

BARNES & NOBLE COLLEGE STUDENT PULSE

Insights into academic and retail success

INTRODUCTION

No one is more committed to the voice-of-the-customer research in higher education than Barnes & Noble College. It drives our student success strategies and retail operations, strengthening our campus partners' ability to deliver on their promise to provide high-quality customer experiences to all students and faculty.

Our annual student insights report, appropriately entitled *Student Pulse*, curates survey responses from over 100,000 students nationwide, offering a snapshot of what motivates their behaviors, influences their purchasing decisions and helps them learn best. This year, we've included a special segment on first-year student insights, which will be particularly compelling for readers focused on student retention. You'll also find insights on:

- *The importance of access and affordability*
 - *Student study habits and preferences in learning resources*
 - *Student perceptions of their school and experiences*
 - *What types of products students purchased*
 - *What influences students to shop at the bookstore*
 - *Generation Z customer preferences*
-

We also discuss the implications of these findings. By demonstrating the value of the campus store and how efforts to improve affordability and increase access benefit students, students can more easily recognize your campus' commitment to prepare them for academic and career success. By offering informed retail experiences that resonate with Gen Z, students will stay engaged and connected throughout their years on campus — and long after graduation.

This research should be used to inform decision-making, strengthen relationships with students, and provide students with the transformative educational and retail experiences that will keep them engaged, enrolled and achieving.



ACADEMIC INSIGHTS

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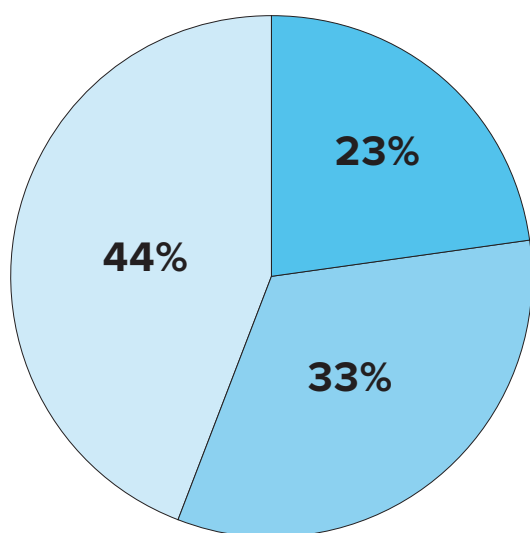
Course Material Access and Affordability Impact Student Success

Students and faculty have been saying for years that access to affordable course materials on the first day of class can dramatically affect academic outcomes. In fact, when asked about the importance of textbook availability in the bookstore, **89 percent of students responded that it was “very important” to “absolutely necessary,”** yet **49 percent of students said they did not have their textbooks on the first day of class.**

We also asked students to use their recent personal experiences to provide insights into how the cost of course materials impacts their learning and purchasing behaviors — and how faculty recommendations affect when and where students purchase their textbooks.

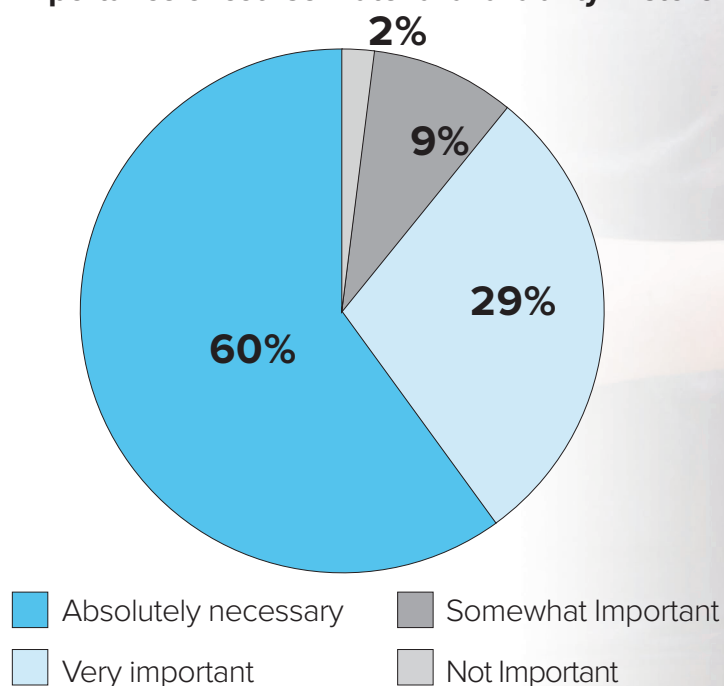
These significant findings have led to the development of innovative programs that directly address access and affordability, such as OER Courseware and our First Day™ inclusive access programs, which provide students with affordable learning materials before the first day of class and improve academic outcomes.

