



AMPERAGE

MARKETING & FUNDRAISING

MOVE THE NEEDLE

# Barton Community College Online Survey Results

November 2021

## In This Presentation

- Research Objective and Methodology Slide 3
- Participant Demographics Slide 5
- Key Takeaways Slide 6
- Question Results Slide 11
- Recommendations Slide 33



## Research Objective & Methodology

- **Research Objective:** Help Barton Community College understand:
  - What factors influence the college decision-making process
  - Why students choose (and don't choose) BARTonline
- **Methodology:** In order to achieve the stated objective, an online survey was conducted among three groups: current first-year students, non-returning students and prospective students who inquired but didn't enroll. Lists were pulled based on student status within the last 18 months.
- **Survey Instrument:** AMPERAGE worked with the Barton Community College project team to develop the online survey instrument, with the goal of keeping participants' time commitment to no more than 5 minutes.
- **Recruitment:** Recruitment was conducted online. Barton Community College deployed the survey to current students, while AMPERAGE deployed the survey to non-returning students and prospective students. Two email reminders were sent to those who did not respond within a reasonable amount of time.
- **Incentive:** Two incentives were offered to participants to thank them for their time:
  - When the survey was deployed, participants were entered into a drawing for three \$100 Amazon gift cards. 197 participants were entered to win.
  - In order to boost response rates at the end of the data collection period, participants were given a \$20 Amazon gift card for a limited time. 60 respondents received a gift card.



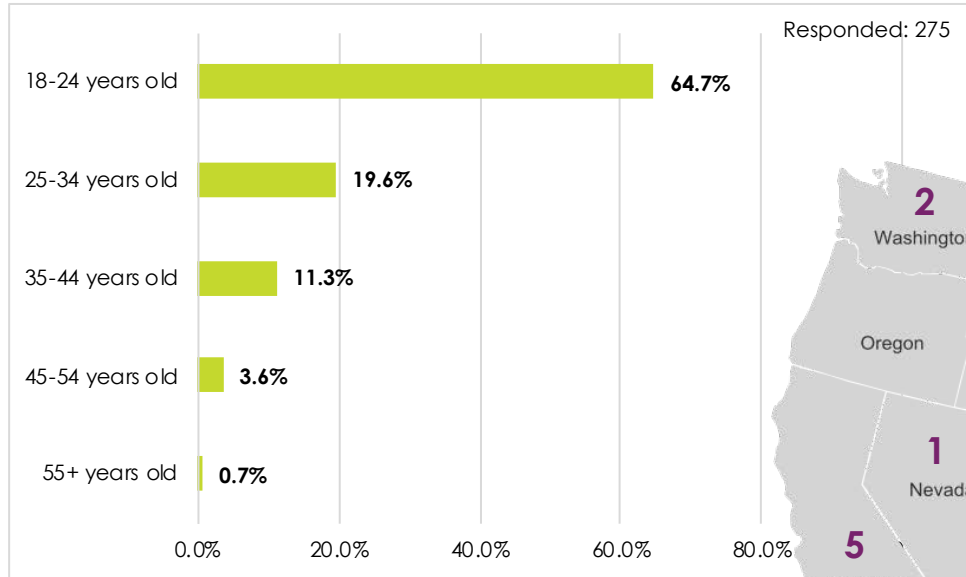
## Research Objective & Methodology (continued)

- **Number of Responses:** In total, 275 responses were collected:
  - Current students: 118
  - Non-returning students: 121
  - Students who inquired but did not apply: 9
  - If you total up those responses, it equals 248, which is obviously less than 275. The 27 remaining respondents discontinued taking the survey prior to answering the question that categorized them into one of three groups.
- **Other Responses:** Open-ended responses can be found in the notes section of the PowerPoint.



# Participant Demographics

## Age



**100%** Had taken college courses within the last 18 months

## Location



Q: What is your age?  
 Q: In what state are you located?





## Key **Takeaways**

## Key Takeaways – What Students are Looking for in a College

- The three factors that had the most impact on respondents' decision to go to college were:
  1. To improve their employment opportunities (70%)
  2. To get a good job (49%)
  3. To make more money (40%)
- The programs/majors offered by the college was the most important factor to respondents when choosing where to take courses, reported by 67% of the respondent group. "Programs/Majors" can be interchangeable with "courses" throughout the document.
- Cost also played a significant role in the college decision-making process. The cost of tuition and fees, availability of financial aid and availability of scholarships were reported as very important/important factors by 55%, 26% and 20%, respectively. Additionally, the cost of tuition and fees were reported to have a very/extremely important impact on respondents' decision.
- Personal connections are important with both instructors and classmates; however, respondents reported a connection with their instructor was more important than a connection with their classmates. 65% of respondents reported the connection with their instructor was very important/important, while 42% of reported the connection with their classmates was very important/important.

## Key Takeaways – Why Students Take Online Classes

- Schedule flexibility was what influenced respondents' decision to take college courses online the most, reported by 78% of respondents. Coming in at a distant second was convenience, reported by 55% of respondents.
- The location of the college's physical campus was not as important to online students – 58% reported the location was not important/not at all important.
- Six-week sessions were the most appealing to respondents, with 69% of the respondent group reporting this session length was very appealing/appealing. The sessions that were least appealing were 4-week and 16-week sessions, with 38% and 34% of respondents reporting these sessions as very appealing/appealing, respectively.

Based on a later slide, I believe they meant to say the **eight week classes** are the most popular.  
I pasted in the table from page 21 below:

Responded: 257	Very appealing	Appealing	Somewhat appealing	Not appealing	Not at all appealing
<b>4 weeks</b>	17.9%	20.2%	27.6%	18.3%	16.0%
<b>6 weeks</b>	22.2%	36.2%	27.6%	8.2%	5.8%
<b>8 weeks</b>	24.5%	44.7%	25.7%	3.5%	1.6%
<b>12 weeks</b>	16.7%	31.1%	26.5%	19.8%	5.8%
<b>16 weeks</b>	16.0%	18.3%	21.0%	25.7%	19.1%

*Only asked of respondents who had taken/are taking an online college course.*



## Key Takeaways – Why Students Choose BARTonline

- The primary reasons students chose BARTonline were schedule flexibility (67%), convenience of attending online (50%), affordability (49%) and the availability of their desired program (49%). These factors are aligned with the factors that influenced respondents' desire to take online classes in general.
- The desired programs reported by students were varied, with the largest concentration falling in the Life Science category (21%). For Chemistry and Life Science students, the opportunity to have a hands-on lab experience was very influential/ influential for 46% of students and somewhat influential for 25% of students.
- The other colleges that respondents considered were diverse and composed of a mix of other community colleges and 4-year colleges/universities. There was not an overwhelming competitor named – Fort Hays State University was the most frequently mentioned competitor, reported by 13% of respondents. No other competitor was named by more than 5% of the respondent group.
- Email was the preferred method of receiving customer service/technical support for two-thirds of students, with most of the remaining respondents reporting that they preferred to speak to a live person.

