

# Tech Snacks: Brightspace Survey Results

As part of OTLE's self-assessment process, each year we ask students to complete a Brightspace experience survey with questions about their Brightspace training, Brightspace habits, Brightspace learning experiences, and overall Brightspace satisfaction. This year, 107 students participated in this survey: 10 high school students, 25 freshmen, 22 sophomores, 19 juniors, 24 seniors, and 6 others.

## Survey Changes

This year, OTLE modified the annual survey to address some emerging questions. Some of the changes were specifically helpful for getting feedback about changes we have made as an office so that we can plan our office's activities moving forward.

**Course Modality** – Due to recent campus-wide questions regarding the course offerings and the modalities that students enroll in and prefer, we included a few questions with that theme.

*Good news: The modality distribution (F2F-only, online-only, mixed) of students taking the survey was almost representative of the distribution of the current student population.*

**Beginning Challenges** — One of OTLE's current goals is to help reach incoming students in an efficient and effective manner. We asked students about some of the challenges they faced when they first started using Brightspace, and many students mentioned they initially struggled with claiming their NetID and with basic Brightspace navigation.

*Good news: 72% of respondents stated that they no longer have the same struggles.*

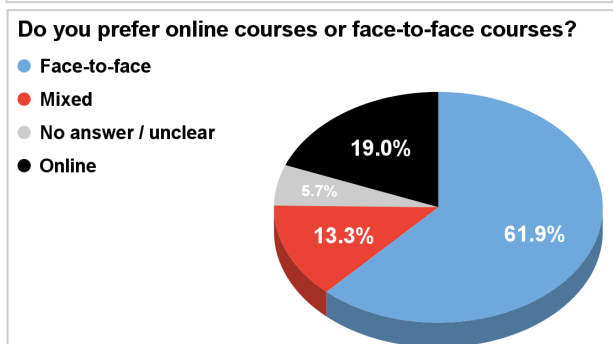
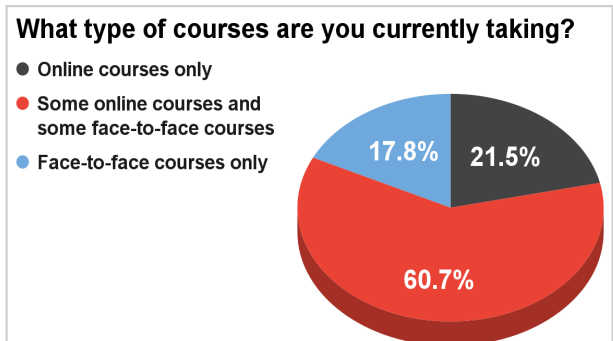
**Brightspace Course Design** — Survey results in past years have included a high number of responses about students' opinions about course design. In response, OTLE has developed workshops and Tech Snacks opportunities to discuss different recommendations and ideas. To reflect on this and to commend the hard work of faculty, we asked a few specific questions about course design. For example: "Do instructors provide clear enough instructions for you to get started on your Brightspace coursework?"

