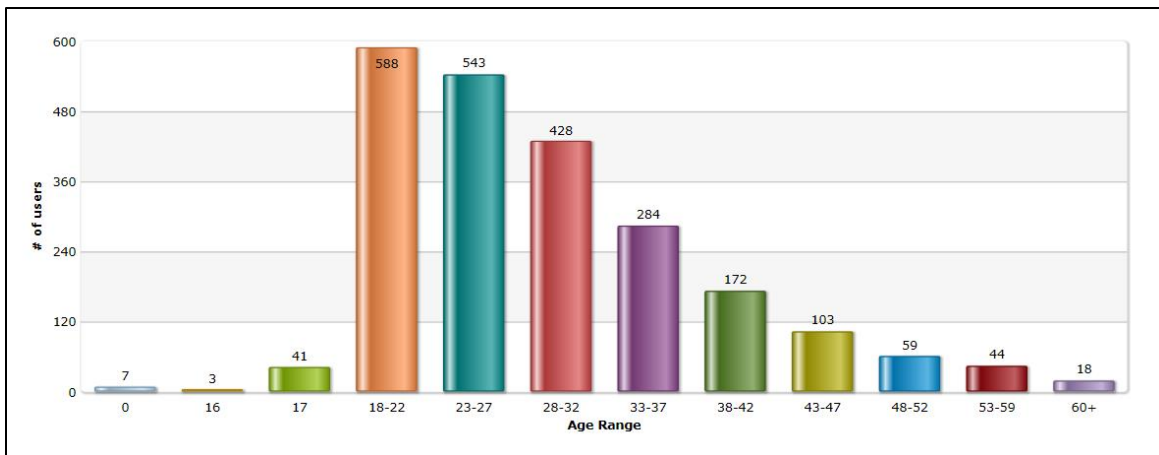
Demographics
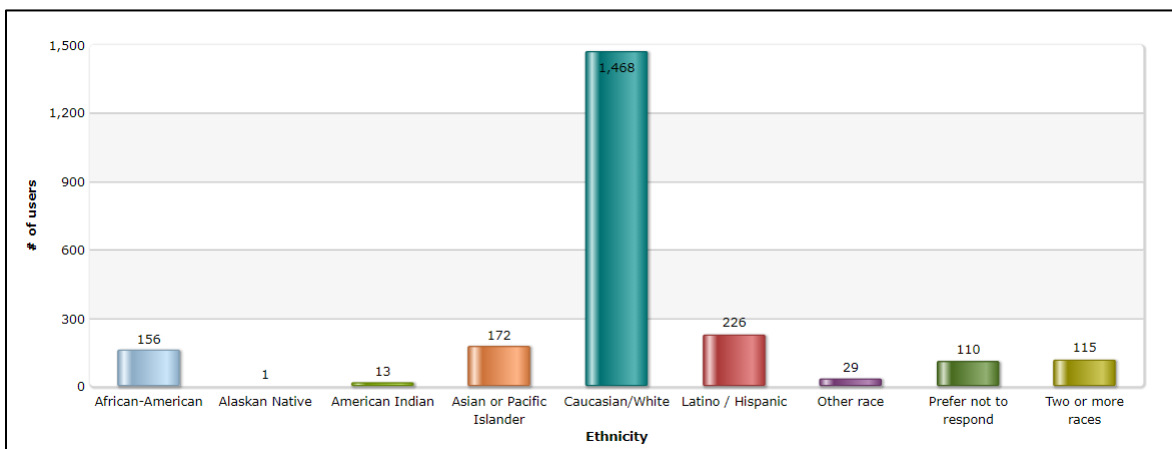
Data collected from Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2021