How course materials are purchased



Both Online In store

Importance of course material availability in store



Absolutely necessary Very important Somewhat Important Not Important



SUMMER

SHOP WITH CONFIDENCE
WE
PRICE MATCH
TEXTBOOKS

Where students purchased course materials

66% Campus Bookstore (+6% over LY)


52% Amazon (-7% over LY)

41% of students do not believe their school is trying to improve affordability

ACADEMIC INSIGHTS

Course Material Access and Affordability Affect Success (cont.)

Colleges and universities are feeling pressure to reduce the costs of learning materials. At the same time, they're also being asked to increase access and improve academic results. With myriad options claiming to solve all three challenges, it can be hard for institutions to know what really works — and what delivers results. In addition, students feel their schools are not doing enough to improve affordability on their campus. There is a disconnect between schools' efforts to lower the costs of learning materials and how students perceive those efforts. **Forty-one percent of students do not believe their school is trying to improve affordability.**



49% of students said they did not have their course materials on the first day of class

Reasons students do not have their course materials on the first day

55% wanted to check with professor first

22% can't afford the cost of a new/used book

18% felt professor doesn't use the textbook

18% used online materials

17% felt textbooks cost more than the value received

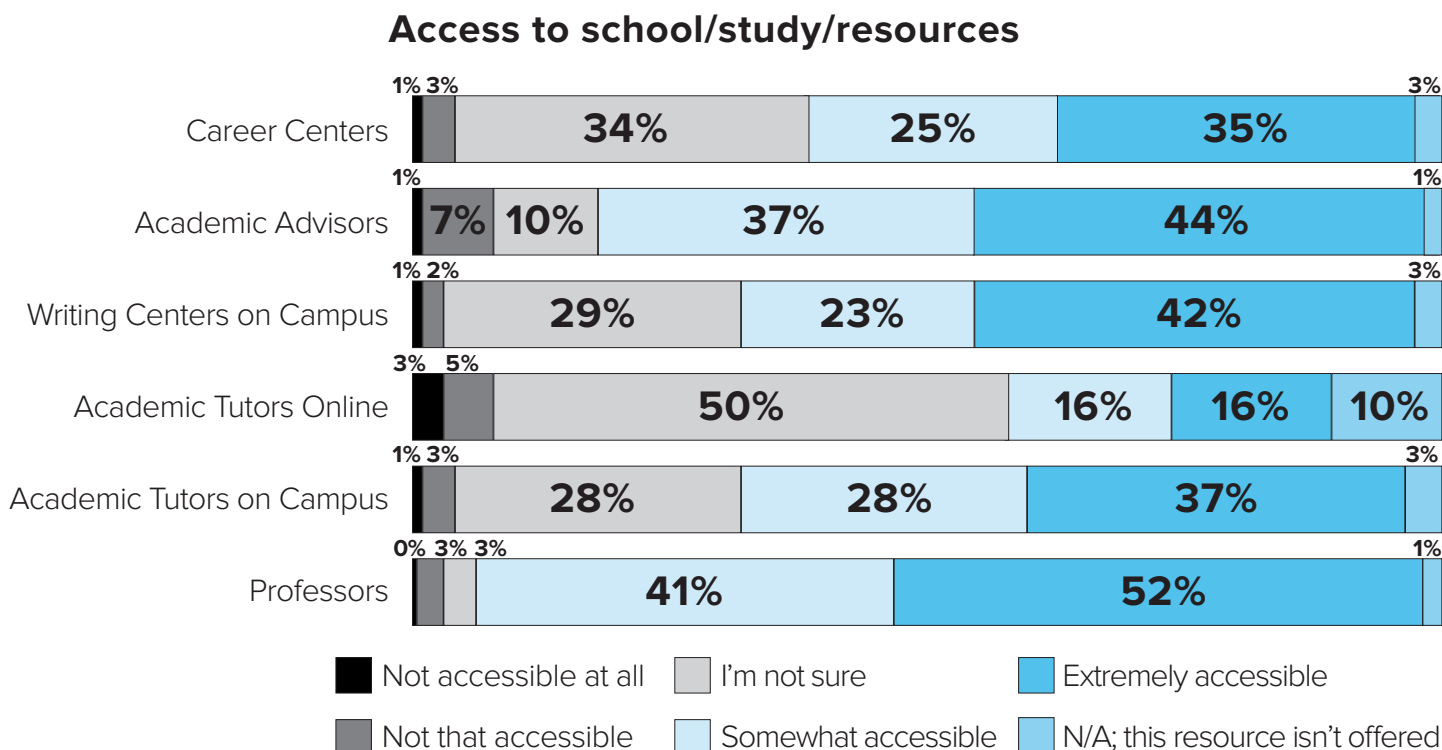
ACADEMIC INSIGHTS

Student Study Tools/Resources

Our voice-of-the-customer research looked at student preferences and access to a variety of study tools and academic resources such as writing centers, faculty office hours, 24/7 online tutoring, writing and grammar help — and discovered a need was not being met. Campus academic, writing and career centers offer invaluable help to students on campus, but due to limited office hours and access, some students are left without access to help.

*Our research revealed **55 percent of students believe academic tutors online are “not that accessible” to “I’m not sure” on their campus.***

Supplementing campus tutoring services and hours with 24/7 access can add additional support for students during late-night study and writing sessions, helping colleges and universities to move the needle on student success and improve retention rates.



ACADEMIC INSIGHTS (cont.)

