

Navigating the Digital Frontier:

Online Program Trends and Winning Marketing Strategies



SNEAK PEEK...

Navigating the Digital Frontier: Online Program Trends and Winning Marketing Strategies

Flexibility. Affordability. Accessibility. There are a number of reasons why prospective students are flocking to online degree programs. And with universities everywhere offering plenty of options to choose from, it's more important than ever to ensure that your programs are top-notch and your marketing strategies help you stand out from the crowd.

If this sounds like a daunting task, don't worry — we're here to help. In the weeks to come, we'll be releasing the resource you need to make informed decisions about the future of your programs and marketing strategies: ***Navigating the Digital Frontier: Online Program Trends and Winning Marketing Strategies***.

This white paper will feature the latest National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS data on online program enrollment and trends. You'll learn how the looming demographic cliff could impact programs, who today's online student is (and how to reach them), strategies for developing a solid recruitment strategy, and more.

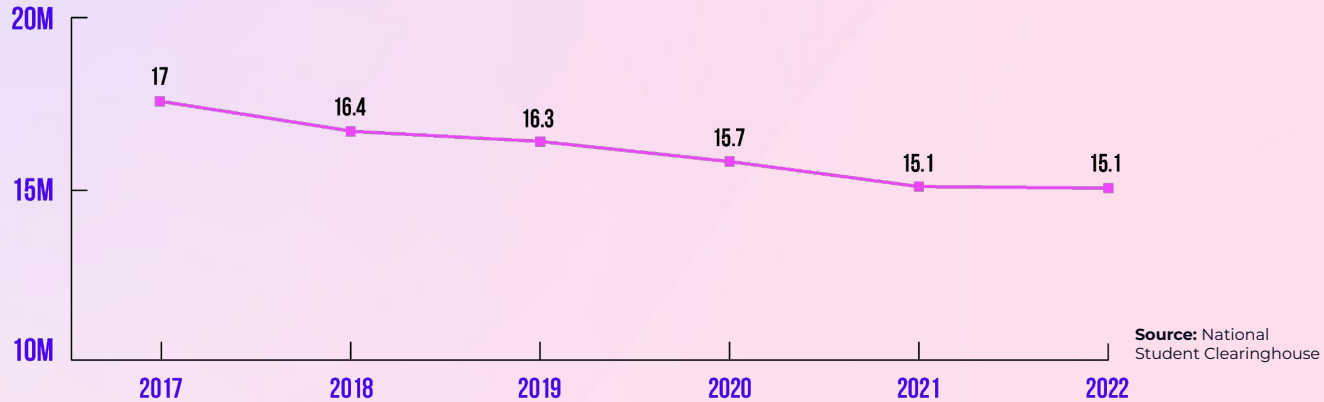
To set the stage for the white paper's release, we wanted to share the following with you: the National Student Clearinghouse's latest survey of the online program market and a quick review of the current 2021 IPEDS trends. Here's some information that will help you set the stage for reassessing and revitalizing your online programs...

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Declining enrollments are the new norm

U.S. Higher Education Enrollments (in Millions): 2017-22



→ In the last five years, higher ed enrollments have been declining, **with overall fall enrollments dropping from 17 million in 2017 to 15.1 million in 2022.** This trend highlights the need for institutions to adapt to effectively attract and retain students.

→ **While the decline has impacted all higher ed institutions, two-year institutions were hit hardest.** The decrease in enrollments at these institutions is concerning, as it may hinder social mobility and access to education for underserved communities.

Institutions focused on high school students will see declines

- Projections show a **15% decline in college-going students from 2025 to 2029.**
- Institutions heavily dependent on this demographic for enrollment need to do the following:
 - ◆ **Diversify their enrollment pools.**
 - ◆ Plan for smaller cohorts as an alternative strategy.



The "traditional" student (a recent 18-year-old high school graduate) will be far less common due to the impending enrollment cliff.

Forecasted Number of College-Going Students in the U.S.



Source: Nathan Crawe's Higher Education Demand Index

Good news: pockets of growth are there

Underneath the surface, **growth has been occurring with online enrollments as well as with nonwhite student groups.**

- As a percentage of enrollment, these groups have steadily grown their share.
- Even with the 2020 anomaly, it is widely believed that **online enrollments will not shrink back to pre-pandemic levels**, as online education has become normalized.
- At the very least, **students will look for a blended/hybrid learning experience** throughout their degree progression.

Percentage of Nonwhite and Online Undergraduate Enrollments: 2017-21



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We'll be updating our insights with the latest IPEDS data in September.