## Key Takeaways – Why Non-Returning Students Didn't Re-Enroll

This finding is perhaps most substantial. We kind of already had an idea that this was the case. But this research really drove home that point.

- With very few exceptions, students didn't re-enroll in BARTonline because they only needed a couple of classes and saw Barton as the affordable, convenient, efficient vehicle to complete the classes they needed.
  - They were supplementing credits at their "home" undergraduate institution and/or only needed one or two courses to finish their undergraduate degree.
  - They only needed a few courses to transfer to another institution and/or fulfill their prerequisites for grad school.

## Key Takeaways – Why Respondents Didn't Enroll

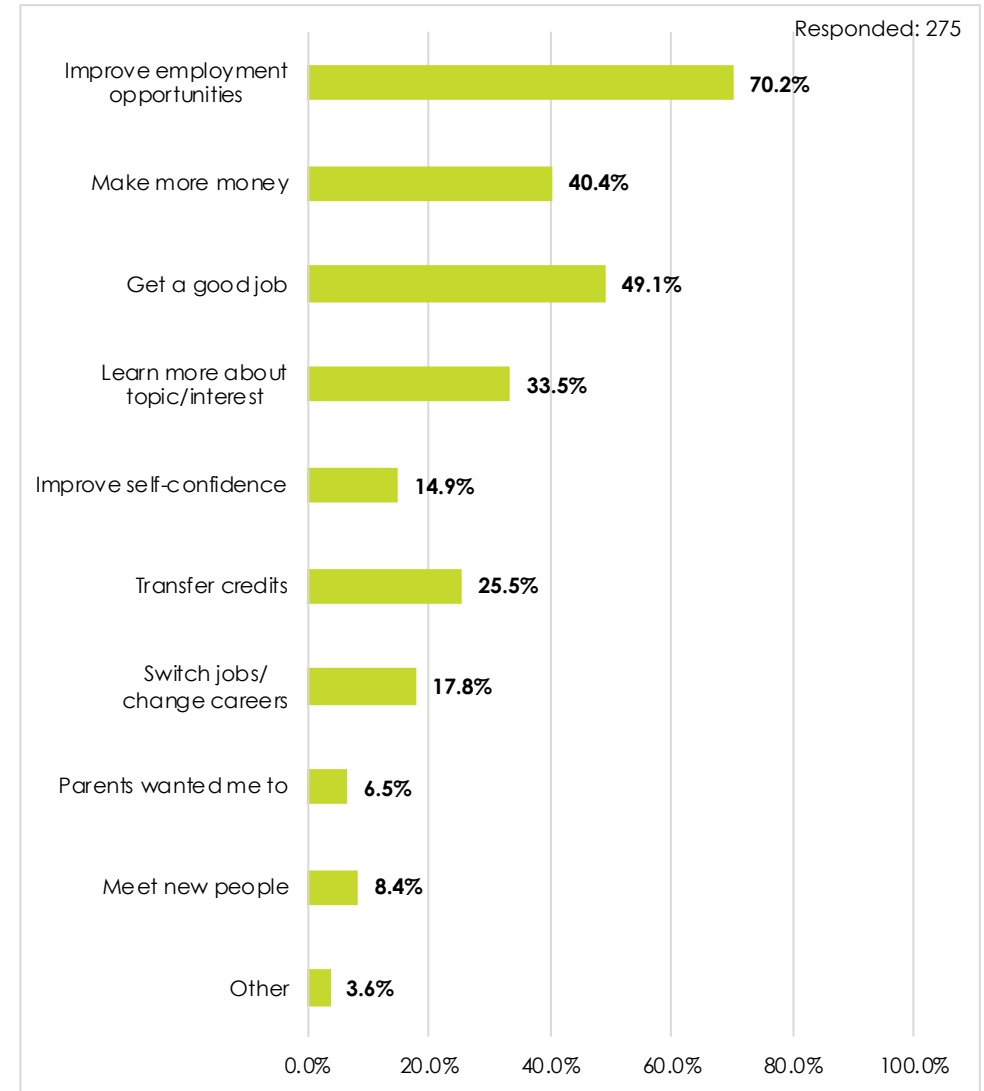
- There were only nine responses to this question, but there were a few themes that emerged from their responses:
  - They didn't enroll because Barton did not have the class/program they were looking for and/or the program wasn't entirely online.
  - They forgot to follow up and/or lost interest.
  - They didn't live in-state and felt tuition was too expensive.
  - The class timeline/enrollment period didn't line up with their personal timeline.



