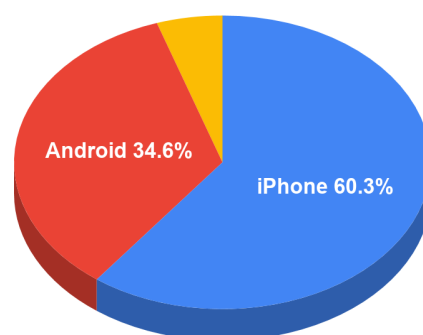


Tech Snacks: What Students Think About Brightspace

As part of OTLE's self-assessment process, each year we ask students to complete a Brightspace experience survey about their device usage, Brightspace habits, overall Brightspace satisfaction, and open-ended questions about how they'd like to see Brightspace improved. *This year, 78 students participated in this survey: 8 high school students, 22 freshmen, 11 sophomores, 9 juniors, 17 seniors, 9 graduate students, and 2 others.*

Smartphones

94.9% of responding students indicated that they had a smartphone. Interestingly, the survey in past years had a roughly even split between iPhones and Androids, whereas this year, iPhones outnumber Androids by nearly two-to-one. 3.8% of students said they use their phone as their primary device for accessing Brightspace, which is consistent with past years.

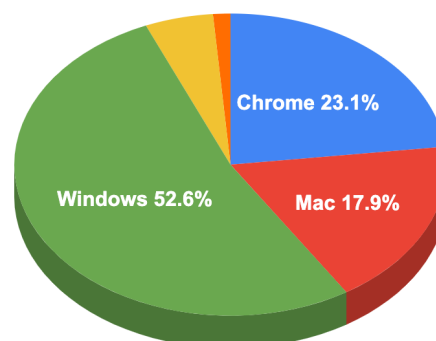


The iPhone to Android split is interesting because, as you'll see in the next section, iPhone users don't necessarily use Apple laptops and desktops.

Why this matters — You can generally expect students to have smartphones available for activities like in-class polling, taking photos and recording videos, or doing in-class internet research. But you should still be prepared for the occasional student without a smartphone and allow them to partner with another student with a smartphone if needed.

Laptops

Surprisingly, 95% of respondents said they have a laptop computer, *roughly the same percentage that reports having a smartphone*. 70% reported using their laptop every day, 77% of respondents said their laptop was their primary device for accessing Brightspace. All of these percentages are up from previous years, potentially due to Covid. Moreover, students are increasingly using Google Chromebooks as their primary laptop — **23.1% this year, versus 18.2% in 2020 and 20% in 2019.**



Why this matters — Chromebooks are not like other computer operating systems, on which the user installs software like Microsoft Word or Adobe Photoshop. Nearly everything on a Chromebook is done through the Chrome web browser. (Users can, however, download files, even if the Chromebook won't open them). Students therefore have to use cloud-based services

like Google Drive or Office 365/OneDrive for word processing or slideshow production. You might consider including a note in your syllabus and/or assignment instructions about what file formats you accept and how students can convert their files if they're using Google Docs.

On a related note, when asked "What other learning management systems have you used?" 52.6% of respondents marked "Google Classroom." Many high schools use Chromebooks for computers, Google Classroom as their LMS and cloud-based Google Drive products as their office suite software. Incoming students tend to be most familiar with these products.

How they learn Brightspace

This year, we continued the question asking how students learned to use Brightspace. Many students are still reporting that they learned to use Brightspace exclusively "on their own." However, the percentage who learned during orientation has increased (now 32.1%), as has the percentage who reported learning from an instructor during class (now 24.4%).

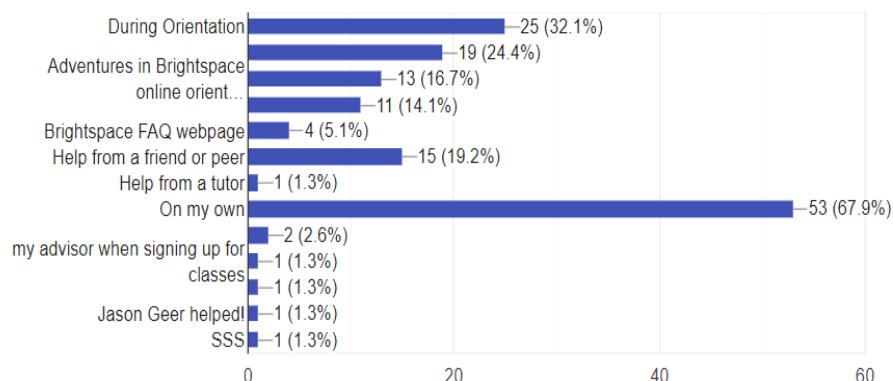
Why this matters —

For the past 3 years, OTLE has been making an effort to catch all incoming students at freshman orientation for a Brightspace introduction. Consequently, our student traffic during the semester has reduced drastically. This also means that fewer students are starting out behind.

