Growing by Degrees

Online Education in the United States, 2005

Southern Edition

I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman

BABSON **Survey** Research Group

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SREB

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Welcome

Welcome to the first annual Southern Edition Report on online learning. Earlier this year, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) entered into a data collection partnership with the Sloan Consortium. As many of you know, the Sloan Consortium conducts an annual survey on the state of online learning in higher education in the U.S. Three reports have been released: "*Sizing the Opportunity: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2002 and 2003*," "*Entering the Mainstream: Online Education in United States Higher Education, 2003 and 2004*" and "*Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005*." The surveys have quickly become the most current, comprehensive, and widely quoted source of information on the numbers and trends in online learning. You can download the reports from the Sloan Consortium web site at http://www.sloan-c.org/.

This report is a special version of the latest report, "*Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005*." The Sloan Consortium agreed to produce this Southern Edition for SREB and *Electronic Campus* colleges and universities. This report is also available for free download to the SREB community. I believe that you will find the report of real interest and an invaluable planning aid, providing you with the ability to compare your own responses to those of other colleges and universities in the SREB region, as well as to the national sample for the main Sloan Consortium report.

On behalf of SREB, our member states and *Electronic Campus* colleges and universities, I want to thank the Sloan Consortium and Drs. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman for undertaking this special effort. Further, the continuing support of this vital research by Dr. A. Frank Mayadas, Program Officer, of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, is greatly appreciated.

Dr. Bruce N. Chaloux
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The Southern Regional Education Board, the nation's first interstate compact for education, was created in 1948 by Southern states. SREB helps government and education leaders work cooperatively to advance education and, in doing so, to improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB's 16 member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.
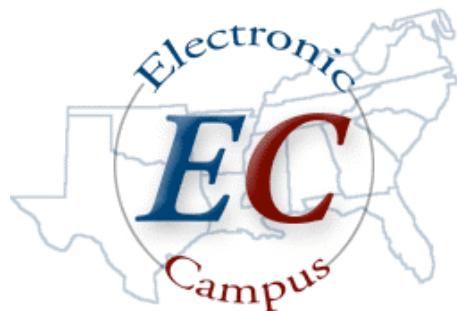
Executive Summary

Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005 – Southern Edition is based on data collected for the third annual national report on the state of online education in U.S. Higher Education. This year's study was aimed at answering some of the fundamental questions about the nature and extent of online education. Supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and based on responses from over 400 southern colleges and universities, this special report examines the nature and extent of online learning among the 16 southern states that make up the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Readers are directed to the national study, *Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005*, for comparison data.

Online learning is thriving in the southern states. The patterns of growth and acceptance of online education among the 16 southern states in this report are very similar to that observed for the national sample, with one clear difference: online learning has made greater inroads in the southern states than in the nation as a whole. Penetration rates are consistently higher and attitudes towards online education are consistently more positive. The details:

Have the course and program offerings in online education entered the mainstream?

Background: *Last year's national study,* Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004 *suggested that online education was penetrating the institutions of higher education in both size and breadth of programs and courses. Is online education now part of the mainstream of higher education?*

> **The evidence:** The answer to this question appears to clearly be "Yes:" schools are offering a large number of online courses, and there is great diversity in the courses and programs being offered:
>
> - Sixty-two percent of southern schools offering graduate face-to-face courses also offer graduate courses online.
>
> - Sixty-eight percent of southern schools offering undergraduate face-to-face courses also offer undergraduate courses online.
>
> - Among all southern schools offering face-to-face Master's degree programs, 47% also offer Master's programs online.
>
> - Among all southern schools offering face-to-face Business degree programs, 48% also offer online Business programs.

WHO IS TEACHING ONLINE?

Background: *When institutions move to embrace online education, do they do so at the expense of their current core faculty? If a greater proportion of online courses are being taught by adjunct faculty, hired on a per-course basis, it may mean fewer opportunities for core faculty members, and, some would argue, lower course quality. Some have claimed that the move to online education will cost jobs for core faculty. Does the evidence support this concern?*

The evidence: Staffing for online courses does not come at the expense of core faculty. Institutions use about the same mixture of core and adjunct faculty to staff their online courses as they do for their face-to-face courses. Instead of more adjunct faculty teaching online courses, the opposite is found; overall, there is a slightly greater use of core faculty for teaching online than for face-to-face.

- Seventy-two percent of southern higher education institutions report that they are using primarily core faculty to teach their online courses, the same percentage that report they are using primarily core faculty to teach their face-to-face courses.

- Seventy-nine percent of southern Public colleges report that their online courses are taught by core faculty, as opposed to only 69% for their face-to-face courses.

IS ONLINE EDUCATION BECOMING PART OF LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR MOST SCHOOLS?

Background: *Approximately one-half of all institutions rated online education as important for their long-term strategy in our two previous studies. This belief was not consistent across all types of institutions, however. Small schools and private, nonprofit institutions were the least likely to support this view. Have opinions changed over time? Do more institutions now agree that online education is an important long-term strategy, and has this changed for specific subgroups of institutions?*

The evidence: The evidence from higher education's academic leaders suggests that there is a strong trend upwards in considering online education as part of a school's long-term strategy. While there is some diversity in response to this question, there is growth among all types of schools:

- The overall percent of southern schools identifying online education as a critical long-term strategy grew from 52% in 2003 to 64% in 2005.

- The largest increases were seen in Associates degree institutions where 78% now agree that it is part of their institution's long-term strategy, up from 62% in 2003.

- The smallest schools, private nonprofit institutions and Baccalaureate colleges remain the least likely to agree that online education is part of their long-term strategy.

Have online enrollments continued their rapid growth?