## Question Results | **What Students Are Looking for in a College**

**Q: Why did you choose to take college courses?  
Please select the three most important.**

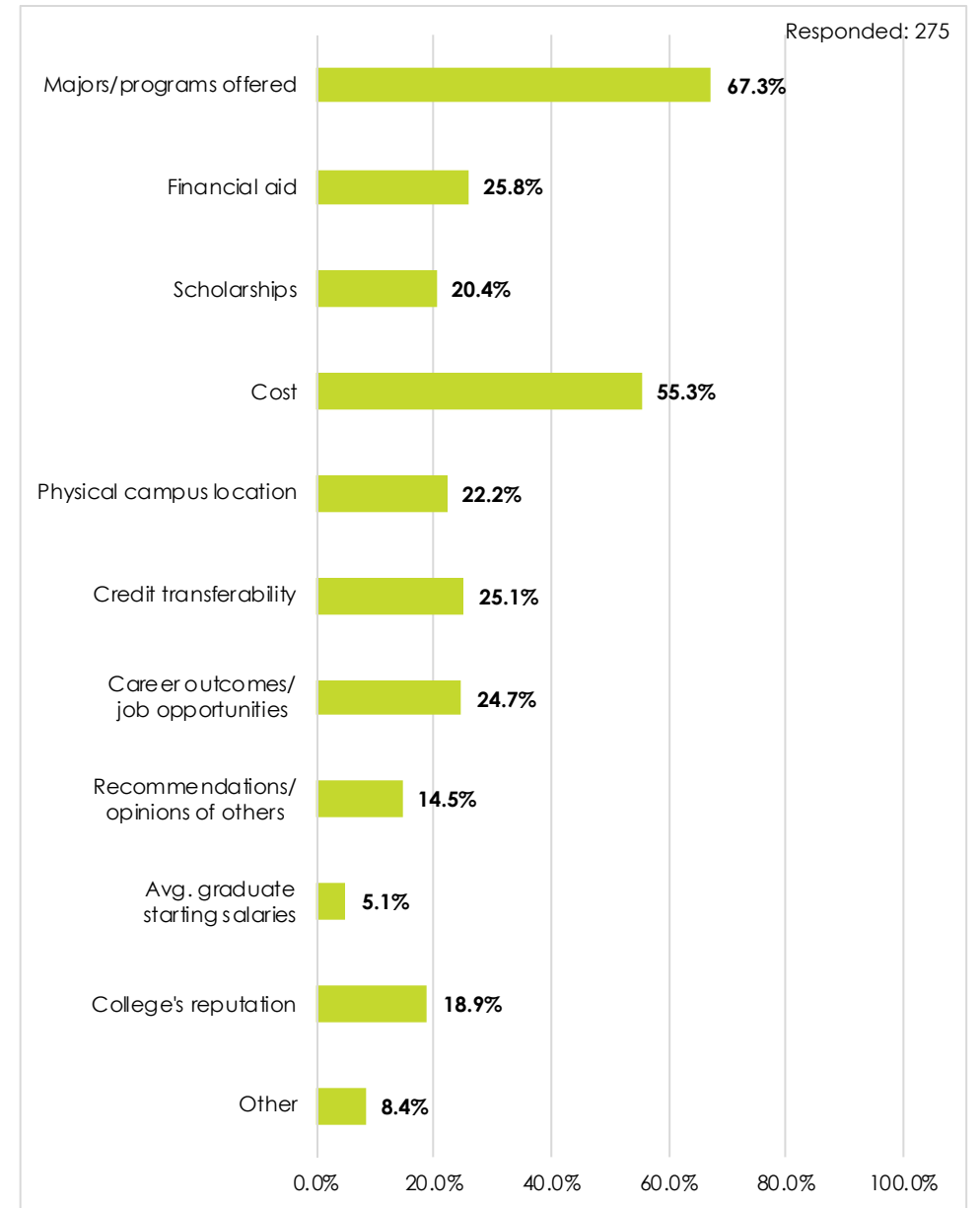
- The No. 1 motivator was the desire to improve employment opportunities – 70% of respondents selected this factor as one of their top three motivators.
- Get a good job (49%) and make more money (40%) followed as distant No. 2 and No. 3 motivators.



## Q: What three factors were most important to you when choosing where to take college courses?

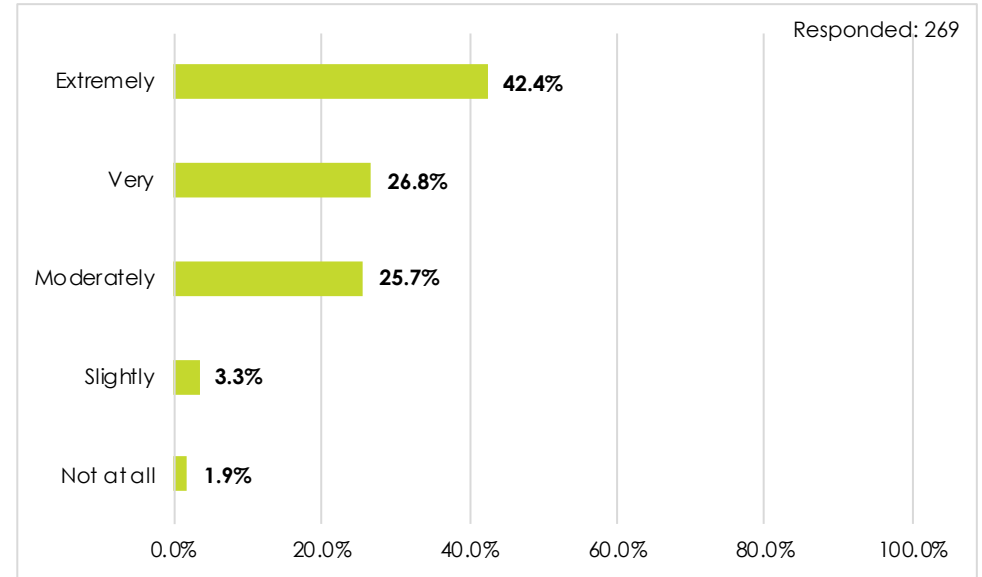
(Courses/Offerings)

- The majors/programs offered by the college was the most important factor when choosing where to take courses, selected by 67% of the respondent group.
- The cumulative impact of the cost of tuition and fees (55%), financial aid (26%) and scholarships (20%).



