



# 2024 Online Student Recruitment Report

10 Critical Questions and Answers to  
Build Student-Centered Online Programs



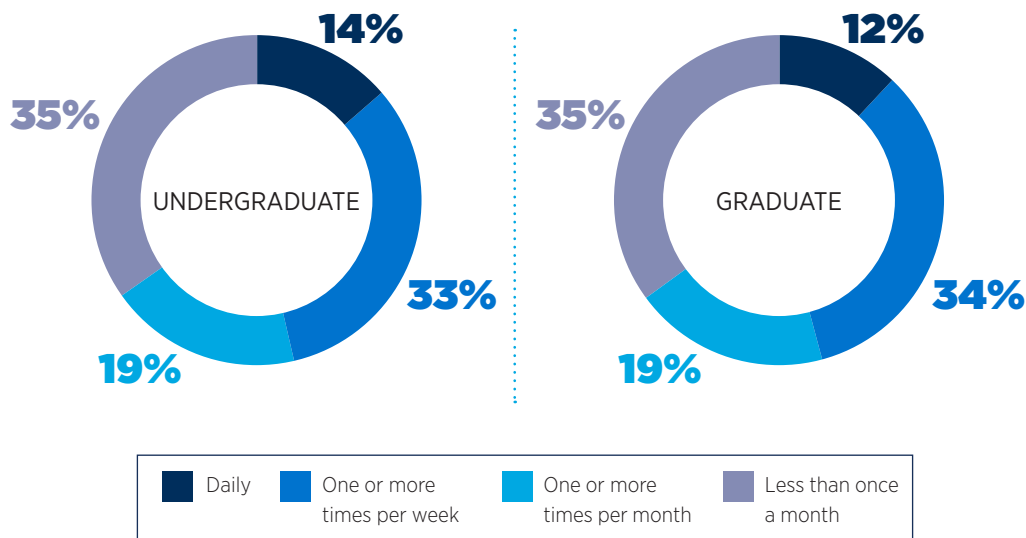
# Ten Questions You Need to Understand

## 1. How are online students using and applying artificial intelligence?

Strategically incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into marketing, recruitment, and teaching efforts at educational institutions has become increasingly important over the last year. This shift is due to substantial advances in AI tech and a rise in its use among the general public, especially students. Understanding the extent to which online students are using AI, the regularity of doing so, and how they use AI in their online study helps institutions assess the direction and extent of their efforts in AI. With this in mind, we asked prospective and enrolled online students a series of questions related to their use of AI in their online education experience.

*This section of the report presents data by both degree level and student generation. A more comprehensive report on the student generations will be published later in the year.*

**Figure 5: How often do you use an AI platform like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, etc.?**



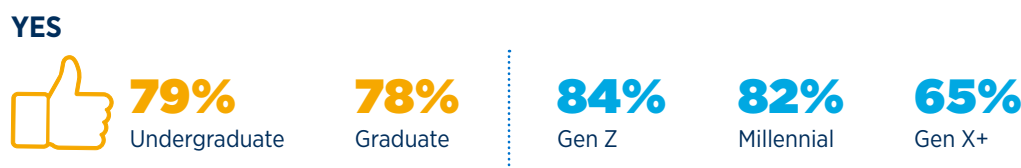
FREQUENCY OF USE OF AN AI PLATFORM	GEN Z	MILLENNIAL	GEN X+
Daily	16%	14%	10%
One or more times per week	39%	34%	25%
One or more times per month	19%	20%	14%
Less than once a month	27%	32%	52%

**Figure 6: If offered as part of your online program, what AI-powered technology would you be likely to use?**

PREFERRED AI TECHNOLOGY IN ONLINE CLASSES	UNDERGRADUATE	GRADUATE
<b>Virtual research assistant:</b> Tools that may complete a variety of research-related tasks for students and researchers, including discovering academic sources, summarizing articles, analyzing citation patterns, organizing literature reviews, and managing citations.	50%	50%
<b>Virtual writing assistant:</b> AI-powered writing platforms or tools that integrate within existing word processing software. Goes beyond spell-check or grammar tools by summarizing writing, suggesting “smart” revisions, and adjusting writing style to and tone for different audiences (academic, general public, etc.).	43%	44%
<b>Personalized study coach:</b> Platforms or tools that provide custom study plans, assist with effective note-taking, and offer adaptive knowledge checks with feedback.	42%	42%
<b>On-demand academic advising:</b> Chatbots or other technologies implemented by institutions to provide first-line academic advising support.	35%	41%
<b>Plagiarism detector/corrector:</b> Tools that detect and alert students, instructors, or other users to potential plagiarism and provide custom guidance for correcting the issues.	31%	31%
<b>None of the above</b>	12%	13%

PREFERRED AI TECHNOLOGY IN ONLINE CLASSES	GEN Z	MILLENNIAL	GEN X+
Virtual research assistant	47%	51%	52%
Virtual writing assistant	47%	45%	37%
Personalized study coach	45%	43%	36%
On-demand academic advising	38%	39%	33%
Plagiarism detector/corrector	41%	29%	23%
None of the above	7%	11%	22%