Background: Last year's national study reported a 22.9% overall increase in the number of students taking one or more online courses, growing from 1.60 to 1.98 million students. Schools were optimistic about future growth as well, with 74.8% reporting that they expected their online enrollments to increase. Has the rapid growth in online enrollments continued for another year?

The evidence: Growth has continued at a healthy rate, but not as rapidly as last year. The national increase in the overall number of online learners was the same this year as last (an increase of around 360,000 each year) for an overall enrollment growth rate of 18.2%. This growth rate greatly exceeds the overall growth rate in the higher education student body.

- Overall national online enrollment increased from 1.98 million in 2003 to 2.35 million in 2004.

- The online enrollment growth rate is over ten times that projected by the National Center for Education Statistics for the general postsecondary student population.

- The southern states represent 29% of online enrollments, with 672,000 students taking at least one online course.

What are Chief Academic Officer's opinions about online education?

Background: Our previous studies have shown that Chief Academic Officers believe, in general, that online courses are of equal quality to face-to-face and that students are as satisfied with online as with face-to-face courses. They have also expressed reservations about their faculty's acceptance of online education. Have Chief Academic Officers changed in their beliefs about faculty acceptance of online education?

The evidence: There is some good news for online education, but the opinions of Chief Academic Officers also raise a number of challenges. On the positive side, they believe it is no harder to evaluate online courses than those delivered face-to-face. More challenging, however, is that Academic leaders believe that online courses require more effort for faculty and more discipline by students, and many of them continue to believe that their faculty have not accepted the value of online education.

- Chief Academic Officers believe, in general, that it takes more effort to teach online.

- A large majority of respondents (72%) believe that it takes more discipline for a student to succeed in an online course.

- Although online education continues to penetrate into all types of institutions, only a relatively stable minority of Chief Academic Officers (30% in 2003 compared with 35% in 2005) continue to believe that their faculty fully accept the value and legitimacy of online education.

- Eighty-two percent of respondents believe that it is no more difficult to evaluate the quality of an online course than one delivered face-to-face.

WHAT IS ONLINE LEARNING?

The focus of this report is online education. In order to be consistent with previous work, we have applied the same definitions used in our prior reports. These definitions were presented to the respondents at the beginning of the survey, and then repeated in the body of individual questions where appropriate.

The primary focus of this report, online courses, are defined as having at least 80% of the course content delivered online. The combination of two of the classifications listed below (traditional and web facilitated) is used as the definition of "face-to-face" instruction (in other words, a course with zero to 29% of the content delivered online). The remaining alternative, blended courses (sometimes called hybrid courses) are defined as having between 30% and 80% of the course content delivered online. While the survey asked respondents for information on all types of courses, results of the analysis of blended options will be presented in a future publication; the current report is devoted to online only.

While there is a great deal of diversity among course delivery methods used by individual instructors, the following is presented to illustrate the prototypical course classifications used in this study.

Proportion of Content Delivered Online	Type of Course	Typical Description
0%	Traditional	Course with no online technology used — content is delivered in writing or orally.
1 to 29%	Web Facilitated	Course which uses web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course. Uses a course management system (CMS) or web pages to post the syllabus and assignments, for example.
30 to 79%	Blended/Hybrid	Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has some face-to-face meetings.
80+%	Online	A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings.

Schools may offer online learning in a variety of ways. The survey asked respondents to characterize their face-to-face, blended, and online learning by the level of the course (undergraduate, graduate, continuing education, etc.). Likewise, respondents were asked to characterize their face-to-face, blended, and online program offerings for certificate, associate, bachelors, masters, doctoral, and professional programs.

Detailed Survey Findings

Online Course and Program Offerings are Mainstream

The number of students who study online has been increasing at a rate far in excess of the rate of growth in the overall higher education student population. Two previous reports in this series, *Sizing the Opportunity: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2002 and 2003* and *Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004*, demonstrated both the continued growth in the numbers of online students and the wide variety of institutions that provide online offerings. Less well known, however, is how closely an institution's online offerings match those of their face-to-face offerings. Have institutions selected a small number of areas to experiment with online, while leaving the bulk of their offerings as face-to-face only? Is online concentrated only among non-degree electives and not part of the core curriculum?

In answering these questions, it is important to understand that higher education institutions vary in the types of courses, programs, and disciplines that they offer. Of interest to those studying the nature and extent of online education is the extent to which institutions that provide a particular type of offering also provide the same type of offering in an online setting. The following analysis examines the *penetration rate* for online offerings by course type, program type, and program discipline. In other words, what proportion of institutions that offer a particular type of face-to-face course or program also provide the same type of offering online?

Online Course Offerings becoming Pervasive

Those skeptical of the growth in online enrollment numbers have posited that what we are observing may be large numbers of students in non-core programs and courses, with little impact on the institution's core offerings. It could be argued that online education can not be a formidable force in U.S. higher education if the only areas where it is having a major impact are at the fringes—for non-credit courses or non-degree programs. Both the national and southern state evidence from this year's study refute this view; online education has made strong inroads in the core offerings for most types of institutions. Institutions in the sixteen SREB states have, in general, more favorable opinions about online learning than those of the national sample.

Nationally, 89%t of all institutions offer face-to-face undergraduate-level courses, and 55% of all institutions offer online undergraduate-level courses. This means that 62.5% of all national institutions that offer undergraduate face-to-face courses also offer the same level course online; in other words, online has a 62.5% national penetration rate for undergraduate-level courses. The undergraduate penetration rate for southern states is even more impressive at 69%. Far fewer institutions provide graduate-level courses (only 26% nationally), but the percentage of these that also have an online offering is actually slightly higher (65%) than the penetration rate for undergraduate courses, with a southern undergraduate penetration rate of 63%. This analysis does not address the *number* of courses that institutions offer in face-to-face and online modes, only if they offer any or not.

