

Addressing the myths and realities of going online

As a Provost in higher education, you're focused on the day-to-day realities of academics at your institution. Your goals are to move the mission of the university while keeping daily operations moving forward, and maintaining a sympathetic ear to the plight of faculty who may be hesitant to change. Understanding the realities of going online will help you ask the right questions for optimal academic growth and faculty satisfaction.



- ?** **Myth:** *Online students are very similar to on campus students, and require similar support.*
- ✓** **Reality:** Not quite. Starting a program online is essentially about creating a new product for a new target market. The demographics of a typical online student tend to skew older; they're working adults with families and other responsibilities, and usually bring some prior college credit to the experience. They desire limited choices, convenience, and appreciate the shortest path to a degree.
- ?** **Myth:** *Faculty will never get on board with launching and teaching online programs.*
- ✓** **Reality:** Faculty can often be the most challenging audience to get on board when choosing to go online. Often, they feel that online programs are “watered down” versions of on campus programs, or that they will require extra work on their behalf. We work closely to provide a one-stop link to your institution’s critical services, freeing faculty to focus exclusively on teaching and learning, not program and course logistics. From this direct support, we’ve found that some of the biggest faculty challengers become an institution’s greatest advocates. Also, online programs can lead to additional resources for faculty — more TAs, more tenured positions, or more time to do research.
- ?** **Myth:** *Online Program Management providers are not flexible and will only work with us one way.*
- ✓** **Reality:** We think you'll find Pearson to be highly flexible. While we offer core services (marketing, recruitment, and student services), many of our other services are optional and can be customized. For example, course development is available but not required, we are technology agnostic (working with any LMS, SIS), and do not require the use of Pearson print content.



 **Myth:** *Online programs quickly become profitable and will rapidly generate new income for other initiatives.*

 **Reality:** Online programs usually cost more than institutions expect. Even healthy programs may not break even for three years, and some take five years.

Going online takes a strategic approach, and decisions should be based on solid research and achievable projections. OPM providers work with institutions to agree on these financial and enrollment projections, and are held accountable to these goals. If an institution chooses to take the same strategic approach and fully fund their own programs, it will be critical to success to manage those programs in an environment of accountability.

 **Myth:** *It's inevitable that our online programs will be less rigorous and our online students will be less qualified.*

 **Reality:** Evidence shows online can be as good, if not better, than on-ground. In many cases, faculty who've historically taught in ground-based classes enjoy the challenging dynamic of translating their work into a fully online environment. Each institution plans and administers the educational experience built into each course. We faithfully represent and support that educational experience. The same academic policies and controls that govern on campus programs generally apply to online learning programs. Course development services specialize in online pedagogy and can increase the level of engagement and effectiveness of the course.

 **Myth:** *If the program is successful on-ground, then it should be successful online. Or, If we put a program online, it will take away from our on-ground students.*

 **Reality:** This varies by program — some are best suited for on-ground, others transfer well to online, but because each option caters to a different type of student, there is very little cannibalization of students. For example, a working adult does not have a desire to drive to/from campus two times a week; they want to learn on their own schedule.

Let's talk about it

Today's increasingly competitive landscape requires a strategic approach to successfully reach more of the right students where they are. Partnering with Pearson can help you accelerate strategic change while reducing the risks associated with growing your online presence. Our online program management services and community can help your students thrive as you build the brand and reputation you're striving for.

For more information, visit pearson.com/opm



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