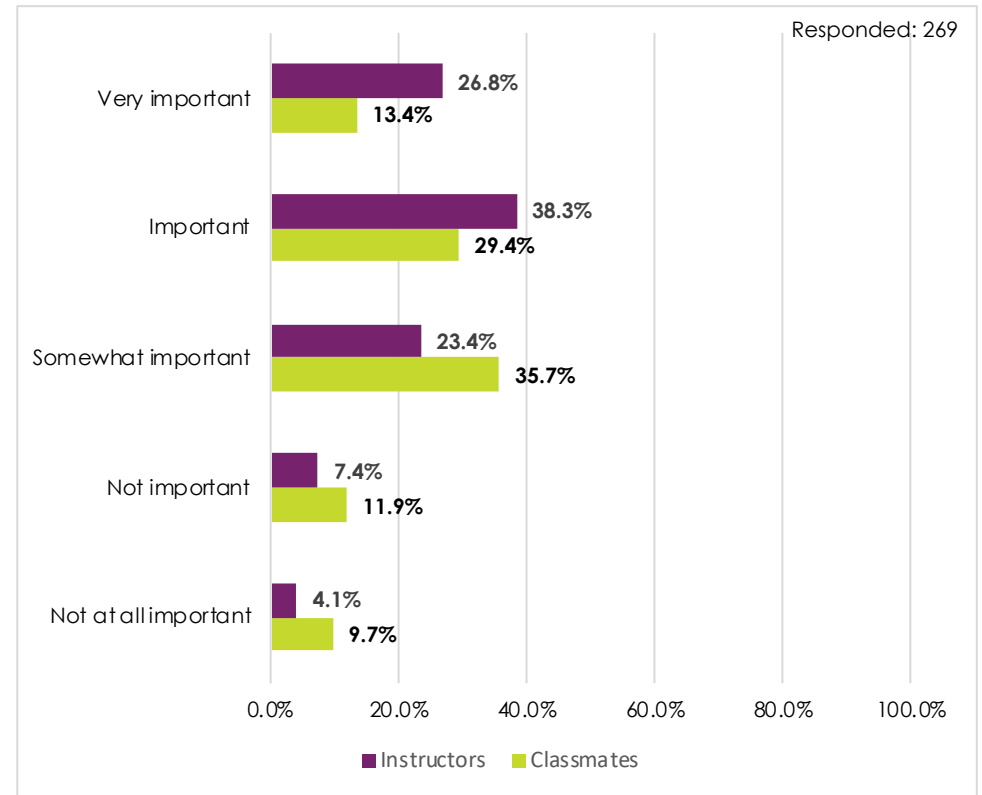
**Q: When choosing where to take college courses, how much does the cost of tuition and fees impact your decision?**

- As previously mentioned, the cost of tuition and fees had a major impact on respondents' college choice – 69% of respondents reported the cost was an extremely/very important factor.



## Q: How important are personal connections with your instructor(s) and classmates?

- Personal connections are important with both instructors and classmates; however, respondents reported the connection with their instructor was more important than the connection with their classmates.
  - 65% of respondents reported the connection with their instructor was very important/important, with most of the remaining respondents (23%) reporting it was somewhat important.
  - 42% of respondents reported the connection with their classmates was very important/important, with most of the remaining respondents (36%) reporting it was somewhat important.





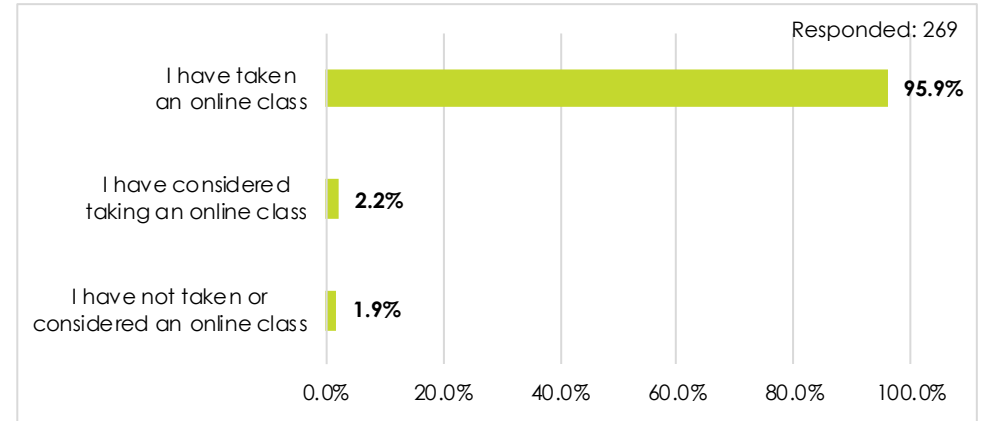
Question Results | **Why Students Take Online Classes**





## Q: Have you ever taken or considered taking online college courses?

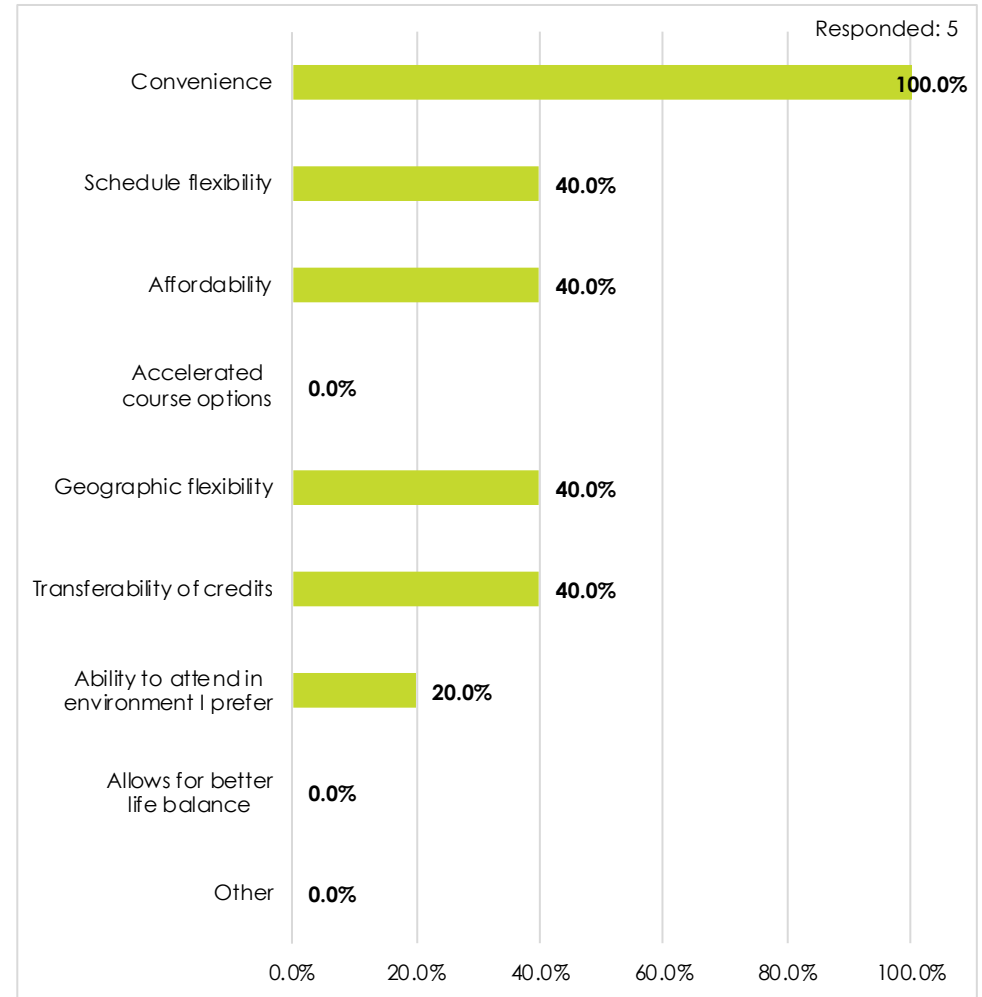
- Most respondents (96%) had taken an online course.