These penetration rates are more dramatic among Doctoral institutions and mid-size large schools. Among southern Doctoral institutions with graduate and undergraduate face-to-face courses, 76% also offer graduate courses online and 74% offer undergraduate courses online. Among large schools (over 15,000 enrollment) offering graduate and

undergraduate face-to-face courses, 88% are also offering undergraduate courses online and 96% are offering graduate courses online.

ONLINE COURSE PENETRATION – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Undergraduate Level	73.8%	72.0%	36.4%	84.6%	53.9%
Graduate Level	76.2%	68.9%	30.2%	100.0%	62.1%
Continuing Education	64.4%	51.0%	17.0%	74.6%	67.2%

The 100% penetration rate for graduate-level courses among Associates institutions bears mentioning. Most institutions classified as *Associates* are two-year schools, but a few offer graduate-level courses. The 100% figure indicates that there are very small but equal numbers of Associates institutions with face-to-face and online graduate-level offerings.

Survey responses also refute the notion that "non-core" Continuing Education courses account for the bulk of the growth in online learning. While the southern penetration rate for Continuing Education courses is relatively high (60%), the rates for undergraduate and graduate instruction are even higher. The conclusion is the same for the southern region as for the nation; growth in online course offerings is occurring at all levels—undergraduate and graduate as well as Continuing Education.

Online Program Offerings Show Wide Adoption

ONLINE PROGRAM PENETRATION – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

Certificate Program	36.9%
Associate Program	45.3%
Bachelors Program	31.9%
Masters Program	46.6%
Doctoral Program	16.6%
Professional Program	12.6%

A similar pattern of broad penetration is found when we examine online programs. Online certificate, professional and traditional degree programs go hand in hand with face-to-face programs. Forty-seven percent of schools offering face-to-face Master's programs also offer Master's programs online, the highest penetration rate for any program type. The figure is even more impressive among specific subgroups of institutions. The penetration rate for Master's programs rises to 50% in Public institutions. Doctoral institutions also have a high penetration rate (64%) for Master's programs.

Programs at the Associate level have the next highest overall penetration rate, with 45% of schools with face-to-face Associate's programs also offering at least one online version. The Associates and Doctoral/Research institutions represent the bulk of these offerings, but over one-quarter of all other school types with Associate's programs also offer online alternatives.

Certificate programs show the widest range of penetration by type of institution. Doctoral/Research institutions lead all others, with a penetration rate of 58%. Very few Baccalaureate institutions offer face-to-face Certificate programs (only 25%) and only a small fraction of these (8%) provide an online Certificate offering.

Programs at the Bachelor's level are offered in face-to-face format by over 95% of all southern Doctoral/Research, Master's, and Baccalaureate institutions. Of these, however, it is only the Doctoral/Research and Master's institutions that provide online program offerings in any great numbers (with penetration rates of 45% for Doctoral and 36% for Masters). Only 18% of Baccalaureate institutions that offer face-to-face Baccalaureate programs also offer at least one online version of a program. This result is no surprise given the generally negative opinion that these institutions have towards online education across a number of issues (reported elsewhere in this and previous reports).

With respect to school size, the largest schools (15000+ students) are most likely to offer both online and face-to-face Master's programs (88%). This pattern is repeated for most other program offerings as well; the smallest institutions have the lowest penetration rates across almost all program categories. The higher penetration rates among the largest schools may stem from a number of factors. Public institutions, which lead in online offerings, tend to be large, but there also may be economy of scale and availability of resources issues at work as well. The largest institutions have the most resources, and therefore, potentially, the greatest ability to move to new types of offerings.

Online Program Penetration – Southern States– Fall 2004

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Certificate Program	58.0%	46.3%	7.7%	35.4%	36.6%
Associate Program	72.7%	34.8%	25.7%	51.9%	32.0%
Bachelors Program	45.2%	36.2%	17.6%	23.1%	40.8%
Masters Program	63.8%	46.3%	26.6%	50.0%	46.5%
Doctoral Program	20.7%	19.4%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%
Professional Program	20.9%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	9.8%

Doctoral and Professional programs have notably lower overall penetration rates than other program types. It is the Doctoral/Research institutions that are the primary providers of the face-to-face Doctoral and Professional programs. All other institution types have low rates of face-to-face offerings for these programs; very few offer any online alternatives either. Since it is Doctoral/Research institutions which have the highest penetration rates for other programs (e.g., Master's, Certificate), this may indicate that Doctoral/Research institutions are more selective in what types of programs are offered online.

Most Discipline Areas Well Represented Online

In addition to asking if institutions offer courses and programs at particular levels, it is important to understand what discipline areas these courses and programs cover.

Online Penetration by Program Discipline – Fall 2003 – Southern States

Business	48.2%
Computer and Information Sciences	41.8%
Education	26.1%
Health Professions and Related Sciences	36.4%
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, Humanities	43.0%
Psychology	28.3%
Social Sciences and History	29.4%
All Other Programs	39.5%

Information on program penetration by discipline areas was collected in our 2004 survey and is presented here. Among disciplines being offered, business program offerings have the highest penetration rate with 48% of colleges offering face-to-face business programs also offering online business programs. Business programs are followed closely by liberal arts and sciences, general studies, humanities (43%), computer and information sciences (42%), and the catch-all category of all other programs (40%).

The penetration rate for business programs is relatively low among Private, nonprofit institutions (21%), but is at nearly two-thirds for (63%) Public institutions. The large public-private difference is found for every discipline – Public institutions have far higher penetration rates than those for Private, nonprofit institutions. The Public penetration rate is triple that of the Private, nonprofit institutions for every discipline with the single exception of Health Professions and Related Sciences, where it is merely double.

