

Marketing online degree programs: How do traditional-residential programs compete?

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Abstract

One hundred fifty university web sites were segregated into one of three groups, accredited residential, regionally accredited online, and non-accredited online institutions. The promotional imagery, marketing messages and marketing themes found on the landing pages of each university program web site were analyzed for similarities and differences. A check sheet containing keywords was developed and as each web page was analyzed, the results were recorded individually by two researchers. Intercoder reliability was confirmed with a Holsti correlation coefficient of 88%. A t-test was used to assess variations of keywords across each category and a chi-square was used to assess within group differences. The results show that accredited residential institutions are not leveraging clear advantages in order to differentiate themselves from online accredited and non-accredited institutions. Benefits and themes featured on web sites were remarkably similar, focusing on easily copied claims rather than building competitive advantages with emphasis on accreditation, faculty, resources, and quality of education.

Keywords: Marketing online education, distance education

Background

Higher education is expected to grow and to become more competitive in the coming years, placing increased pressure on institutions to market their programs. The largest number of high school students is expected to graduate in 2009 (Selingo, 2005), and the demand for highly educated, skilled workers is expected to increase. With 75% of Americans lacking a bachelor's degree (Carnevale & Olsen, 2005), continuing education programs have ample opportunities to provide certificates, training, or university degree programs. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics suggests that in 2003, about 90 percent of public four-year colleges offered bachelor's degree programs online (2003).

Traditional-residential universities that offer online programs are facing increased competition for new student enrollments. Many of the for-profit online institutions are quickly gaining market share by offering programs similar to those offered available through traditional universities in residential settings (Golden, 2006). For example, Sylvan Learning has grown their online teacher education programs at more than 20 percent per year, and Kaplan has begun to offer education programs that directly compete with traditional-residential programs (Blumenstyck, 2003). At the same time, these institutions have expanded their online programs through acquisitions, and have been noted to account for a majority of the recent publicly disclosed purchases and investments in higher education (Blumenstyck & Farrell, 2003). It has been through this aggressive growth strategy that these institutions have managed to increase their share of enrollments to one-third of all online students (Blumenstyck, 2005).

Spending to market online programs has increased as competition for new student enrollments has grown (McCollum, 1999). It has been noted that the market success of all online programs hinges on selling convenience, and that many students are attracted to the notion that non-residential programs are “quick and easy.” While online courses offered by for-profit institutions may be more expensive, students see them as an alternative to residential programs known to be academically rigorous (Blumenstyck, 2003; Selingo, 1998).

Traditional institutions and their residential programs, however, have the distinct advantage of smaller classes, face-to-face contact with instructors, name recognition, and solid reputation to maintain and build online enrollment (Carnevale & Olsen, 2003). While declining budgets have plagued campus IT initiatives several years (Green, 2004), traditional-residential universities have the resources to build competitive advantages. For example, these institutions can offer a wider range of student support services and blended learning, or courses that are attended partly online and partly in a classroom setting.

Public perception of online education

Increased access to courses for people in rural areas, working professionals and single parents who are unable to attend classes on campus has proven to be the most positive aspect of distance education (Grenzky & Maitland, 2001). Many non-traditional students now have access to classes offered online that are comparable to those offered through residential programs. Media comparison studies that focus on measuring student outcomes in residential as compared to online courses, show no significant difference in student achievement (Russell 1999; Gagne & Shepherd, 2001). Student satisfaction rates tend to match or exceed “traditional” instruction in the delivery of content (MacFarland,

1999; Sikora, 2003). It is important to note that while online degrees are more commonplace, the reputation of the granting institution makes a difference in whether the degree is perceived as acceptable (Vault, 2002; Adams & DeFleur, 2006).

In spite of the presence of high quality online programs in the marketplace, the rapid growth of online education has raised questions concerning the credibility, quality, and role of these programs in higher education (Wilner & Lee, 2002). Online, for-profit institutions have made national news because of fines for aggressive enrollment techniques, investigations regarding misappropriation of federal grant money, and institutional claims related to transferability of credits (Blumenstyk, 2004). Unfortunately, unfavorable news about missteps in the distance education industry may have resulted in a loss of credibility for the degrees conferred by properly accredited online for-profit institutions and traditional-residential universities that offer online programs. For example, several research studies indicate that degrees earned online are not as acceptable as traditional degrees for graduate student admissions (DeFleur & Adams 2004), faculty appointments (Adams & DeFleur, 2005), and business employment (Adams & DeFleur, 2006). Clearly, there is evidence many stakeholders perceive online programs to be risky choices.

