



# Making outstanding online education accessible at scale

Arizona State University



Pearson

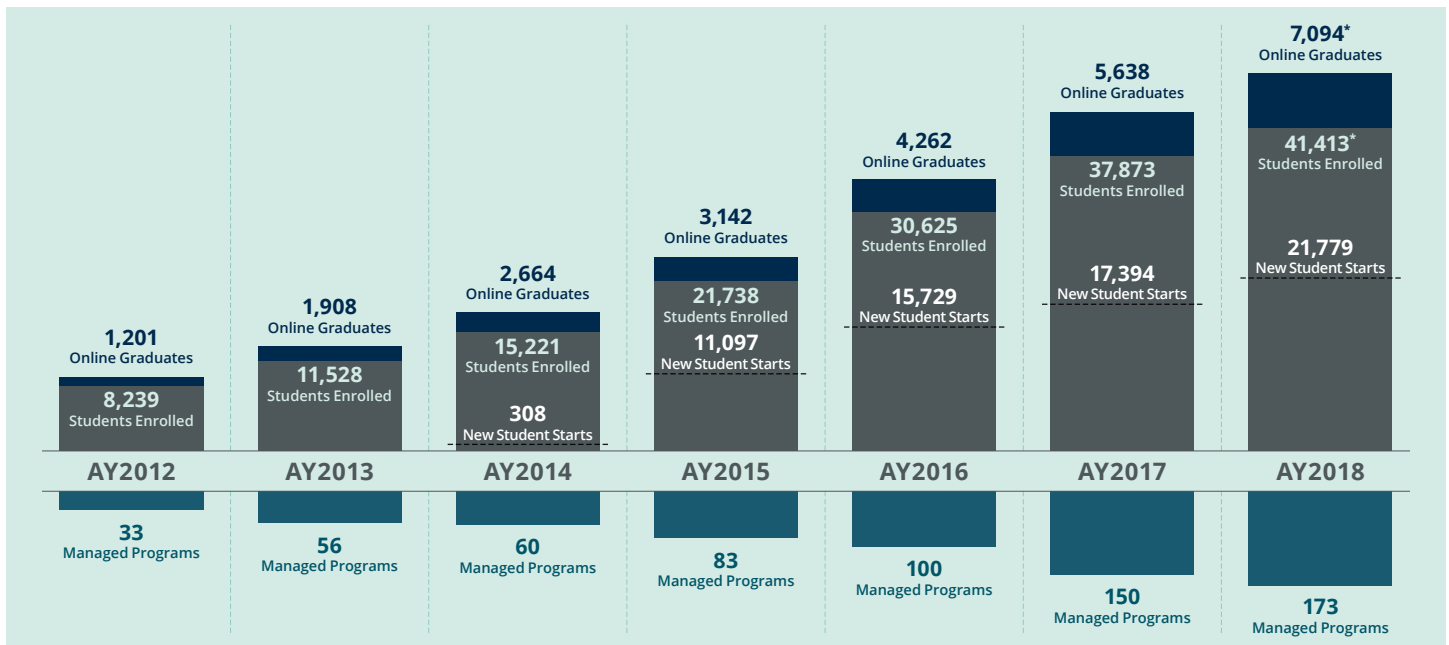
## Combining inclusion, excellence, speed, and scale

Arizona State University's (ASU) mission is to enable every student with a desire to learn to pursue a college degree. As it meets this ambitious goal for inclusion, it's also becoming a national leader in academic quality, a global leader in interdisciplinary research, and an increasingly powerful force for improving communities.

To accomplish all these goals, ASU innovates continuously, learns quickly from experience, and propagates effective innovations widely.

A centerpiece of ASU's innovation strategy is ASU Online, which has scaled from 8,200 to 41,000 students in six years, as its portfolio of fully online programs has grown from 33 to 173.<sup>1</sup> "Scaling isn't just about the number of programs," says Leah Lommel, Chief Operating Officer of EdPlus at ASU. "You must also evaluate your marketing efforts to recruit ever-larger numbers of students."

To help ASU accelerate online growth, EdPlus established a strategic partnership with Pearson. According to Lommel, who manages this relationship, "Pearson helps with all facets of marketing and messaging to distinguish our high quality programs from other institutions. Then, Pearson's enrollment team helps prospects overcome their initial fear, take the big step of applying, and prepare for success in their chosen program. They make sure each potential student makes a well-informed decision, and feels confident about what they're about to do and why."