Online Penetration by Program Discipline – Fall 2003

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Business	62.5%	21.0%	**
Computer and Information Sciences	54.6%	18.1%	**
Education	38.5%	12.0%	**
Health Professions and Related Sciences	41.1%	21.8%	**
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, Humanities	59.9%	17.5%	**
Psychology	41.0%	11.2%	**
Social Sciences and History	44.4%	9.2%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

Who Teaches Online and Face-to-face Courses – Southern States – Fall 2004

	Face-to-face	Online
Core	71.7%	71.6%
Split	21.8%	17.8%
Adjunct	6.5%	10.6%

When institutions move to embrace online education, do they do so at the expense of their current core faculty? If a greater proportion of online courses are taught by adjunct faculty, hired on a per-course basis, it may mean fewer opportunities for core faculty members, and, some would argue, lower course quality. Some have claimed that the move to online education will cost jobs for core faculty. The evidence, however, does not support these assertions.

Survey respondents were asked to identify the most appropriate classification of their use of core or adjunct faculty to teach online and face-to-face courses; if it was "Exclusively" one type or the other, "Mostly," or a "Roughly equal mix of core and adjunct faculty." Survey results indicate that core faculty is used to teach online courses about as frequently as they are used to teach face-to-face courses (72% online and 72% face-to-face). This shows that the often cited prediction that online courses will rely much more heavily on adjunct faculty has not materialized. Not addressed in this analysis are the numbers of faculty involved at particular schools. An institution beginning to offer online courses may start with core faculty doing the development and initial teaching. Once the number of courses, and therefore the number of faculty needed, grow, the institution may reach out for additional adjunct faculty to handle the load.

When examined in more detail, some other differences emerge. Public colleges have more core faculty teaching online with 79% reporting that online courses are primarily taught by core faculty as compared to 69% for face-to-face courses. The disparity is in the other direction for Private, nonprofit institutions, where 58% report core faculty are teaching online courses and 80% are teaching face-to-face courses.

Who Teaches Online and Face-to-face Courses – Southern States – Fall 2004

	Doctoral/Research		Masters		Baccalaureate		Associates		Specialized	
	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online
Core	93.9%	85.9%	79.6%	66.3%	84.1%	86.5%	57.6%	72.5%	70.2%	52.4%
Split	6.1%	10.9%	12.4%	17.2%	13.5%	2.7%	35.6%	21.2%	16.5%	19.5%
Adjunct	0.0%	3.1%	8.0%	16.6%	2.4%	10.8%	6.8%	6.3%	13.2%	28.0%

School size appears to be a factor in who is teaching online. The largest schools (15,000 + students) have the largest percentage (86%) saying that their online courses were taught by core faculty, over ten percentage points higher than the number that reported core faculty teaching their face-to-face courses (75%). The pattern is exactly opposite for the smallest schools (under 1,500 students). Here the percentage reporting core faculty teaching online courses is the lowest at 59%, a full ten points less than they report for core faculty teaching face-to-face courses (69%).

While Doctoral, Masters and Specialized institutions had larger percentages of core faculty teaching face-to-face courses, Associates institutions indicated that online courses are much more likely to be taught by core faculty (73%) as compared to face-to-face courses (58%).

Online Enrollments Show Steady Growth

Nationally, the number of students taking at least one online course is now over two million, with over 2.3 million total students in Fall 2004. Overall online enrollment increased from 1,971,397 in Fall 2003 to 2,329,783 for Fall 2004. The number of new students added to those studying online matched the number added for the previous year (around 360,000 in both cases). Students at colleges and universities in the southern states represent 29% of online enrollments, with 672,000 students taking at least one online course.

The National Center for Education Statistics issues enrollment projections annually. The most recent of these, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2014*, provides three alternative projections for total enrollments for all degree-granting postsecondary institutions. The projected growth rates for the comparable period (2003 to 2004) range from a low of 0.87% to a high of 1.31%. These numbers are dwarfed by the 18.2% rate observed for the growth of the online enrollments.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING AT LEAST ONE ONLINE COURSE – NATIONAL – 2002 TO 2004

Time Period	Number of Students
Reported for Fall 2002:	1,602,970
Predicted Spring 2003 for Fall 2003:	1,920,734
Reported for Fall 2003:	1,971,397
Predicted Spring 2004 for Fall 2004:	2,634,189
Reported for Fall 2004:	2,329,783

The online enrollment growth, while substantial, did not measure up to what schools themselves had predicted in 2003 (2.6 million) and the year-to-year growth rate of 18.2% for 2003 to 2004 is somewhat lower than the 22.9% rate observed from 2002 to 2003. This may indicate that the growth rate, while both substantial and steady, has reached a plateau. It will be very interesting to observe what occurs in the coming years.

While schools do a decent job of predicting future enrollments in the aggregate, individual schools are often inaccurate when predicting their future online enrollments. Of the schools that predicted that their online enrollments would grow by at least 2% between Fall 2003 and Fall 2004, 50% grew, 8% stayed the same (between 98% and 102% of the previous enrollment), and 42% actually decreased. Conversely, of all the schools that expected their online enrollment to stay the same from Fall 2003 to Fall 2004, 64% had growth, 7% stayed within 2% of the previous enrollment, and 30% had a decrease. While the proportion of schools with decreases was surprisingly large, given that virtually none had predicted a decrease, the actual size of the enrollment decline was generally quite small (typically a few percent).

While schools may not always make accurate predictions of their future enrollments, it still is useful to understand what level of growth they are expecting. Among southern institutions with online enrollments for Fall 2004, the predicted mean growth rate for Fall 2005 was 18.7%, with a median of 10.0%.

Online Education is Part of Long-Term Strategy for Most Schools

The proportion of institutions which believe that online education is important to their long-term strategy continues to increase, growing from 52% of all southern institutions in 2003 to 59% in 2004 and 64% in 2005. Academic leaders were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement "Online education is critical to the long-term strategy of *[their institution]*."