The survey indicates that instructors really make an impact as well. To help prevent students from slipping through the cracks, consider passing out copies of our "Getting Started on Brightspace" handout, walking students to OTLE (Cowan 110) for a Brightspace orientation, or asking OTLE staff to visit your freshman classes and introduce ourselves.

How did you learn to use Brightspace? (Check all that apply)

78 responses



Some other interesting numbers

- 75% of high school student respondents are using a Chromebook as their laptop.
- 73% of high school, freshman, and sophomore student respondents use an iPhone, compared to 46% of junior, senior, and graduate student respondents.
- 91% of freshman and sophomore respondents said "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the statement "I find Brightspace easy to use." Only 50% of high school students had this response.
- 64% of all respondents said "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the statement "I know where to go for Brightspace help." High school and graduate students agreed the least.
- 59% of all respondents found the docReader tool "Helpful" or "Very Helpful."

Student Comments

Along with the quantitative survey questions, we also gave students a chance to provide open-ended comments about their Brightspace experience. A few general categories of comments emerged, with some new twists. These are just sample comments:

Modular structure and organization

Utilize the content space so a student is aware of what you need to do each week. Some instructors don't use the Brightspace to the fullest and I feel I tend to get lost as they put link in the content but don't address when it is needed and what week we should be using the content.

Not any of my current instructors, but I've had some instructors who post everything in the Announcements section and won't use Content area.

Have everything accessible through the given content tab

Separate work by week

List content for courses by week or bi-week. I also like the deadlines that coordinate with the Brightspace calendar. If there is something I missed, then it will show up as available or ending on the home calendar.

I like when I can find each assignment by module or category.

Some can be very disorganized with tests, assignments, and grades

Link everything due for the week on the content page

One instructor always has a weekly label for each week.

Allow us to see what we are doing in class for that week

List content for courses by week or bi-week. I also like deadlines that coordinate with the Brightspace calendar. If there is something I missed, it will show up as available or ending on the home calendar.

Keep consistent with where information is posted. For example. List the details of the assignment in one place. It is really confusing when the details of some assignments are in the syllabus, while those of others are in the drop box instructions and not in the syllabus- it takes a lot of searching to find all of the information. Also, the majority of the course assignments, especially discussion posts should be already populated in the bright space shell at the beginning of the course. [For me] it is imperative to be able to plan ahead and when the instructor posts multiple assignments in Brightspace late Sunday night for assignments due Wednesday or Friday, it is really difficult to manage.

I think more classes should be set up week to week to allow for better make up or conflicting classes.

There are so many "nooks and crannies" where an instructor can list information. And if information is rolled over from a previous semester taught, it compounds confusion with incorrect dates, etc. The calendar feature would be useful to plot due dates on an outlook calendar if the instructors used the feature consistently. Since some instructors use it and some do not, as a student, I cannot rely on one source for information and then I have to check and cross check the syllabus with all of the different areas in Brightspace. [...] Students taking 4-6 courses in any given semester have to do this 4-6x.

I wish they were more "uniform."

It would be a lot better [in some of my online classes] if they had a week by week schedule that told us what we needed to do that week what we needed to read etc. The schedules [that some classes give] are informal. They don't really tell us what we need to do that week. It says like chapter whatever then has due date for assignments. It doesn't say: this week you need to read this chapter, go over this specific PowerPoint, then do this quiz or this specific homework assignment. A lot of it is there's not a specific/organized/formal schedule for us to follow.

Presence

I greatly appreciate when instructors post videos of their lectures rather than just reading.

I like when instructors give us more than just written lectures. For example; supplemental videos, lectures, etc

Post Webex recordings of lectures that I can study from

Zoom meetings, just to put a face on our instructors.

I like when instructors actually make announcements and remind us when assignments are due

I love that my [subject] teacher talks along with her slides for note taking. It makes for a more personal experience and feels like I am really in her class. The others not so much. Just some slides and work.

I like the announcements posted about our assignments.

Give more options for learning like videos and interactive things that aren't just discussions.

I like when instructors give a run down of what the work is going to look like.

Feedback (including Quiz feedback)

[My instructors] are always willing to help and give helpful feedback.

[I like that I receive] feedback on completed assignments

I like the way my instructors are on top of grading and are easy to communicate with.

I enjoy that my instructor is able to leave notes on my assignments

I wish my instructor would make tests visible right after you have taken them so you can see what you got wrong.

I wish it would let you know which exam/quiz answers you got wrong so that you can see what the correct answer is rather than moving on and not fully grasping the concepts

If I could see what questions were answered right and wrong on the quiz I would be able to adjust my discernment. However I am not able to see the results, so I am not sure how to improve.