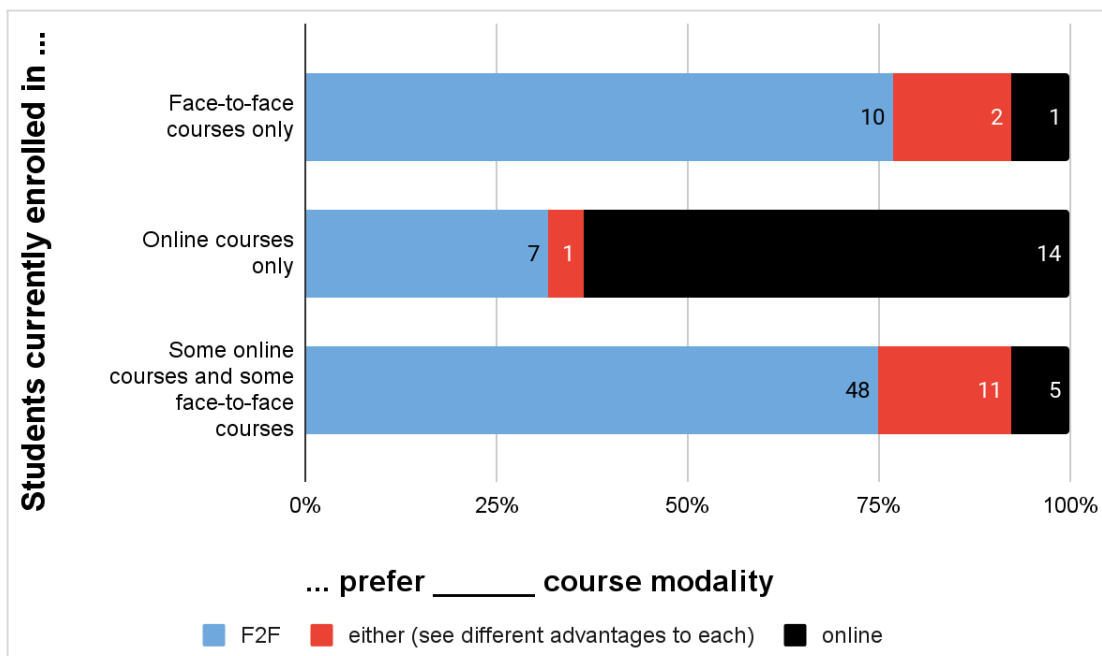
*Good news: Over 70% of respondents said they feel that their instructors have given them sufficient instructions for navigating their Brightspace courses.*

## Student feedback about different course modalities

Surprisingly, the modality distribution of students taking the survey was almost representative of the distribution of the current student population (21% online, 56% mixed, 22% F2F – see IRVM's MSUN Metrics" for more info.)

Students expressed a variety of opinions about the advantages of online versus F2F courses, which are characterized in the qualitative section at the end of the handout. Over 75% of F2F and mixed enrollment students who took the survey prefer F2F courses. About 64% of online-only students prefer online courses. The bar chart below shows preferences by enrollment type.





### Why students like face-to-face:

- A majority of responding students said they prefer a more hands-on approach to learning
- Some students said they prefer in-class discussions over online discussions
- Many students feel that online courses require them to “teach themselves”

*“I prefer face-to-face courses because it creates a sense of accountability and relationship, which are both important factors to me in education. I think it's difficult to feel fully motivated and purposeful in your learning when there's no interaction and opportunity to build relationships with professors and other students. Also, a sense of accountability helps me reach deadlines on time, whereas with online courses there's a lot more independence and self-discipline.”*

### Why students like online:

- Easier to work at your own pace
- More flexible for busy schedules outside of school
- Multiple students said they struggle with face-to-face courses due to their anxiety

*“I prefer online classes. I struggled with the classroom environment and dreaded sitting in class because of my anxiety and ADHD. I do so much better being able to switch subjects when my brain changes the entire thought process on me.”*

### Why students see advantages to both:

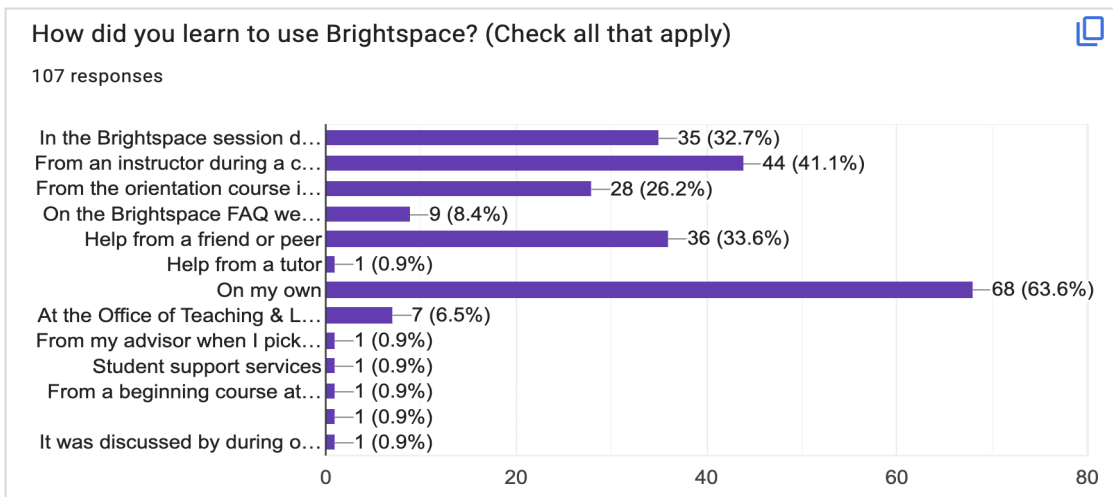
- It's easier to get the benefits of both face-to-face and online courses
- Many students said that they like taking general education courses online, but prefer to take their major courses face-to-face.
- Some students said they need to take both due to scheduling conflicts with other courses.