Associates institutions are the most positive, showing a three year trend moving from 62% in 2003 to 76% in 2004 to 78% in 2005. By contrast, only 25% of Chief Academic Officers in Baccalaureate schools identified online education as a critical strategy in 2005.

A majority of the smallest colleges (54% for schools under 1500 students) believe online education is critical to their long term strategy. Among all larger schools the belief is even stronger (ranging from 67% to 78%).

Public institutions continue to express a strong belief that online education is key to their long-term strategy (70% in 2003, 73% in 2004, and 80% in 2005). However, Private, nonprofit schools which make this part of their long-term strategy are still in the minority, but the percentage continues to increase (from 31% in 2003 to 37% in 2004 to 41% in 2005).

ONLINE EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO LONG-TERM STRATEGY – SOUTHERN STATES – 2003, 2004, AND 2005

	2003	2004	2005
Agree	51.6%	59.2%	63.8%
Neutral	38.4%	31.8%	26.0%
Disagree	10.0%	9.0%	10.2%

Teaching Online Requires More Time and Effort

Teaching an Online Course Takes More Faculty Time and Effort – Southern States

	No Online	Have Online
Agree	35.5%	42.8%
Neutral	62.9%	48.7%
Disagree	1.6%	8.5%

Most academic leaders (53%) are neutral on the statement "Teaching an online course takes more faculty time and effort than teaching a face-to-face course." Over one-third (41%) believe that it takes more time and effort to teach online, while only 7% believe that it takes less time and effort.

It is the institutions which have online offerings that feel most strongly about this. Among schools that offer no online courses, 63% believe there is no difference in the effort required while 2% believe less effort is required, and 36% believe more effort is required. In schools that do offer online courses, a higher percentage (43%) believe it takes more effort and faculty time, while 49% believe the effort is the same, and 9% believe less faculty time and effort are required.

Students Require More Discipline to Complete Online Courses

A majority of respondents (72%) agree with the statement "Students need more discipline to succeed in an online course than in a face-to-face course." This belief is greatest in Associates institutions where 81% responded that students need more discipline to succeed in online courses. This is an interesting finding, given that Associates schools are among those with both the most positive views on online education and some of the highest penetration rates. Clearly, these schools do not view the need for increased student discipline as a strong inhibiting factor for online education.

Students Need More Discipline to Succeed in an Online Course – Southern States

	No Online	Have Online
Agree	62.4%	76.1%
Neutral	34.1%	19.9%
Disagree	3.5%	4.0%

Similar proportions of Public and Private, nonprofit colleges believe that it takes more discipline for students to succeed online (74% for Public vs. 68% in Private, nonprofit schools). A majority of respondents from institutions of all sizes agreed that more discipline is necessary to succeed in an online course (ranging from 53% to 77%). It appears that the more experience you have with online education the more likely you are to agree. Institutions which offer online education were more likely to agree that students need more discipline to succeed (76% vs. 62% at institutions with no online courses).

Faculty Acceptance of Online Education Still in Doubt

Although online education continues to penetrate into all types of institutions, only a minority of Chief Academic Officers agree that "Faculty at *[my institution]* accept the value and legitimacy of online education." The level of perceived acceptance has increased only slightly since 2003 (30% in 2003 compared with 35% in 2005). However, the majority of Chief Academic Officers continue to believe that faculty are neutral on this question; the level of perceived neutrality has declined, but only slightly (64% were neutral in 2003 vs. 58% in 2005).

FACULTY ACCEPT THE VALUE OF ONLINE EDUCATION – SOUTHERN STATES – 2003 AND 2005

	Public		Private, nonprofit		Private, for-profit	
	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005
Agree	41.7%	42.3%	18.1%	21.7%	**	**
Neutral	54.8%	54.2%	75.1%	67.3%	**	**
Disagree	3.6%	3.5%	6.9%	11.0%	**	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

Academic leaders at Public institutions had the most positive view of their faculty's attitude toward online education in both 2003 and 2005. Attitudes at Public institutions toward positive faculty acceptance of online education have not changed from 2003 (42%) to 2005 (42%). Attitudes at Private, nonprofit schools have also changed little during this period (18% in 2003 vs. 22% in 2005).

Examining these results by Carnegie class, Masters and Specialized institutions show a sizable increase in this belief of legitimacy while all other types of colleges show either a small increase or even a decrease in a belief that faculty see the value of online education. Offering online courses may imply a higher degree of legitimacy in the Chief Academic Officer's response. However, this factor only increases the number of institutions indicating that faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education to 43% (compared to 35% for all schools). Only 15% of schools without online courses say their faculty value online education.

Academic leaders are being asked for the overall attitude of their entire faculty for this question. The question does not address if specific subgroups of faculty hold different beliefs. As more faculty become familiar with online education, will the perception of faculty attitudes change? There is no evidence among southern schools that the increased penetration of online courses and programs in higher education has led to a greater level of perceived acceptance of online education on the part of faculty.

Online education is a new experience for many faculty and academic administrators. Lessons learned over a lifetime of teaching may or may not apply in the online setting. One concern that has been raised over time is whether it will be more difficult to evaluate online offerings than face-to-face courses? Will the "distance" between the student and the instructor hinder the ability to assess the pedagogical impact of the course?

IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF AN ONLINE COURSE – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

	Doctoral/Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Agree	7.0%	21.4%	22.0%	16.9%	9.9%
Neutral	46.5%	51.2%	61.2%	50.3%	68.6%
Disagree	46.5%	27.4%	16.7%	32.7%	21.5%

Academic leaders believe that the evaluation of an online course is no more difficult than for face-to-face instruction. Eighty-two percent of respondents do not agree with the statement "It is more difficult to evaluate the quality of an online course than of a face-to-face course." This response is about the same from institutions which offer online courses (82%) and those which don't (83%).