*Respondents who had not taken or considered taking an online class were excused from the survey following this question.*

**Q: What factors led you to consider online college courses? Select up to three.**

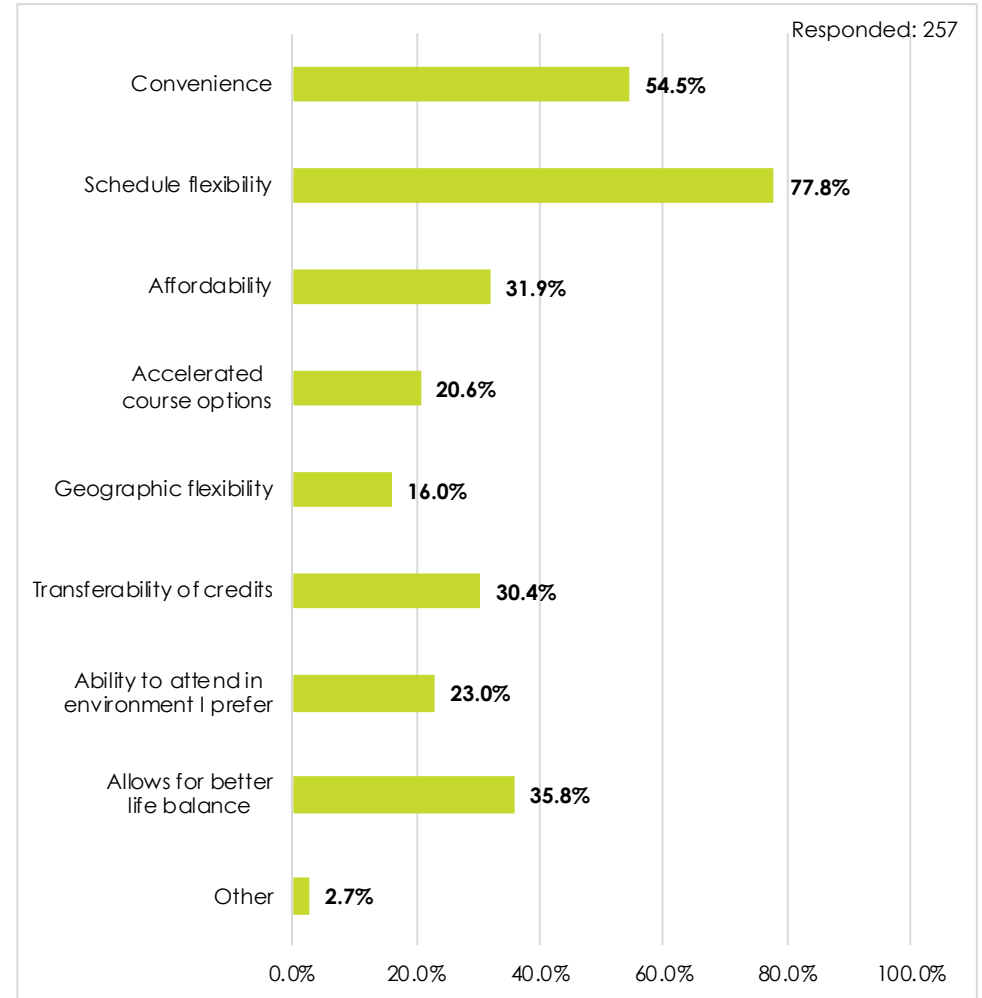
- The No. 1 reason respondents considered taking an online course was convenience, reported by all five respondents who had considered online courses but hadn't enrolled in one.



*Only asked of respondents who had considered taking an online college course.*

**Q: What three factors were the most influential on your decision to take online college courses?**

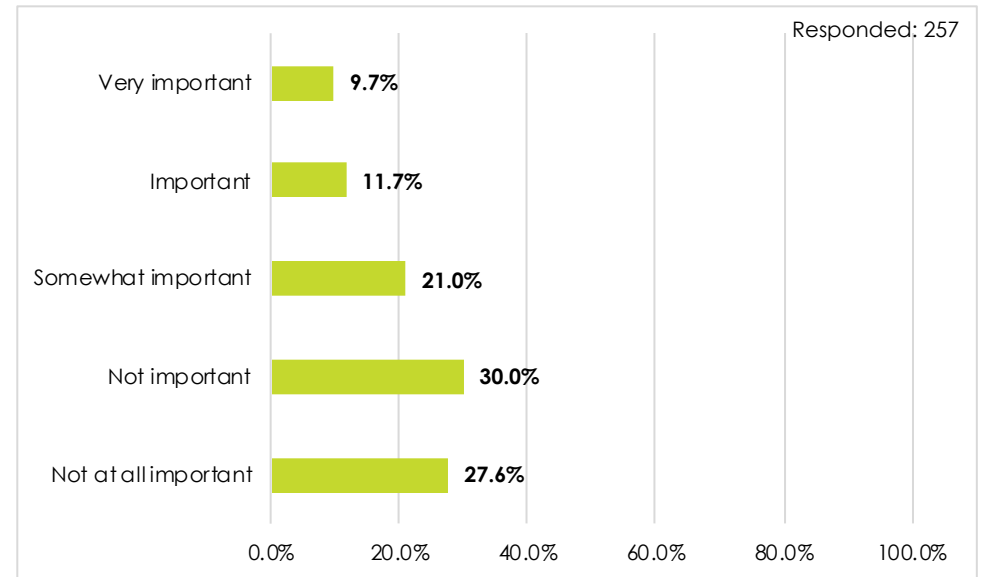
- Flexibility (78%) was the No. 1 influencer in respondents' decision to take online college courses, followed by convenience (55%).



*Only asked of respondents who had taken/are taking an online college course.*

**Q: How important to you is the location of the college's physical campus if you are attending online?**

- The location of the college's physical campus was not as important to online students – 58% reported the physical campus location was not important/not at all important. 21% of respondents reported this factor was somewhat important.