What resources students use to study

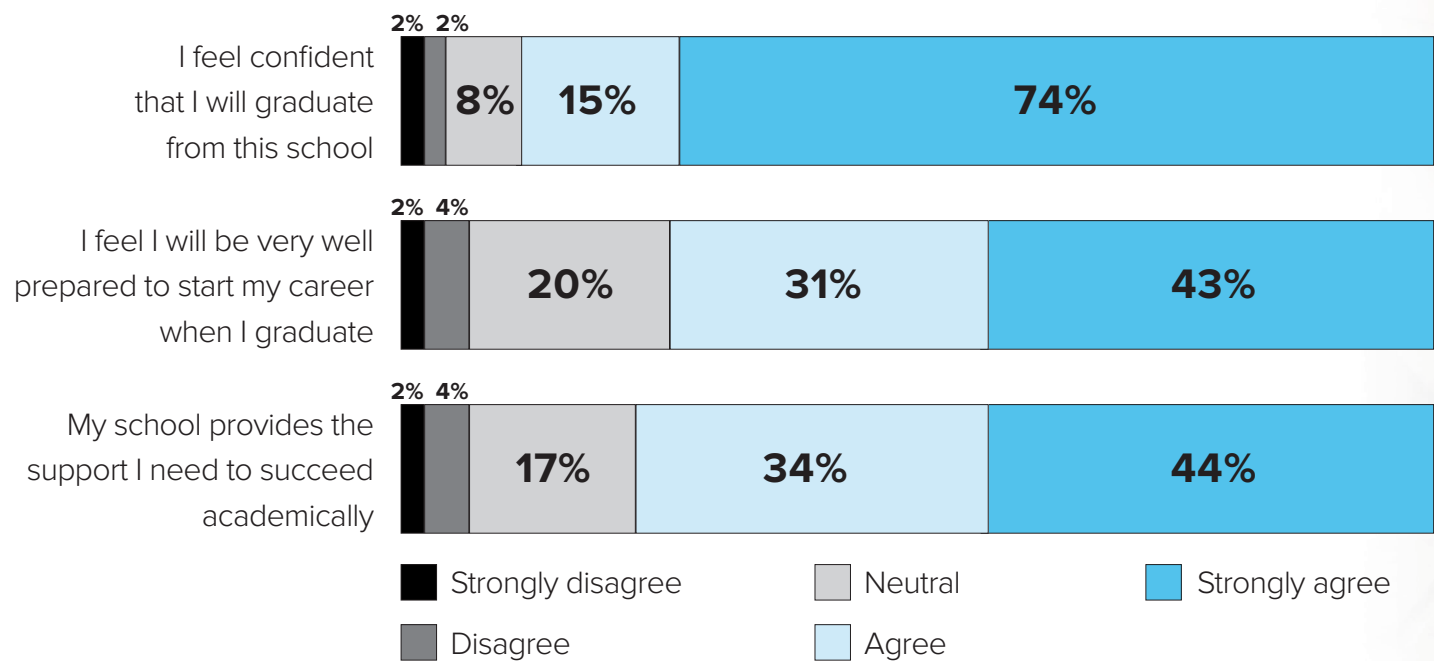
47% of students use a printed textbook

25% use a tutor/tutoring center

20% use digital homework solutions

15% use digital writing solutions

Perceptions of their school and experience





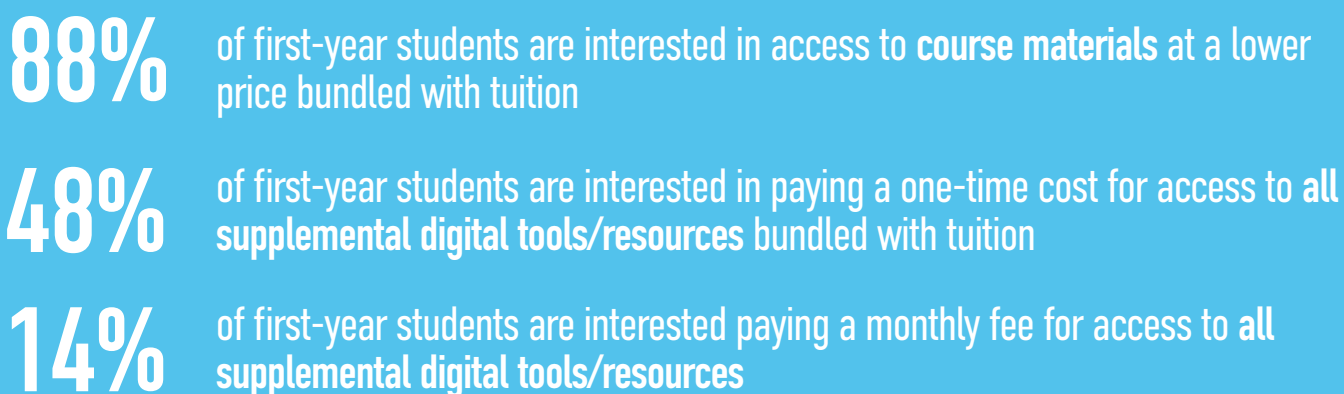
FIRST-YEAR INSIGHTS

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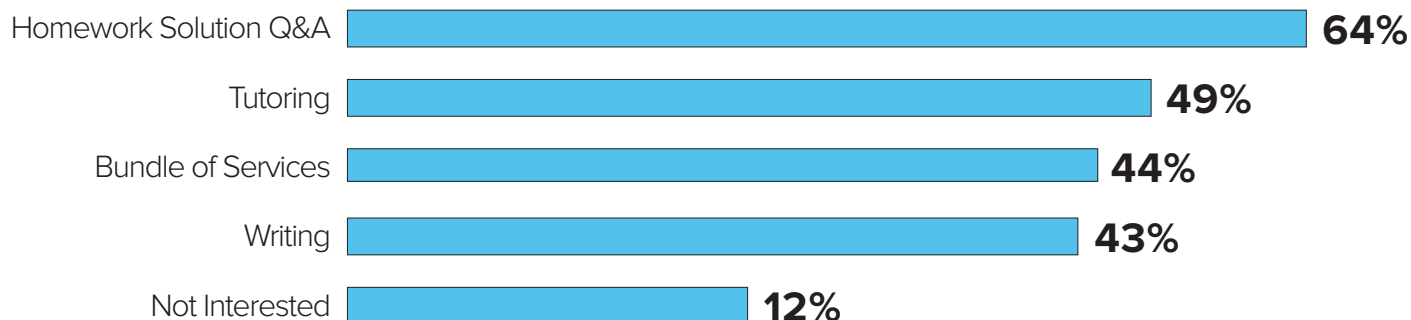
Colleges and universities are focusing more and more attention on first-year students — and with good reason. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, one third of first-year students will not return the following year. The reasons are varied, but one thing is clear — students who struggle academically are at risk of dropping out.

Schools are looking for solutions to retain first-year students through better academic support. Offering more affordable and easily accessed learning materials, such as inclusive access and OER courseware, better prepares students for the first day of class. Digital study tools and resources can also help supplement campus tutoring services and hours with 24/7 access, adding additional support for students during late-night study and writing sessions — ultimately improving academic success.

These programs are resonating with students. **Most first-year students (88%) stated they would be interested in getting course materials bundled with tuition for a lower cost.**



First-year student interest in digital study tools/learning resources for courses





RETAIL INSIGHTS

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Bookstore Preferences and Influences

As a new generation of consumers enters the college customer base, bringing with them different ideas about the kinds of shopping experiences they want, the retail landscape has become even harder to predict. Through our highly targeted research, we've uncovered a wealth of information on how students view the campus bookstore, how they prefer to hear about special offers and events as well as their shopping behaviors at the bookstore — offering some clues about the future of retail.