Fewer Doctoral universities believe it is more difficult to evaluate quality than all other Carnegie classifications (7% vs. 21% Masters, vs. 22% Baccalaureate, vs. 17% Associates, and vs. 10% for Specialized institutions).

Electronic Campus Results

SREB's Electronic Campus, launched in January, 1998, is a student services web site representing the public and independent colleges and universities in the SREB states. It serves as an "electronic marketplace" of online courses and programs from the South's accredited colleges and universities. The Electronic Campus is a comprehensive source for information about higher education opportunities in the South whether traditional campus study or elearning.

A total of 355 institutions that participate in the Electronic Campus were included in the survey sample, with an overall response rate of 47.9%.   Because of their self-selection in participating in the "electronic marketplace" activities of the SREB Electronic Campus, these schools might be expected have more favorable attitudes towards online education. The percentage of schools who expressed agreement with each of the five major opinion questions in this study are presented below for Electronic Campus, Southern State, and National samples.

For two of the five topics, "Students need more discipline to succeed in an online course" and "It is more difficult to evaluate the quality of an online course," the three different groups of schools expressed similar views. Both Southern State and Electronic Campus institutions hold a somewhat stronger view that "Students need more discipline to succeed in an online course" than the national sample. Electronic Campus schools are the most likely to agree that their faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education, but even among theses institutions it remains a minority (47%). The largest difference is shown for the question of the long-term strategic importance of online education for the institution, where Electronic Campus schools view online education as far more critical (82%) than either Southern States (64%) or the National sample (56%).

OPINION QUESTIONS – PERCENTAGE AGREEING – NATIONAL, SOUTHERN STATES, AND ELECTRONIC CAMPUS SCHOOLS – FALL 2004

	Electronic Campus Schools	Southern States	National Sample
Online education is critical to the long-term strategy	82.2%	63.8%	56.3%
Teaching an online course takes more faculty time and effort	47.1%	40.7%	35.1%
Students need more discipline to succeed in an online course	70.5%	72.2%	64.7%
Faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education	43.7%	35.3%	30.9%
It is more difficult to evaluate the quality of an online course	13.2%	18.1%	18.0%

Summary of the Findings

- Almost two-thirds of all schools offering face-to-face courses also offer online courses. More than 46% of schools offering Master's degree programs also offer these programs online.

- Southern schools are consistently more positive about online learning than the results reported for the national sample.

- Business programs have the highest penetration with 48% of southern schools that offer these as a face-to-face programs also offering at least one online business program.

- While growth did not meet reported expectations from last year's survey, an overall growth rate of 18.2% for national online enrollments was reported between 2003 and 2004.

- Southern schools, with 672,000 online students, represent 29% of all online enrollments.

- The online enrollment growth rate of 18.2% is over ten times that projected by the National Center for Education Statistics for the entire postsecondary student population.

- An increasing majority of most types of schools see online education as key to their long-term strategy (exceptions: Private, nonprofit institutions, schools with under 1500 students, and Baccalaureate institutions).

- Most academic leaders are neutral on the statement that it takes more faculty time and effort to teach online, but one in four do believe this to be the case.

- Academic leaders at a majority of all schools believe that the effort and discipline required of students to successfully complete an online course is greater than in face-to-face courses.

- A majority of all schools believe that evaluating the quality of online courses is no more difficult than that of face-to-face courses.

- The increased penetration of online courses and programs has not had a positive impact on perceived faculty acceptance; there continue to be only a small minority of academic leaders that agree that their faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education.

SURVEY SUPPORT AND METHODOLOGY

The 2005 Sloan Survey of Online Learning was supported by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group, and is published by the Sloan Consortium. In order to ensure objectivity, the Sloan Consortium does not have editorial control over the survey design, data capture, data analysis, or presentation of the findings.

The sample is composed of all active, degree-granting institutions of higher education open to the Public in the sixteen southern states. An email with a link to a web-based survey form was sent to Chief Academic Officers at these institutions. If there was no designated Chief Academic Officer, the survey was sent to the President of the institution. In some cases, the survey team was notified by the recipient of another, more appropriate recipient, and the survey was forwarded to this individual.

All sample schools were sent an invitation email and two reminders, inviting their participation and assuring them that no individual responses would be released. The survey team worked with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) on a joint outreach to schools in the SREB-member states. All survey respondents were promised a free copy of the report. Schools in SREB-member states were also promised a report presenting results for SREB schools. Nationally, of 3216 surveys sent, 1025 responses were received, representing a 31.9% overall response rate. A total of 1099 surveys were sent and 413 responses received among the sixteen SREB states, for a response rate of 37.6%. These responses have been merged with the data from the two previous survey years (994 national and 313 southern in 2003 and 1170 national and 383 southern responses in 2004) for examination of changes over time. A stricter definition of "agree" and "disagree" for questions dealing with the level of agreement with particular statements is being used this year; data from previous years used for comparison have been recoded to match the new definition. Additional enrollment data for the for-profit sector was provided by Eduventures, Inc. This information was merged with the data collected for the Sloan Survey to improve the accuracy of enrollment estimates.

Data were linked to the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System database, and responders and nonresponders were compared to create weights, if necessary, to ensure that the survey results reflected the characteristics of the entire population of schools. Variables used for producing probability weights included size of the institution, public/private, nonprofit/for-profit, and Carnegie class of school (Doctoral/Research, Masters, Baccalaureate, Associates, and Specialized). To ensure that a different response rate from schools in SREB member states did not bias the results, weights were computed for all of the above characteristics independently for schools in SREB states and for those in all other states. These weights provided a small adjustment to the results allowing for inferences to be made about the entire population of active, degree-granting institutions of higher education in the United States and the southern states.