*Only asked of respondents who had taken/are taking an online college course.*

**Q: How appealing are each of the following session lengths?**

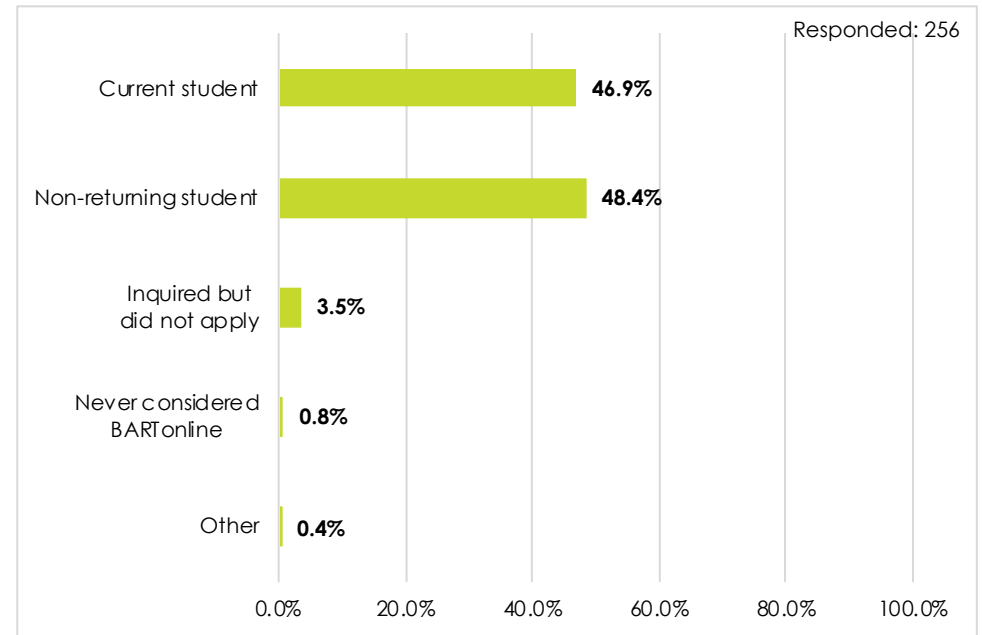
- The most appealing session length was 8 weeks, with 69% of respondents who reported this session was very appealing/appealing.
- Session lengths are ranked below from most appealing to least appealing:
  1. 8 weeks – 69% very appealing/appealing
  2. 6 weeks – 58% very appealing/appealing
  3. 12 weeks – 48% very appealing/appealing
  4. 4 weeks – 38% very appealing/appealing
  5. 16 weeks – 34% very appealing/appealing

Responded: 257	Very appealing	Appealing	Somewhat appealing	Not appealing	Not at all appealing
<b>4 weeks</b>	17.9%	20.2%	27.6%	18.3%	16.0%
<b>6 weeks</b>	22.2%	36.2%	27.6%	8.2%	5.8%
<b>8 weeks</b>	24.5%	44.7%	25.7%	3.5%	1.6%
<b>12 weeks</b>	16.7%	31.1%	26.5%	19.8%	5.8%
<b>16 weeks</b>	16.0%	18.3%	21.0%	25.7%	19.1%

*Only asked of respondents who had taken/are taking an online college course.*

## Q: Have you ever taken an online class at Barton Community College?

- The respondent group was nearly split in half between current students (47%) and non-returning students (48%).
- Only nine respondents had inquired but did not apply to Barton.



*Only asked of respondents who had taken/are taking an online college course.*



Question Results | **Why Current Students Choose BARTonline**

**Q: Why did you choose to take an online class at Barton Community College? Select the three most influential factors.**

- There were four factors that rose to the top when current students were asked why they chose BARTonline:
  1. Flexibility (67%)
  2. Convenience (50%)
  3. Affordability (49%)
  4. Programs offered aligned with student desires (49%)

Responded: 118	
It was affordable	49.2%
It offered my desired program	49.2%
Reputation	9.3%
Career outcomes and job opportunities for graduates	6.8%
Value of education for the cost of attending	11.0%
Hands-on learning/real-world experience in curriculum	1.7%
Flexibility of schedule	66.9%
My family wanted me to go there	1.7%
Accelerated courses	31.4%
Convenience of attending online	50.0%
Other	5.1%



## Q: What other colleges were you considering?

- None (24)
- Fort Hays State University (15)
- Kansas State University (6)
- University of Kansas (5)
- Wichita State University (4)
- Hutchinson Community College (3)
- Washburn University (3)
- Allen Community College (2)
- Cowley Community College (2)
- Johnson Community College (2)
- North Carolina A&T State University (2)
- Savannah Tech (2)
- University of Oklahoma (2)
- Western Oklahoma State College (2)
- Winston Salem State University (2)
- Adam State University
- Alabama
- Arizona State University
- Atlanta Technical College
- Colby College
- Des Moines Area Community College
- Flint Hills Technical College
- Florida A&M University
- Georgia State University
- Great Basin College
- Hastings College
- Heartland Community College
- Houston Community College
- McPherson College
- Midland University
- Newman University
- North Dakota State University
- Oklahoma University
- Otero College
- Pittsburg State University
- Portland Community College
- Pratt Community College
- Suffolk County Community College
- Tuskegee University
- Washington State University
- Wenatchee Community College