These key findings help shape our product offerings, promotional campaigns and store designs. For example, we found that **53 percent of students stated email is the leading influencer to shop at the campus store**. As a result, we invested in creating highly targeted email campaigns, which result in higher than industry average open and conversion rates.

Through our research, we discovered our customers are looking for an omni-channel experience, curation and customization, lifestyle needs and experiential shopping opportunities — all of which are addressed through our new and innovative retail initiative.

Preferences for how students want to hear about bookstore offers and events

Emails from the campus bookstore	76%
School website	33%
Posters/flyers around campus	26%
Social Media	23%
Bookstore app	16%

What influences them to shop at the bookstore

Emails from the campus bookstore	53%
Word of mouth	30%
Recommendations from friends	26%
Posters/flyers around campus	18%
Ads you see online	13%

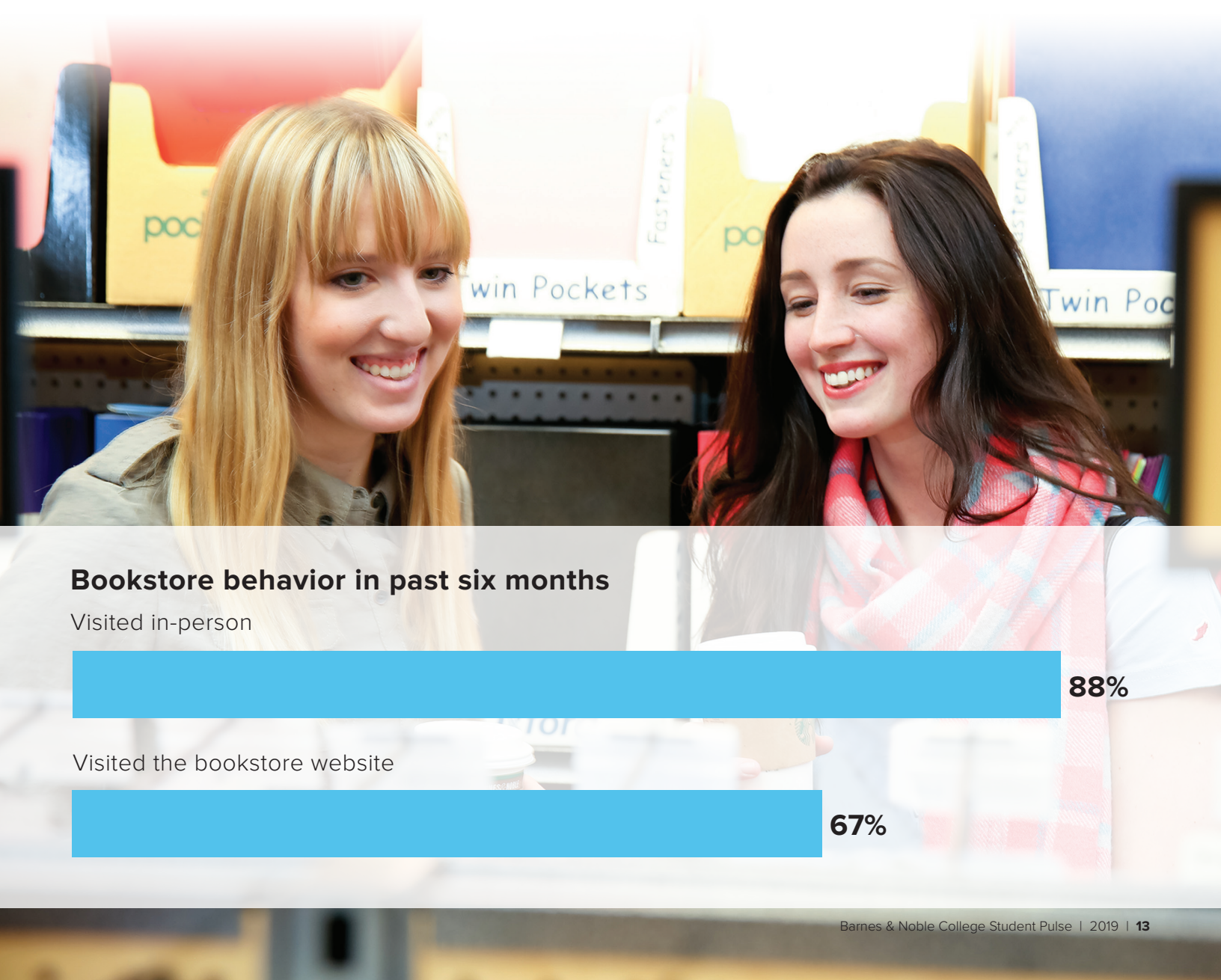
What items were purchased



61% School supplies (e.g., notebooks, pens, staplers)