Note: *To encourage participation and ensure objectivity, respondents are promised that no individual-level responses would be released. Results are not reported for table cells that contain a small number of institutions, to prevent the "guessing" of individual responses. No results are presented for southern for-profit institutions for this reason.*

APPENDIX

Online Course Offerings Becoming Pervasive

ONLINE COURSE PENETRATION – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

Undergraduate Level	68.6%
Graduate Level	62.5%
Continuing Education	60.4%

ONLINE COURSE PENETRATION – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500–2999	3000–7499	7500–14999	15000+
Undergraduate Level	51.2%	76.9%	78.6%	100.0%	89.7%
Graduate Level	45.5%	57.0%	64.0%	95.1%	96.2%
Continuing Education	46.5%	64.4%	52.8%	94.5%	73.9%

Online Program Offerings Show Wide Adoption

ONLINE PROGRAM PENETRATION – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Certificate Program	43.5%	17.5%	**
Associate Program	55.9%	14.2%	**
Bachelors Program	40.5%	18.2%	**
Masters Program	57.2%	25.2%	**
Doctoral Program	13.2%	15.2%	**
Professional Program	21.4%	3.8%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

ONLINE PROGRAM PENETRATION – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2004

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500–2999	3000–7499	7500–14999	15000+
Certificate Program	17.6%	43.4%	42.6%	48.3%	83.5%
Associate Program	31.7%	58.5%	56.2%	45.7%	77.8%
Bachelors Program	25.5%	27.8%	38.9%	41.3%	54.2%
Masters Program	33.8%	37.5%	47.0%	58.6%	88.0%
Doctoral Program	10.0%	28.9%	10.6%	11.4%	24.3%
Professional Program	5.1%	4.7%	5.4%	30.0%	35.4%

Most Discipline Areas Well Represented Online

ONLINE PENETRATION BY PROGRAM DISCIPLINE – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2003

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500–2999	3000–7499	7500–14999	15000+
Business	34.9%	56.7%	55.8%	60.9%	48.2%
Computer and Information Sciences	35.3%	42.6%	46.2%	53.8%	42.9%
Education	17.7%	16.6%	31.9%	68.6%	44.0%
Health Professions and Related Sciences	31.2%	28.2%	35.4%	57.3%	67.9%
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, Humanities	35.6%	45.1%	46.2%	52.4%	57.1%
Psychology	21.2%	35.8%	29.9%	30.6%	26.4%
Social Sciences and History	24.8%	30.0%	33.0%	35.0%	32.1%

ONLINE PENETRATION BY PROGRAM DISCIPLINE – SOUTHERN STATES – FALL 2003

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Business	31.9%	41.0%	19.8%	65.8%	22.9%
Computer and Information Sciences	20.3%	23.7%	15.4%	62.4%	66.1%
Education	46.6%	40.2%	5.7%	30.0%	14.9%
Health Professions and Related Sciences	53.1%	43.5%	10.3%	36.6%	57.9%
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, Humanities	34.2%	29.1%	13.0%	70.1%	17.7%
Psychology	10.5%	12.6%	9.0%	52.0%	7.7%
Social Sciences and History	14.5%	15.5%	9.4%	59.5%	0.0%

Core Faculty Most Likely to Teach Online

Who Teaches Online and Face-to-face Courses – Southern States – Fall 2004

	Under 1500		1500–2999		3000–7499		7500–14999		15000+	
	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online
Core	68.6%	59.1%	75.4%	80.1%	72.1%	74.3%	76.1%	70.1%	74.5%	85.7%
Split	22.6%	23.8%	20.2%	12.4%	22.8%	17.9%	16.9%	20.9%	25.5%	10.7%
Adjunct	8.8%	17.1%	4.4%	7.5%	5.1%	7.8%	7.0%	9.0%	0.0%	3.6%

Who Teaches Online and Face-to-face Courses – Southern States – Fall 2004

	Public		Private, nonprofit		Private, for-profit	
	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online	Face-to-face	Online
Core	68.6%	78.9%	80.1%	58.2%	**	**
Split	26.2%	17.0%	14.5%	22.0%	**	**
Adjunct	5.2%	4.2%	5.4%	19.8%	**	**

Online Enrollments Show Steady Growth

Predicted Percent Increase in Online Enrollment 2004 to 2005 – Southern States

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Mean	17.1%	31.9%	18.1%	13.3%	23.6%
Median	10.0%	12.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%

Predicted Percent Increase in Online Enrollment 2004 to 2005 – Southern States

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500– 2999	3000– 7499	7500– 14999	15000+
Mean	17.1%	16.3%	24.4%	17.2%	18.1%
Median	10.0%	10.0%	8.6%	15.0%	11.0%

Predicted Percent Increase in Online Enrollment 2004 to 2005 – Southern States

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Mean	17.4%	25.3%	**
Median	10.0%	10.0%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

Online Education is Part of Long-term Strategy for Most Schools

ONLINE EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Agree	61.6%	64.4%	25.4%	78.3%	68.9%
Neutral	33.7%	26.8%	42.6%	18.2%	27.9%
Disagree	4.7%	8.8%	32.1%	3.5%	3.3%

ONLINE EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500 to 2999	3000 to 7499	7500 to 14999	15000+
Agree	52.4%	71.1%	67.4%	89.2%	77.6%
Neutral	34.8%	18.5%	23.5%	10.8%	19.0%
Disagree	12.8%	10.4%	9.0%	0.0%	3.4%

ONLINE EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Agree	79.6%	41.1%	**
Neutral	15.1%	40.3%	**
Disagree	5.3%	18.6%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