**Q: Please select your desired program.**

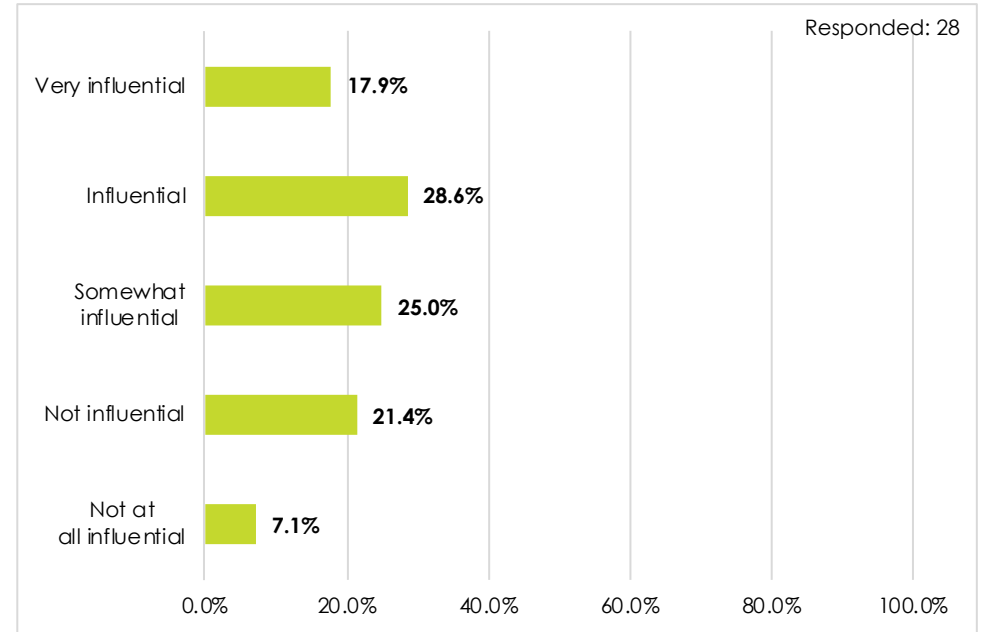
- The programs reported were diverse, with the largest concentration falling in the Life Science category.

Responded: 116	
Accounting	5.2%
Business	6.9%
Chemistry	3.4%
Criminal Justice	1.7%
Dietary Manager/Dietetics	6.0%
Education	3.4%
General Studies	7.8%
Liberal Studies	13.8%
<b>Life Science (Anatomy, Biology, Botany and Physiology)</b>	<b>20.7%</b>
Medical Lab Technician	5.2%
Nursing	3.4%
Paramedic	1.7%
Radiology	1.7%
Secondary Education	1.7%
Social Work	3.4%
Sociology	1.7%
Unsure	1.7%
Other	10.3%



**Q: How influential was the opportunity to have a hands-on lab experience on your decision to take an online class at Barton Community College?**

- For Chemistry and Life Science students, the opportunity to have a hands-on lab experience was very influential/influential on the decision for nearly half of students, but less influential for the others:
  - 46% reported a hands-on lab experience was very influential/influential
  - 25% reported it was somewhat influential
  - 29% reported it was not influential/not at all influential

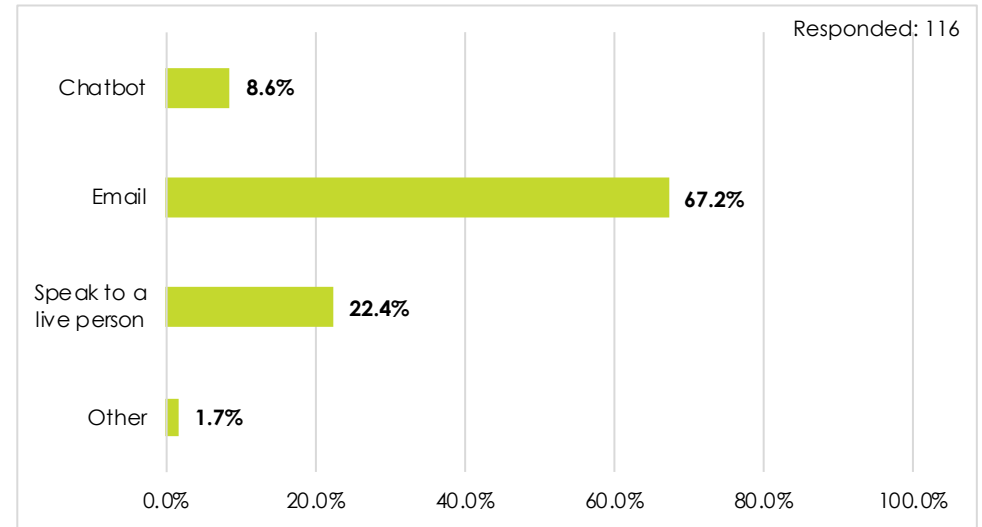


*Only asked of respondents who selected Chemistry or Life Science.*

This may be a great way to visualize the Barton Online experience in a video/photo for an ad campaign - students using our chemistry lab box to complete assignments in their homes.

**Q: What is your preferred method of receiving customer service/technical support?**

- Email was the preferred method of receiving customer service/technical support for two-thirds of students, with most of the remaining respondents preferring a live person.





Question Results | **Why Non-Returning Students Didn't Re-Enroll**



## Q: Why didn't you re-enroll in BARTonline?

- With very few exceptions, students didn't re-enroll in BARTonline because they only needed a couple of classes and saw Barton as the affordable, convenient, efficient vehicle to complete the classes they needed.
  - They were supplementing credits at their "home" undergraduate institution and/or they only needed one or two courses to finish their undergraduate degree.
  - They only needed a few courses to transfer to another institution and/or fulfill their prerequisite for grad school.
- Representative comments are below.
  - *I am enrolled in another college and only took an online class to transfer a credit.*
  - *I finished my degree requirements. I might take more courses with Barton in the future.*
  - *I finished the class I needed, and credits were transferred to my "home" undergraduate institution.*
  - *I completed all prerequisites needed for school.*
  - *I was only taking summer classes. I am full-time student at another institution that has easy transferable credit with Barton, plus it's more affordable.*
  - *I just needed to take a few classes to get into a program.*
- Less than 10 out of 121 respondents reported a reason other than the two listed at the top of the slide.



## Question Results | **Why Respondents Did Not Enroll**



## Q: Why didn't you enroll in an online class at Barton Community College? Where did you enroll?

- There were only nine responses to this question, but there were a few themes that emerged from their responses:
  - They didn't enroll because Barton did not have the class/program they were looking for and/or the program wasn't entirely online.
  - They forgot to follow up and/or lost interest.
  - They didn't live in-state and felt tuition was too expensive.
  - The class timeline/enrollment period didn't line up with their personal timeline.
- Out of the nine respondents:
  - Four didn't enroll anywhere
  - One preferred not to say
  - The remaining enrolled at:
    - Allen Community College
    - Excelsior College
    - Dallas College
    - Pratt Community College





**Recommendations**



## Recommendations

Recommendations are aligned with those presented in the Journey Map. They include:

- **It's time to review and redesign your website.** Online students are not visiting your campus, which means you don't have the opportunity to convince them to attend Barton in-person. This process has to be facilitated online – your website is their “college visit.” Flaws of the current website noted in the journey workshop included confusing navigation and outdated information. Having an intuitive, responsive website experience, and messaging that tells potential students a story, are essential and key to keeping users engaged, interested, inquiring and applying to BARTonline.
- **Optimize your website for search and develop a robust digital marketing strategy.** Students are using Google to find answers and make decisions, so to connect with them you must be discoverable online. Your website information has to be visible to potential students at all stages of the journey.