57% School-branded apparel

42% Convenience (e.g., candy, snacks, soda)



Bookstore behavior in past six months

Visited in-person

88%

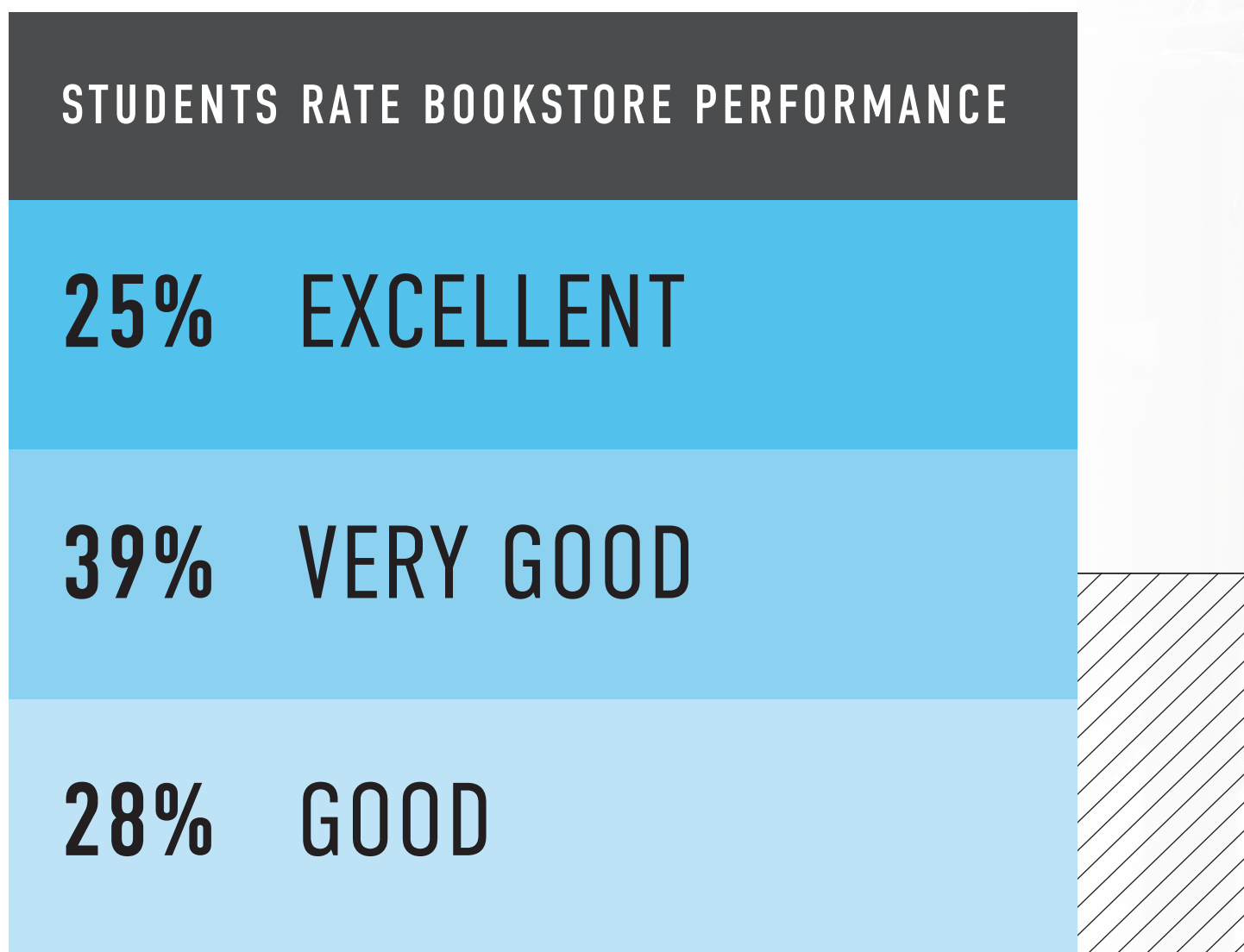
Visited the bookstore website

67%

RETAIL INSIGHTS (cont.)