\* estimates

## Building and sustaining a culture of innovation

ASU has worked to build a culture of innovation since President Michael Crow arrived in 2002, and has topped all four annual *U.S. News & World Report* “most innovative schools” rankings. “We have a ‘fail fast’ approach,” says Lommel. “You have to take a risk to find out quickly if something works. If people know it’s OK to fail, they try harder not to.”

ASU and EdPlus know that online innovation can benefit on-campus students, too. Says Lommel, “You’re not only building for online: you’re finding the best learning opportunities for each student, wherever they are.”

Just as innovative technology can improve instruction, it can also help faculty achieve their research goals. “We have faculty who are most interested in teaching, faculty most interested in research to advance the field, and faculty who want to do it all. We need to help them leverage their strengths, so they can all help us achieve our mission.”

## Understanding the “whole” online student

Pearson and ASU’s EdPlus teams work together to anticipate and address the needs of online students. When Pearson began working with ASU, it helped them understand that online students benefit from shorter courses: they want to take fewer classes in a faster time frame. In response, the whole university shifted its academic calendar.

ASU innovates to improve the entire online student experience, from course delivery to student support and community. Its recent national rankings — for example, #6 in online MBAs and online graduate criminal justice programs, #6 in online graduate business programs other than MBA, and 9th best master’s program in engineering — prove that scale, speed, and excellence are fully compatible.<sup>2</sup>

ASU’s focus on student experience proved especially valuable when it was discovered they were attracting an unexpectedly younger online student demographic. Younger students often don’t perform as well online, but ASU saw an opportunity. “We know people are taking more online courses in high school, and living more in online mode,” says Lommel. “So we asked, ‘How do we support, coach, and engage them better?’”

“We’re also working with Pearson to see how our messaging works for freshmen, and identify them earlier to serve them differently. We’re still learning, but we’ve grown our online freshman class from 100 to 2,200” — while also being ranked #2 nationally in online bachelor’s degree programs.”



*Together, we’ve built a really solid foundation, and that allows us to maximize our efforts together, so rapid growth doesn’t have to rely on brute force.*

— Leah Lommel  
Assistant Vice President  
& Chief Operating Officer  
EdPlus and ASU Online  
ASU University

### A partnership built on transparency and candor

ASU Online's partnership with Pearson has thrived through change and rapid growth. It works, says Lommel, because "we quickly agreed to be as transparent as possible. You need a bit of vulnerability with a partner."

ASU Online and Pearson believe in using data to drive your efforts — but never forgetting the human stories. Pearson assesses the market and how to reach audiences, and shares what's new in digital marketing. ASU shares what they're learning about their students. Lommel adds, "You could tell a partner: 'just do what I tell you.' But it's better to say, 'let's build this together.' By staying open, we can innovate together."

ASU's relationship with Pearson reflects its exceptional openness to partnerships. "As President Crow says, we're better with our partners. You can't be an expert in everything. You have to choose who the experts are, to help you improve.

"An OPM partner can educate you, and provide services they're experts in. Sometimes people spend so much time overplanning, nothing happens. The right partner helps you envision it and make it happen."

Learn more about ASU Online at <https://asuonline.asu.edu/>

1 "EdPlus at Arizona State University: Who We Are," <https://edplus.asu.edu/who-we-are>

2 Arizona State University Online Programs, US News & World Report rankings for 2019 (<https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/arizona-state-university-104151>); and ASU #1 in Innovation Four Years in a Row, ASU Now (<https://asuonline.asu.edu/newsroom/asu-online-news/asu-named-1-innovation-four-years-row>)

3 "ASU Online in Review 2018/19," ASU and Pearson data.

#### ASU by the Numbers

2018/19

**35,540**

students currently enrolled  
for Spring A 2019  
(19% increase YoY)

**25%**

Increase in YoY new students  
since 2014/15

**#2**

*U.S. News and World Report*  
named Arizona State  
University's bachelors  
programs #2 in the nation, a  
jump from last year's #4 spot

**174**

Unique programs spanning 15  
distinct colleges

**111**

Joint projects/initiatives  
completed in 2018 including  
First-time Freshmen  
Task Force, New Program  
Launch Process, and  
Chat Implementation

Today's increasingly competitive landscape requires you to reach more of the right students where they are, and leverage online platforms with ever-greater sophistication. Partnering with Pearson can help you drive faster and more strategic change to move the needle on access, retention, and completion. Our online program management services and global community can help your institution and your students thrive.

For more information, visit [pearson.com/opm](https://pearson.com/opm)



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