Marketing higher education programs

Academic reputation is noted to include a number of factors including successful graduates, facilities, rigor and distinguished faculties (Conrad & Conrad, 2001). It has been suggested that the key points to successfully promote online programs include marketing to industry, selling convenience and emphasizing interactive technologies (Carnevale & Olsen, 2003). Other efforts to distinguish online programs have included branding identities through standardization, or by the media methods used to deliver content. For

example, Strayer University Online hires professional readers to record faculty members' lectures for audio playback, Stanford's online courses are delivered as streaming video and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology offers online course materials free of charge. Efforts are being made to take advantage of niche marketing opportunities (Dalgic & Leeuw, 2006) to differentiate brands.

Managing public perception of these new technologies is at the center of marketing efforts. Risk perception has been considered a strong deterrent for online exchanges in general and marketers often advise the use of risk relievers to make online purchases more attractive (Dall'Olmo et al, 2005). According to several studies, brand reputation is the most important risk reliever in the areas of performance, financial, and psychological risk (Dall'Olmo et al, 2005; Citrin, 2003; Lee & Tan, 2003; Van den Poel & Leunis, 1999). Therefore, well-known traditional-residential providers of higher education with an established brand reputation should have a strong competitive advantage in promoting their online programs and should exploit this advantage in their marketing strategies.

Promotional materials, such as letters, brochures, posters and booklets are widely distributed to recruit freshmen and play a role in the decision-making process (Armstrong & Lumsden, 1999). Web sites have been noted as having the potential to influence college choice by serving as an alternative to published information (Ramasubramanian, Gyure & Mursi, 2002). Recent surveys conducted by American InterContinental University Online, have shown that potential students typically go to three or four different colleges' web sites when shopping for online-degree programs (Carnevale & Olsen, 2003). Web pages, then, may be an ideal way to communicate "big idea" concepts such as an over-riding theme to connect a name to an institution and to help viewers formulate an image of the organization

and the products or services (Singer, 1997). For example, research by Klassen (2000) suggests that images from top-tier schools tend to emphasize aspiration ('come here, learn and be successful') where lower-ranked schools place greater importance on affiliation with peers ('have a good time with people like you and graduate').

Research Questions

In this context of market advantages and public perception, the goal of this research is to explore the nature of marketing strategies used to promote online, distance education programs offered through a variety of categories of institutions. A content analysis was performed on the landing pages of three types of institutions offering online education to identify and compare the promotional images, themes, promises, and benefits used to promote their online educational offerings. This study, then, is an exploratory work designed to assess the marketing strategies being used and to gauge the amount of information available for students investigating distance learning. These questions have implications for how marketing content is related to the quality of online instruction that is offered through distance programs.

RQ1: Are there differences in the marketing images, messages, strategies and promises used by traditional-residential institutions, nontraditional accredited online institutions (mostly for-profit), and non-accredited institutions to promote online education on their web sites?

RQ2: What aspects of institutional reputation are emphasized on the landing pages of these different groups?

Method

Two researchers performed a content analysis of web pages that are the entry point to each of 150 online university programs selected for this study. A master list of

universities offering online programs was compiled through a variety of online resources and categorized into one of the three groups described in Table 1. A sample of 50 web addresses was randomly selected from each of the three groups to form the final sample for content analysis. The sample of web addresses used for the study is provided in Appendix A.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Using a reiterative method of identifying categories and keywords, the researchers examined three landing pages from each group to develop a coding scheme (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The content analysis check sheet contained a number of keywords organized into four major categories (*Images, Testimonials, Benefits and Attributes*). In addition to the four major categories, a nine-item scale was created to capture the latent or underlying message (Babbie, 1998) in order to describe the ‘big idea’ being presented by each institution (Klassen, 2000). After the check sheet was formalized, the researchers mutually examined a selection of web pages to make adjustments and to ensure the checklist was thorough, exhaustive and reliable (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991).

A single check was used to indicate the occurrence of a keyword within each major category. Holsti's reliability coefficient was used to check intercoder reliability by using a random sample of 18 web site addresses independently coded by both researchers. PRAM, a software package designed to assess reliability, was used to perform this analysis. An intercoder reliability analysis (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000) of 18 coding sheets showed an 88% agreement across the four major categories and a 96% agreement on the nine-item scale.