The majority of students are “nontraditional”

Who?

Depending on parameters, **more than 80% of students could be classified as “nontraditional.”**

- Previously, a “nontraditional” learner was someone older than age 25.
- However, as online learning and interest in alternative credentials grows, the average age of these students has actually trended younger.

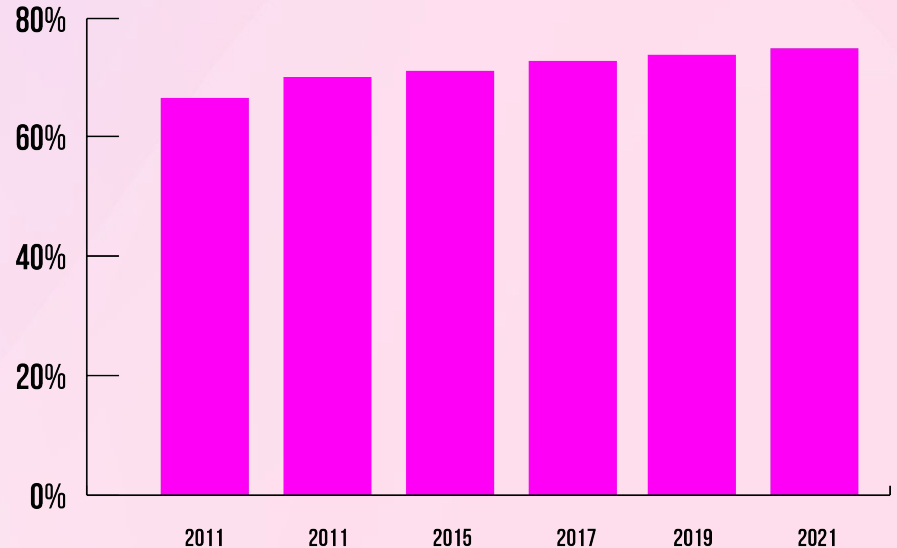
+8%

**Enrollment
growth, ages 18
or 19, since 2011**

-14%

**Enrollment
decline, age 25+,
since 2011**

% of Undergraduate Enrollment Under Age 25: 2011-21



Source: IPEDS, U.S. Census

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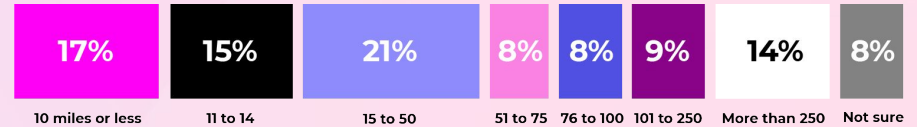
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Where can you find nontraditional online learners?

Online programs **mostly enroll local students**, despite being accessible to students nationwide.

- Approximately **53% of online learners live within a 50-mile radius** of the campus. Nearly **70% of online learners reside within 100 miles** of the campus.
- Many online students prefer not to visit the campus, **but about one-third of them consider proximity to the campus important.**
 - ◆ **Among those who value campus proximity:**
 - 45% would visit the campus to connect with a professor.
 - 43% would attend program requirements on-site.

How far do you live from the closest campus of the school you attend/plan to enroll?



Online Learners: Proximity to Campus



53% live within 50 miles

70% live within 100 miles

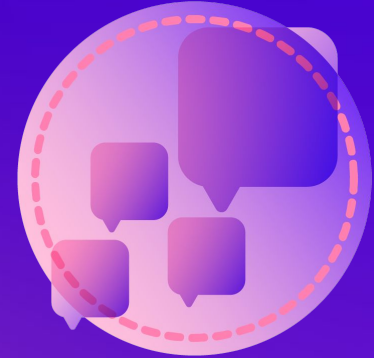
Key takeaways



→ We're seeing widespread enrollment declines, with two-year institutions experiencing the greatest impact.



→ Institutions heavily reliant on the traditional 18-year-old demographic must diversify their enrollment pools.



→ Universities need to embrace an online-first approach. Students seek hybrid learning experiences for their degree progression.

You'll Be the First to Know the Latest Data

As soon as *Navigating the Digital Frontier: Online Program Trends and Winning Marketing Strategies* is complete with the latest IPEDS data, we'll send it your way.

In the meantime, can we help you address your online program enrollment questions? Whether it's [conducting a degree program viability study](#) or [assisting you in creating the right nurture campaign to reach online students](#), we're here to help.

[Let's get a conversation started today](#) ►

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