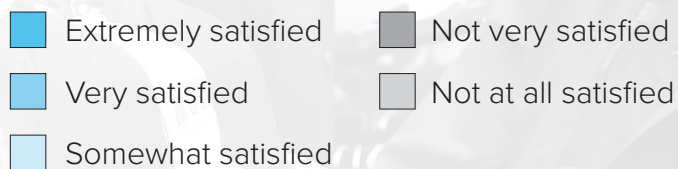
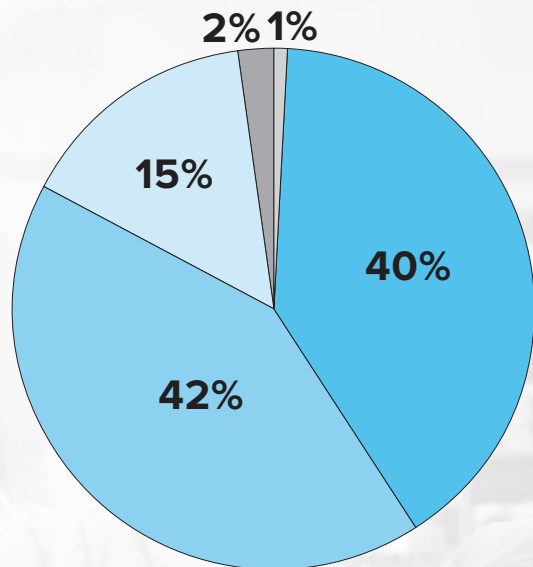
Overall Performance

College students are an important demographic for retailers to watch closely, and understanding them and their preferences enables our campus stores to offer student customers a more deeply personalized shopping experience. Feedback on the bookstore's overall performance and student satisfaction not only influences our merchandise selection, but also informs our store operations, customer service, checkout processes, store design and organization.

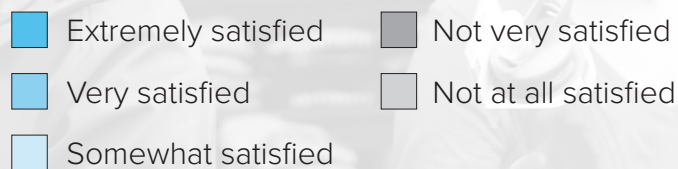
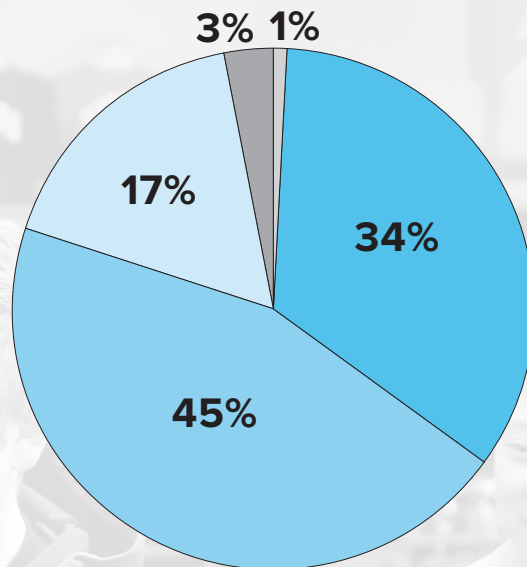