*“I prefer online classes when it makes sense, like writing and language classes, but classes that are hands on or have hands on elements are better in a face to face setting as proven during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.”*

## How students learn to use Brightspace

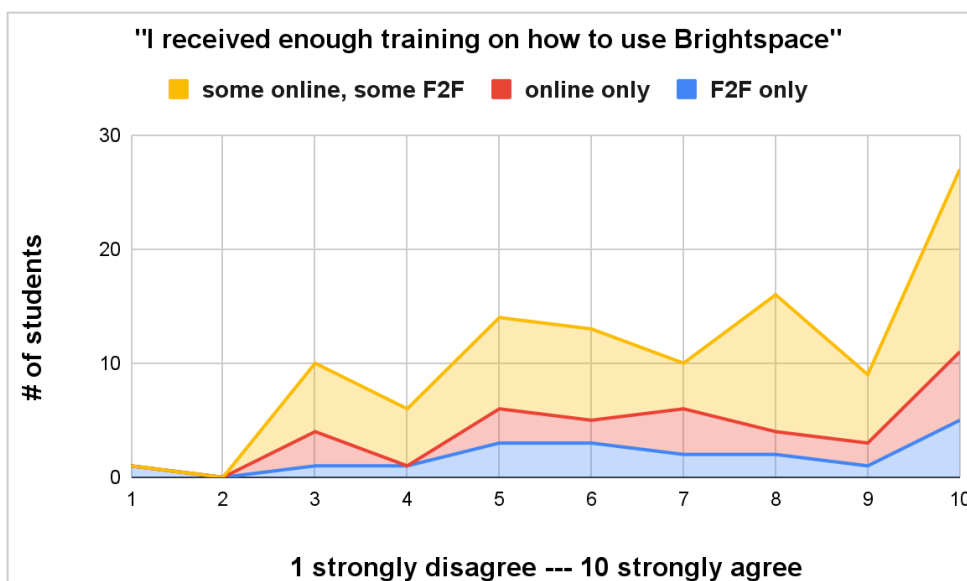
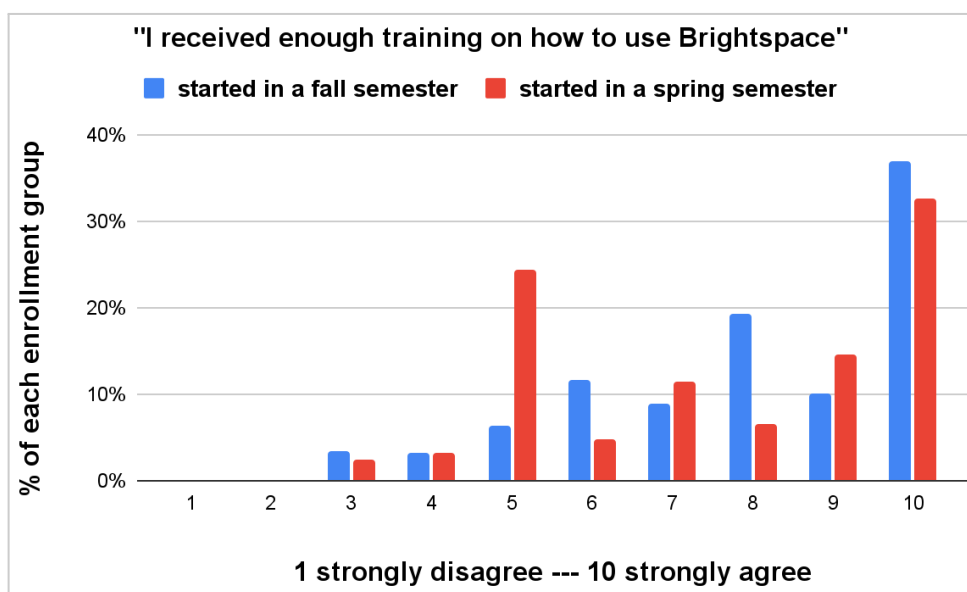
This year, we retained the question that asks how students learned to use Brightspace. Many students are still reporting that they learned to use Brightspace exclusively “on their own.”