Data were collected from landing pages that describe online degree programs. Some landing pages did not load or were no longer accessible; therefore, of the 150 sites sampled, only 134 were included in the analysis. Of the 134, 44 represented residential sites, 47 were accredited online sites, and 43 were non-accredited online sites. The observed frequency of each checklist item was used for a Chi-square analysis. This was conducted on each characteristic to determine if there were significant differences between the web sites of the different types of educational institutions. In some cases the validity of the Chi Square analysis is questionable because of expected cell frequencies falling below five. These incidences are noted in the Chi Square results tables.

Additional analysis was conducted by calculating percentages from checklist frequencies in each category to make comparisons across institutional types. This data was used for t-tests to compare the percentage of web sites in each category with overall percentages representing all web sites. Because of the relatively small sample sizes, significant differences were flagged at both the 95% and 90% level.

Results

The results of the analysis are presented in the following sections. The use of promotional images, testimonials, promises, attributes and overall marketing themes on web sites of the three categories of institutions are discussed.

Promotional Images

Results of the analysis related to promotional images are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 provides the Chi Square results and indicates the number of web sites that fell in each category. Table 3 presents the t-test results and reports percentages for each category.

The analysis revealed many similarities in the way that images are used across the three groups. For example, buildings, logos and crests were used similarly across all groups. This is particularly interesting because online courses do not require visiting a campus to attend a class and in some cases, the institution offering the degree program does not have a physical campus. Institutions that do not have a physical location, however, use buildings in their visuals just as often as residential institutions.

Promotional images were categorized as comprised of either groups or individuals and then evaluated as to whether they were meant to promote affiliation (i.e., people like you), aspiration (i.e., success), or instruction (i.e., classroom settings, professors, or administrators). The most common promotional image across all institutions depicted individual affiliation (59%). Overall, there were few aspiration-oriented promotional images of individuals. Promotional images of aspiration groups were used significantly more often by online non-accredited institutions. This seems to contradict studies that indicate aspiration-oriented promotional images were associated with higher-tiered schools and affiliation images with lower-tiered schools.

Online non-accredited institutions tended to use instructional group photos more often, and online accredited institutions used them less often than traditional-residential institutions. Interestingly, online non-accredited groups did not use photographs of professors on their web sites. Nine percent of the online non-accredited institution web sites featured a college administrator while much lower percentages of traditional-residential institution (0%) and online accredited institution web sites (2 %) did.

The promotional image analysis also included a breakdown of types of individuals displayed on the landing pages. No significant difference in gender was found between the

groups, even though women tended to appear more often than men. Generally, the web sites had a combination of individual and group visuals that featured both males and females. Online non-accredited institutions tended to use instructional group photos more often (19%) than traditional-residential institutions (9%). The ethnic composition of the groups was predominantly white college students. Almost 87% of the online accredited institution web sites featured white students compared with about 55% of traditional-residential institution sites. On-line accredited institutions had a larger portion (44%) of African Americans depicted on their web sites than the other groups.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Marketing messages

Testimonials were not used very often across any of the categories of institutions but the online accredited and online non-accredited institutions used them to a greater degree (See Tables 4 and 5 for a summary of results). For example, former students were used 13% of the time by online accredited institutions. Online accredited programs used testimonials from employers and professors where no testimonials of this type could be identified in either of the other two categories. Perhaps this marketing approach is to assuage perceived risk among potential students.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Results regarding promises or benefits featured on web sites are summarized in Tables 6 and 7. Promises of length of *time to complete the degree, quality education, increased knowledge, new skills, and new job opportunities* appeared with about the same relative frequency across the different groups' web sites. *Personal success, career or corporate advancement, professional success, and increased earning potential* were all mentioned significantly less often by traditional-residential institutions. *Cost effectiveness* was also mentioned less often in traditional-residential web sites.

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Higher education institutions often feature certain attributes in their promotional materials to position themselves in the marketplace. Surprisingly, several attributes appeared with about the same frequency across the different categories of institutions (See Tables 8 and 9 for a summary of results). For example, there was no significant difference in the frequency of use of *admission standards, faculty, curriculum, flexible schedule, blended courses, or tuition support*. Additionally, there was no significant difference across the categories of institutions' frequency of attempts to associate themselves with a credible personality through visuals, quotes or reference to names.