ONLINE EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	No Online	Have Online
Agree	26.8%	78.8%
Neutral	50.3%	16.2%
Disagree	22.9%	5.0%

Teaching Online Requires More Time and Effort

Teaching an Online Course Takes More Faculty Time and Effort – Southern States – 2005

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Agree	48.2%	46.8%	27.9%	46.3%	36.4%
Neutral	38.8%	47.8%	64.4%	49.3%	55.4%
Disagree	12.9%	5.4%	7.7%	4.4%	8.3%

Teaching an Online Course Takes More Faculty Time and Effort – Southern States – 2005

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500– 2999	3000– 7499	7500– 14999	15000+
Agree	38.6%	38.8%	48.0%	39.7%	39.7%
Neutral	55.7%	55.3%	43.4%	49.3%	56.9%
Disagree	5.8%	5.9%	8.6%	11.0%	3.4%

Teaching an Online Course Takes More Faculty Time and Effort – Southern States – 2005

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Agree	45.6%	37.0%	**
Neutral	47.3%	58.7%	**
Disagree	7.1%	4.3%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

Teaching an Online Course Takes More Faculty Time and Effort – Southern States – 2005

	No Online	Have Online
Agree	35.5%	42.8%
Neutral	62.9%	48.7%
Disagree	1.6%	8.5%

Students Require More Discipline to Complete Online Courses

STUDENTS NEED MORE DISCIPLINE TO SUCCEED IN AN ONLINE COURSE – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Agree	40.7%	69.3%	69.4%	81.2%	67.5%
Neutral	47.7%	30.7%	25.2%	14.6%	32.5%
Disagree	11.6%	0.0%	5.3%	4.2%	0.0%

STUDENTS NEED MORE DISCIPLINE TO SUCCEED IN AN ONLINE COURSE – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500– 2999	3000– 7499	7500– 14999	15000+
Agree	72.2%	76.5%	71.8%	73.0%	53.4%
Neutral	23.8%	20.6%	23.6%	25.7%	39.7%
Disagree	4.1%	2.9%	4.5%	1.4%	6.9%

STUDENTS NEED MORE DISCIPLINE TO SUCCEED IN AN ONLINE COURSE – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Agree	74.3%	68.2%	**
Neutral	22.5%	30.5%	**
Disagree	3.1%	1.3%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

STUDENTS NEED MORE DISCIPLINE TO SUCCEED IN AN ONLINE COURSE – SOUTHERN STATES – 2005

	No Online	Have Online
Agree	62.4%	76.1%
Neutral	34.1%	19.9%
Disagree	3.5%	4.0%

Faculty Acceptance of Online Education Still in Doubt

Faculty Accept the Value and Legitimacy of Online Education – Southern States – 2003 and 2005

	Under 1500		1500–2999		3000–7499		7500–14999		15000+	
	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005
Agree	24.1%	30.3%	33.2%	37.1%	38.7%	43.7%	28.6%	36.5%	49.2%	32.1%
Neutral	70.1%	61.1%	60.8%	56.3%	57.1%	48.2%	71.4%	63.5%	46.0%	67.9%
Disagree	5.8%	8.5%	6.0%	6.6%	4.2%	8.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%

Faculty Accept the Value and Legitimacy of Online Education – Southern States – 2003 and 2005

	Doctoral/ Research		Masters		Baccalaureate		Associates		Specialized	
	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005	2003	2005
Agree	29.1%	28.6%	24.2%	31.2%	17.6%	18.8%	38.2%	43.7%	14.8%	41.3%
Neutral	64.6%	69.0%	74.2%	61.5%	65.8%	62.0%	57.5%	52.7%	85.2%	58.7%
Disagree	6.3%	2.4%	1.6%	7.3%	16.6%	19.2%	4.3%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%

Evaluating Online Courses No More Difficult than Face-to-face

It is More Difficult to Evaluate the Quality of an Online Course – Southern States – 2005

	Doctoral/ Research	Masters	Baccalaureate	Associates	Specialized
Agree	7.0%	21.4%	22.0%	16.9%	9.9%
Neutral	46.5%	51.2%	61.2%	50.3%	68.6%
Disagree	46.5%	27.4%	16.7%	32.7%	21.5%

It is More Difficult to Evaluate the Quality of an Online Course – Southern States – 2005

	Enrollment Size				
	Under 1500	1500– 2999	3000– 7499	7500– 14999	15000+
Agree	21.1%	18.3%	13.3%	27.8%	0.0%
Neutral	57.8%	54.2%	52.8%	37.5%	51.7%
Disagree	21.1%	27.5%	33.9%	34.7%	48.3%

It is More Difficult to Evaluate the Quality of an Online Course – Southern States – 2005

	Public	Private, nonprofit	Private, for-profit
Agree	18.9%	18.5%	**
Neutral	49.4%	62.6%	**
Disagree	31.7%	19.0%	**

** Results withheld to protect the privacy of reporting institutions.

It is More Difficult to Evaluate the Quality of an Online Course – Southern States – 2005

	No Online	Have Online
Agree	18.8%	17.9%
Neutral	66.9%	49.0%
Disagree	14.3%	33.1%

Growing by Degrees: *Online Education in the United States, 2005 - Southern Edition* is based on data collected for the third annual national report on the state of online education in U.S. Higher Education. This year's study was aimed at answering some of the fundamental questions about the nature and extent of online education. Supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group, and based on responses from over 400 southern colleges and universities, this special report examines the nature and extent of online learning among the 16 southern states that make up the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Among the questions addressed are:

• Have the course and program offerings in online education entered the mainstream?

• Who is teaching online?

• Is online education becoming part of long-term strategy for most schools?

• Have online enrollments continued their rapid growth?

• What are Chief Academic Officer's opinions about online education?

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