Gender Distribution
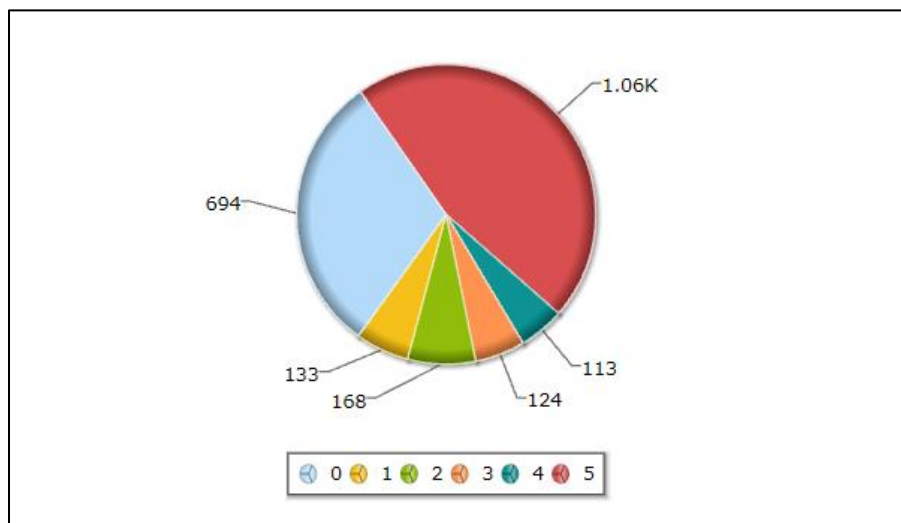

Age Distribution

Ethnicity Distribution
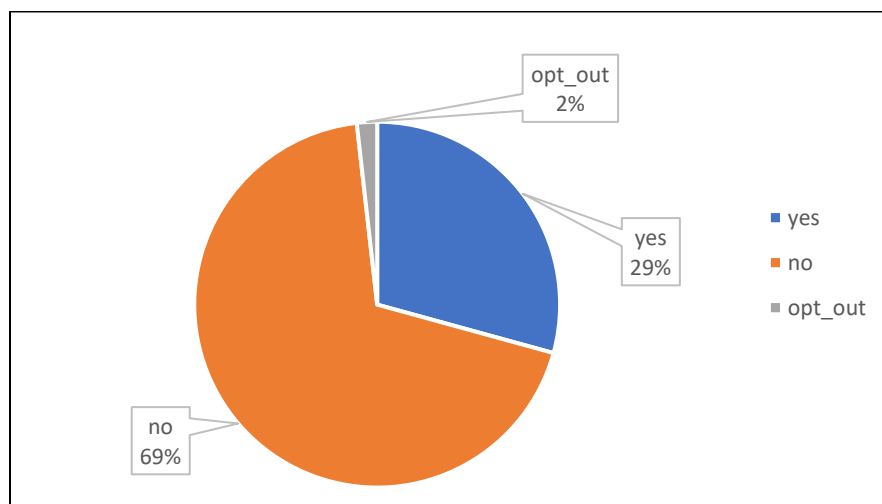
Select Assessment Data

Data Notes

- Students are not required to complete every section of the assessment.
- Threshold scores are derived from models using first term GPA to determine cut-off points.
- Key indicators for first-year student success include reading recall, typing, and perceived academic skills.
- SmarterMeasure data range from August 2019 – present

Number of Online Courses Previously Taken (n=2292*)
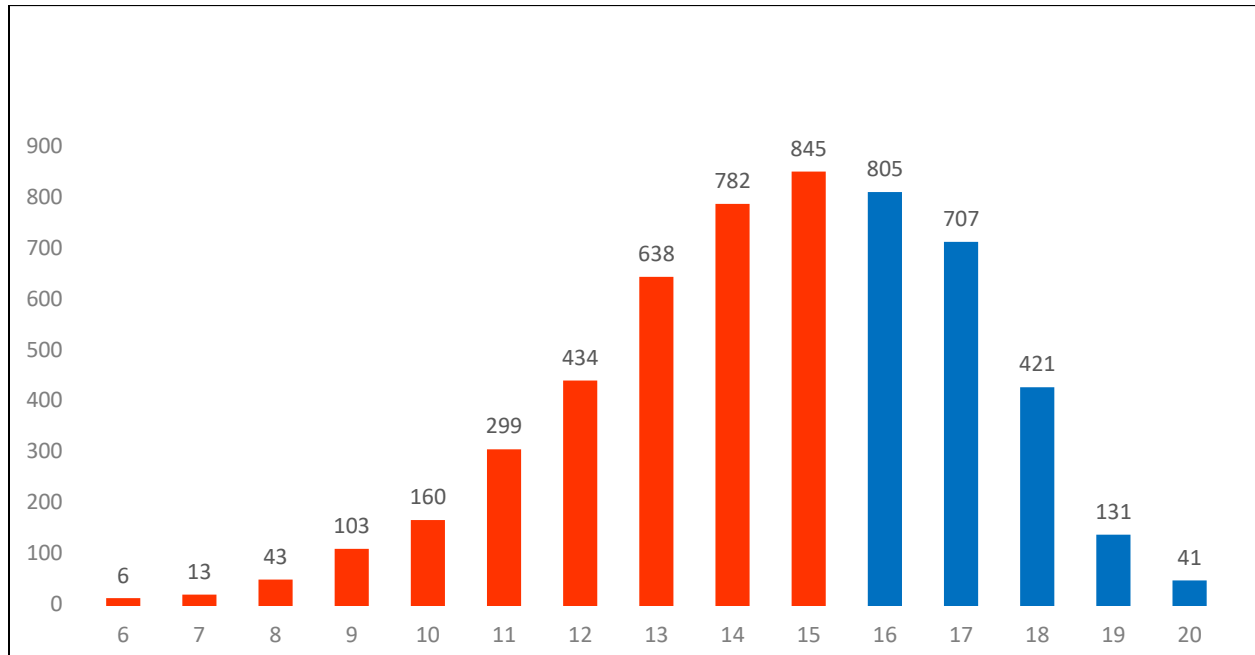*Data collected from Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2021*