**Figure 7: Did you use an AI-driven chatbot during your search for an online program?**



**Figure 8: How effective did you find chatbots in providing the information you needed during your search?**

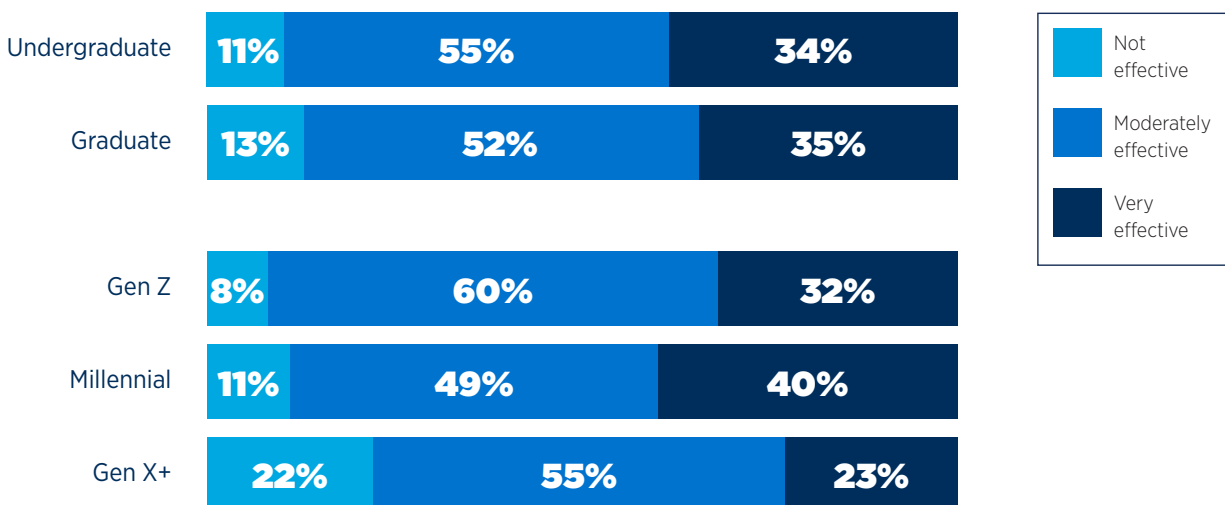
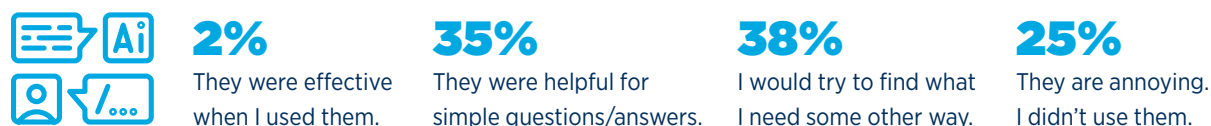


Figure 9 shows a similar question asked in the RNL 2022 *Online Student Recruitment Report*, with respondents demonstrating considerably less enthusiasm for AI-driven chatbots just two years ago.

**Figure 9: What is your opinion of AI-driven chatbots on online program pages?**



## Implications for institutions

Online students across all age groups are enthusiastic about incorporating AI into their academic endeavors, whether it's aiding in their studies, research, or even navigating the complexities of finding the right graduate program. With the increasing comfort level with AI, particularly among Gen Z, the trajectory of AI usage is poised for rapid growth.

Additionally, most students, particularly from the Gen Z and millennial cohorts, have used chatbots during their search for online programs. While the effectiveness of chatbots varies, with a considerable percentage finding them moderately to very effective, there is a consensus among respondents that they can serve as helpful tools for obtaining quick answers.

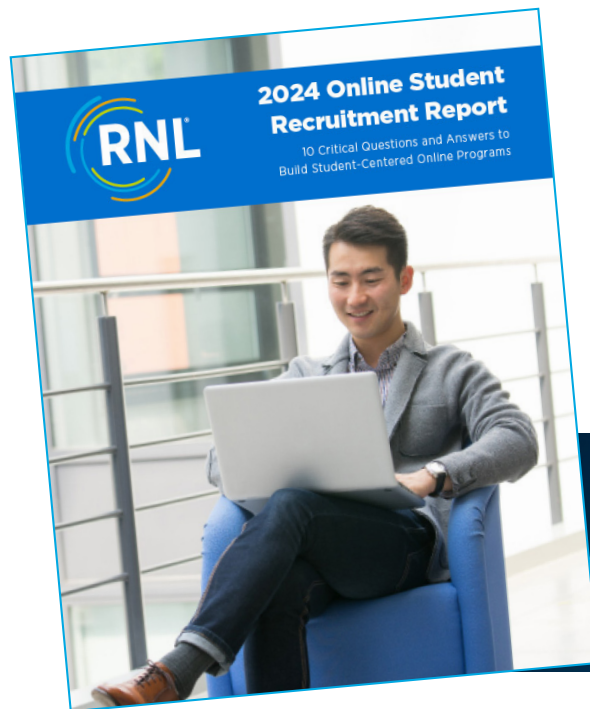
Instead of hitting the brakes on AI, universities need to step up their game. It's all about guiding students in using AI responsibly, like setting up guardrails on a highway rather than closing it down.

The bottom line is that universities need to hustle to integrate AI into their online education scene. Make it accessible, give students guidance on how to use it well, and watch the learning landscape transform.

**—Roger Lee, Senior Vice President of AI Success & Sustainability, RNL**

# Read the full report and receive expert insights

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