Student satisfaction with store service, checkout, organization and selection

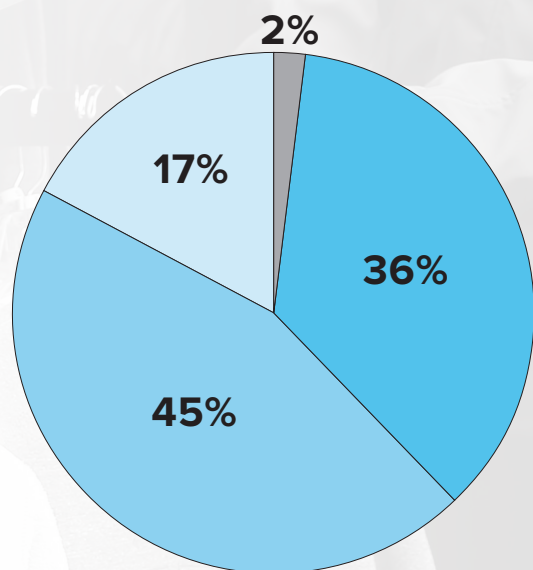
Customer Service



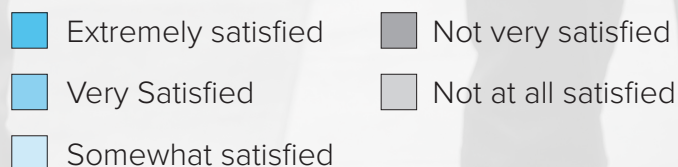
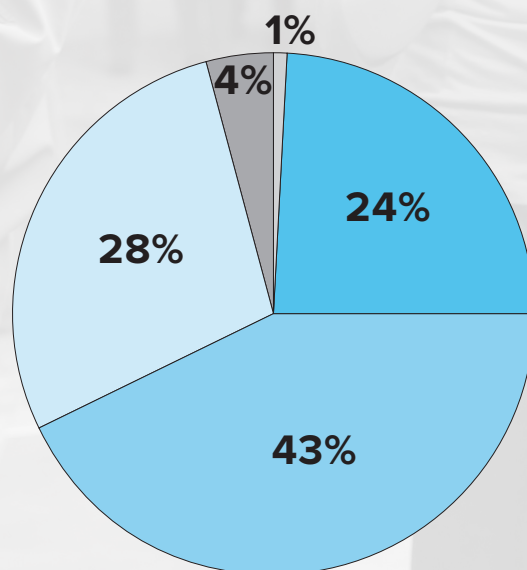
Checkout Process



Organization



Merchandise Selection



RETAIL TAKES ON NEW MEANING FOR GENERATION Z

Gen Z continues to break the mold set by their Millennial predecessors. Their actions and preferences are uniquely their own — and that couldn't be truer when considering their retail shopping behaviors.

Contrary to popular belief, the 18-to-22-year-old college-aged segment frequents brick-and-mortar retail to shop for clothing. In our new report, *How They Shop. How They Style. How They Spend.*, we examined what Gen Z students seek in retail environments, how they shop and what they buy. Speaking with college students from across the country and engaging in robust, in-depth online discussions revealed specific retail experience “wants” and apparel preferences. These rich insights helped inform and shape the retail experiences we create for students, both in store and online.

A Gen-Z-focused merchandising and customer engagement focus will create a shopping experience targeted directly at Gen Z customers. We took this knowledge and created highly curated in-store spaces and digital content, helping customers create a one-of-a-kind experience that will draw students in.

Gen Z shops in a structured, organized fashion to quickly navigate to merchandise they're looking for: gender, apparel type then by brand.



CONCLUSION

The insights shared in this report are beneficial for identifying new directions where we can rise to meet students' needs. The results demonstrate that increasing transparency is of critical importance. We must communicate to students the steps we are taking to improve affordability, increase access and support their achievement.

Part of our responsibility should be to help students see the value in making purchases from the campus store, rather than from alternative retailers, and to contextualize the role of the campus store within the college's or university's mission to prepare students for academic and career success. Similarly, we can call upon faculty and other campus support staff to serve as advocates, given students' decisions to purchase course materials often hinge on whether professors articulate that textbooks are essential learning resources. If our goal is to ensure students are positioned for success on their first day of class, we need to be proactive in removing any barriers — financial or otherwise — to provide a seamless transition for them into each new term.

This report affirms that the majority of students are visiting our campus stores, whether in person or online, and place considerable emphasis on the quality of their experiences. Our digital presence is important, as students prefer campus communications through online channels like email, the school's website, social media and bookstore app. But equally important are the in-person experiences that bring our mission to life. We're presented with a significant opportunity to continue to grow and sustain meaningful relationships with students in our stores, building their sense of loyalty and pride in the campus that they will carry with them as alumni.

Every decision we make should be guided by students' voices, so we can increase engagement, retain more students year after year and graduate students who understand and appreciate the value of their education.

ABOUT US

Innovation is at the heart of everything we do as a company. Barnes & Noble College offers forward-thinking learning and retail solutions that help colleges and universities improve student affordability, access and achievement; protect schools' brands and drive much-needed revenue.

We hope you'll learn more about Barnes & Noble College — and see how much we've changed. As higher education continues to evolve, our innovative learning and retail solutions are well-positioned to meet the changing needs of your students, faculty, alumni, fans and campus community.

READY TO LEARN HOW BARNES & NOBLE COLLEGE
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