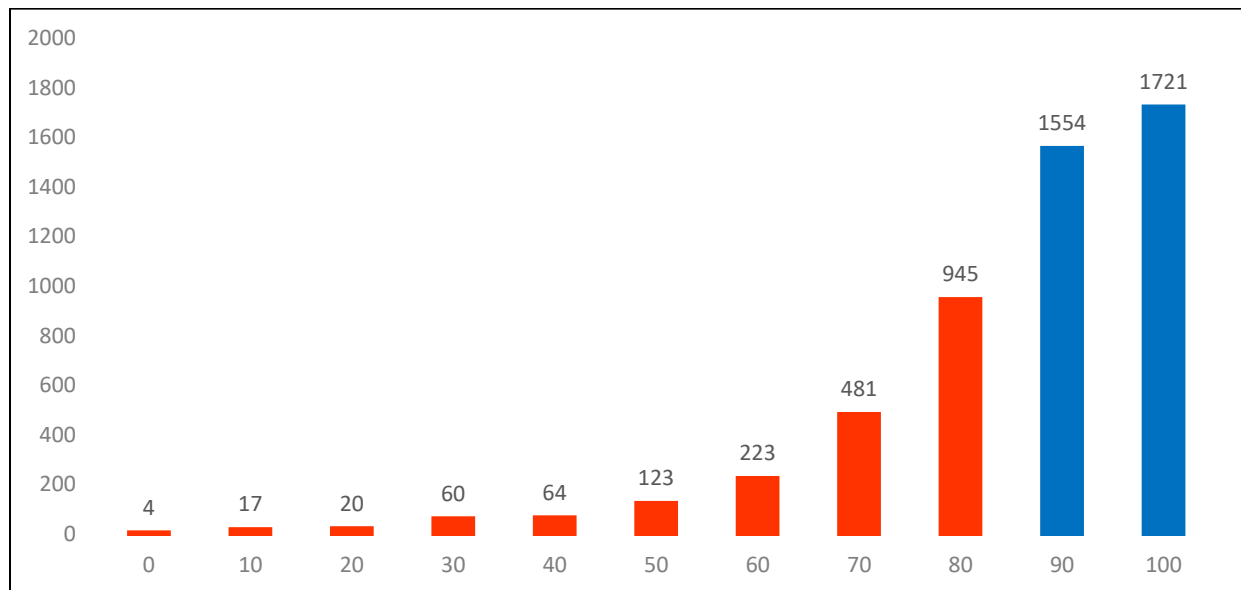**Volume of Participants Identifying as First-Generation Learner (n=5426)**

Summary of Academic Skills Scores (n=5428; Threshold = >15*)

This component of the assessment involves students answering questions about their perceived academic abilities.

Summary of Reading Recall Scores (n=5212; Threshold = >80%*)

Reading recall involves the student reading a passage and answering a series of questions about the content. This is a timed test, and the student is score on how quickly they read the material and the number of questions they answered correctly.

*Note: *Scores in red indicate values below threshold*

Summary of Typing Scores (n=5076; Threshold = >27 WPM)

The typing test measures the student's touch-typing skills and involves the student typing a short passage while being timed. Students are scored on speed and accuracy.