A combination of a search engine optimization strategy and paid media campaigns will ensure your message is communicated to your target audience at key points along the journey. While each of these strategies individually can drive results, when you combine a strategic paid campaign while ranking high on those same keywords organically, you are doubling your chances of the user converting.

So again, this is a service they provide, and they are specifically referring to the online courses portion of our website, not the whole thing. ;)

Also see earlier comments - we are already doing this. They did not evaluate our SEO, this is simply a service they provide to clients.



## Recommendations (continued)

- **Review marketing materials to ensure the look and feel depicts an online learning environment, and the tone, voice and message speak to student wants, needs and feelings.**

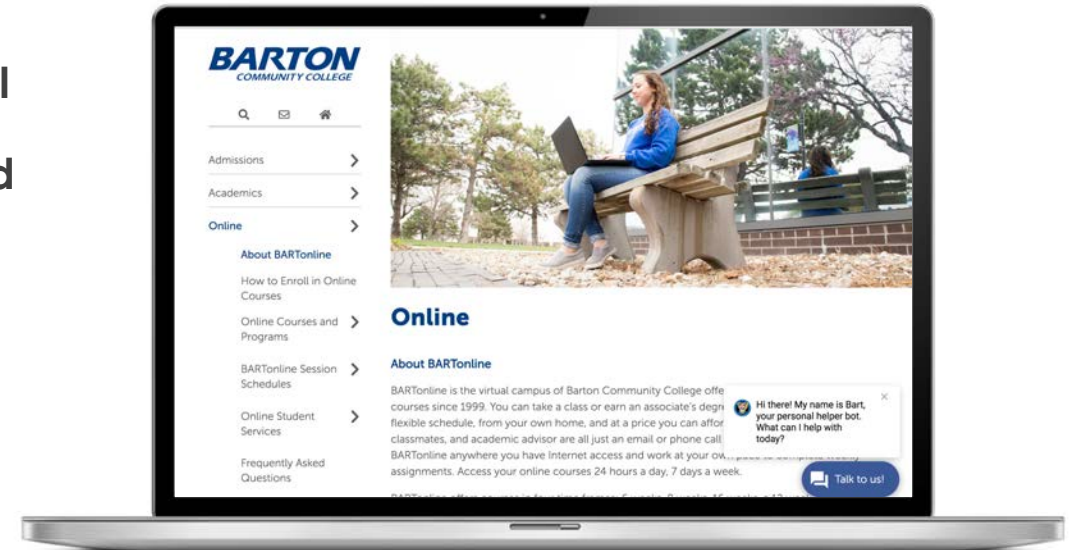
Good advice. We are incorporating it into our marketing activities.

Because your students are not physically connected to your campus, they don't have a strong affiliation to your mascot. We recommend using the Barton Community College logo sans mascot on all marketing materials, and would also encourage you to consider developing a logo specific to your online campus, similar to what you've done for other campuses. The Barton Cougar logo is not relevant to this group, nor is the pawprint.

Photos should depict students in an online environment, not on campus. We want potential students to see themselves in the marketing. They can't relate to a picture of a student on campus.

### **Speak to online students on social media.**

Right now your social media channels speak heavily to in-person student wants, needs and experiences – an online student would not be able to discern how Barton Community College can help them in their college journey. Incorporating more content specific to the online student journey will allow both student types to see themselves in the Barton Community College story.



## Recommendations (continued)

See comments on these recommendations from the "student persona" document. We need to free up Julie to do more video for this purpose, hire another content creator or outsource.

Same with increasing storytelling to this end, though we can shift some priorities to add more stories related to online-only students, specifically our "transient" audience.

### Use more video content.

In terms of content creation, there may be no more important medium than video. It's engaging and evokes emotion with the added sensory advantages of sight, sound and motion.

Video will improve your SEO, enhance your social media presence, increase your reach and help you better engage with consumers. Videos are the best way to teach, engage and deepen your virtual relationship with prospective students.

Video content doesn't have to be expensive to produce. Use the professionals to produce evergreen content that you'll use for a longer duration. Use internal resources to create raw, authentic content for social media and select email communications.

### Pull customers in with storytelling.

There are two ways to share knowledge – you can push the information out or you can pull potential students in with storytelling. Storytelling allows you to connect with students and allows them to see themselves in the story. It's part of humanizing the brand. A good story makes your organization real and relatable, and makes people care.

Tell your story through the voice of your students. There is nothing more powerful than a student telling other students about their experience at BARTonline. We all know word-of-mouth advertising is the most effective. This is a way to do word-of-mouth in a broader form and offer social proof that Barton is a good choice.



These are also the same recommendations from the student persona document. See comments there. :)

## Recommendations (continued)

- **Your business development strategy is an important piece of your overall marketing strategy.**

Referrals from other colleges/universities and military entities are a big opportunity. Review your business development strategy to ensure current referrers have the information/tools they need, and work to identify other potential referrers that can be added to the pipeline.

- **Regularly ask students what you can do to make their experience better.**

Ask students how you're doing during key points in their journey. Was the application and enrollment process seamless or were there friction points? Student interviews revealed that the instructor can make or break the experience. Ask students about their instructors' performance and if they would recommend BARTonline to others. Collecting this data at regular intervals will give you the information you need to optimize what you're doing really well and identify potential problems before they become big issues. We recommend sending students a survey at two key points:

- When they start class: Send a survey about the application and enrollment process. Have instructors reinforce the importance of their feedback during class.
- After a class is complete: Email students an instructor evaluation, asking about the instructor and overall virtual classroom experience.



## Recommendations (continued)

Good advice and we are already moving in this direction! :)

**And, one new recommendation: Focus messaging on the things that mattered the most to online students, such as convenience, flexibility and affordability, balanced with the things that make BARTonline unique and different.**

Don't just highlight popular programs, highlight the instructors that make that classroom experience great. Talk about your accelerated course options that allow students to get in and get credits completed fast, so they can move on to the next big thing in their lives. Position Barton Community College's virtual campus as a platform they can use to launch and succeed.





Thank You