However, the percentage of students who reported learning from an instructor has significantly increased (41.4% from 27.4%), and the percentage who learned during orientation has remained consistent (32.7%).



The survey indicates that **instructors really make an impact** as well. To help reduce the number of students slipping through the cracks, consider passing out copies of our "[Getting Started on Brightspace](#)" handout, walking students to OTLE (Cowan 104) for a Brightspace orientation, or asking OTLE staff to visit your freshman classes and introduce ourselves.

OTLE has made a large effort to get in front of freshmen during fall orientation the past two years. Consequently, student traffic in OTLE during the semester has reduced drastically. This also means that fewer students are starting out behind. However, there are still key groups of students who tend to miss out on this comprehensive Brightspace training (e.g., athletes, spring admits, online freshmen, and high school students). One student even recognized this when asked whether they received enough training: *"I kind of did, but I felt like it could of been explained in more detail. I missed freshman orientation due to volleyball."* Surprisingly, however, the survey did not indicate any major differences regarding students' course modality (F2F-only, online-only, mixed) and whether they felt they received enough training.



# Common Themes and Student Comments

Along with the quantitative survey questions, we also gave students a chance to provide open-ended comments about their Brightspace experience. Similar general categories of comments emerged, with some new twists. Sample comments include:

## Modular structure and organization

[I like how one instructor] gives an overview of what we have to get done for the week. And he then explains it even further so everyone understands.

I like how my instructors have all the assignments on the calendar so I know beforehand.

I like that they add everything to the calendar, so I get notifications when due dates are approaching, and I don't have to go searching for things that should be due soon.

I like when they give me the due date and it pops up in my calendar, it gives me a clear idea of what is due and what I need to do early. I also like how the grades are set up and how easy it is to access my course work.

I appreciate when instructors utilize the Announcements and "Content" feature, these help me stay organized in knowing what I need to get done.

I like when weeks are split into different context folders. This helps me prioritize my work. I also like when links needed for assignments are available in the week they are due as well as in the assignment folder.

I love when they set of each week separately in content area. This is beyond helpful, you see what you need to do, in which week, due dates, links, etc. That way usually I have no questions and if I do they usually refer to content tab and that week.

Discussions, links to resources, some instructors have clearly laid out plans for the entire semester to accommodate students like me.

## Presence

Post all announcements, I get a pulse notification everytime

The announcements are very helpful

I like that they are willing to help you in any way possible. They are reachable and kind to everyone. They point out your problems as soon as possible.

Video tutorials

[I like when instructors] post the slideshows from class to review later

I like when they communicate through the main page on their special tab.

Posting announcements is really beneficial, because it gets sent out via notifications and external email. Also tests on Brightspace are super effective and I can take my test anywhere I have access to a computer.

They provide the class with their contact information and additional information that we can learn from and include in for each assignment.

I like that they are able to post important announcements in a feed and it's the first thing we see when logging into brightspace

Because I am an online student they walk you through what their expectations are using Brightspace

Notify when classes are canceled and when they notify every week how the week assignments are assigned.

Maybe make an effort to have an area where students can ask each other questions. Something like a message board for students in the class.

Put textbook information at least 1-2 weeks prior to the start of class. This gives students time to purchase the book before the 1st day of class. Super important when dealing with shortened class times.

## Feedback (including Quiz feedback)

Making quiz answers accessible upon completion.

Utilize the Feedback feature

Dr. Bachmeier's responses to assignments are very well thought out and always early in the week, so I can make any corrections needed before the next submission date.

The ability to see missed questions on Tests or quiz's so I can see what I need to work on