There were significant differences in the frequency of use of *accreditation*, *educational methods*, *success*, *experienced*, *convenience*, *self-paced*, and *affordability*. *Convenience* was mentioned in 59% (See Table 9) of traditional-residential institution sites compared to 49% of accredited sites and 35% of non-accredited sites. Online non-accredited institutions used the word *experienced* in reference to institutional capabilities less often (2%) than the other types of institutions. Forty percent of online accredited institution web sites used the term *accredited* while only 25% of traditional-residential institutions and 18.6% of online non-accredited institutions featured the characteristic.

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE

Marketing themes

The last area of analysis involved identifying the “big idea” or overall theme used to market the institution on its landing page. Results regarding the marketing theme use are provided in Table 10 and 11. The themes that appeared with significant frequency differences across groups were *brand name*, *culture*, *promotion* and *instruction*. As expected, traditional-residential universities used brand name (30%) and culture (9%) as an overall marketing theme more often than the other two groups. The traditional-residential group also used the promotion theme (focusing on advancement in work, career, or

personal life) less often than the other groups. Reference to quality of instruction appeared least often by the online non-accredited group.

TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 11 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

The findings of the research suggest that traditional-residential providers of higher education are not leveraging clear advantages in order to differentiate themselves from accredited and non-accredited online institution programs. These results show that the attributes and benefits featured on web sites across the three groups were remarkably similar, focusing on easily copied claims of convenience, flexibility, and access. Some programs offered by the traditional-residential group emphasized brand name and culture themes to gain competitive advantage, however, most utilized access themes just like their online counterparts. Clearly there are opportunities for traditional-residential institutions to emphasize their competitive advantages

Both online accredited and online non-accredited institutions appear to be reaching out to potential students by offering promises of career and personal success. Interestingly, traditional-residential programs seem to be more focused on providing their current students a convenient alternative to supplement traditional course offerings. Accreditation, faculty, resources, and quality of education -- which clearly present residential programs with competitive advantages -- may not be understood well enough in order to be effectively communicated in the marketplace. In other words, it is important to tell

potential students about these advantages, and to clearly explain why they are important. Clearly, further research is needed to determine if traditional-residential institutions explain these benefits in terms that would be meaningful to the target audience.

These results raise several questions as to whether traditional-residential institutions have considered using their web presence to maintain (or gain) market share, establish a clear advantage in brand identity, and take advantage of their inherent resources. For example, none of the traditional-residential web sites take advantage of public concerns over accreditation, fraud and abuse that are sensitive issues for accredited online institutions. At the same time, key advantages or special status did not appear to be predominantly positioned by traditional-residential institutions for promotional purposes. For example, while for-profit online institutions are vigorously developing online degree programs in teacher education, the only programs that are fully accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education are those offered in residential programs through traditional institutions (Blumenstyck, 2003). The special certification status of traditional-residential institutions did not appear on any of the landing pages.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study demonstrates the need for more research in the area of online marketing of degree programs. With a new generation of tech-savvy high school students this may become the preferred media outlet for all institutions. In the meanwhile, research is needed to answer the question that Moore (2004) asked: Are online marketing efforts truly integrated?

This research was intended to serve as exploratory research to investigate whether various online degree programs are using different marketing approaches. No claims are

made that would suggest that this is a definitive effort. Furthermore, online degree programs are in a state of rapid change. Although each web site was carefully examined to ensure the integrity of each category the researchers noticed some blurring of the lines between the three groups of institutions.

Tables and Figures

Table 1.
Description of Groups

Group Name	Group Description
Traditional-Residential online	Comprised of well-established, accredited colleges and universities who offer online education as well as residential on-campus education.
Online Accredited	Comprised of for-profit institutions (colleges and universities) with online education as their primary educational offering accredited by a federally recognized accrediting board.
Online Non-accredited	Comprised of colleges and universities with online education as their primary educational offering, but are not accredited by a federally recognized accrediting board.

Table 2
Results of Chi-Square analysis for promotional images

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Image Type				
Instruction Grp* ¹	4	1	8	13
Professor	2	2	0	4
Administration** ¹	0	1	4	5
Aspiration Grp*	4	4	12	20
Aspiration Ind.	2	2	3	7
Affiliation Grp	13	9	9	31
Affiliation Ind.**	28	32	19	79
Ethnicity				
African American*	12	20	8	40
Asian	4	6	7	17
Hispanic	3	5	4	12
White*	24	39	29	92
Gender				
Male	6	4	3	13
Female	8	10	7	25
Mixed	18	26	21	65
Icons				
Buildings	12	13	11	36
Logo or Crest	21	29	30	80
Globe** ¹	0	3	5	8

*Chi Square was significant at $\leq .05$.

**Chi Square was significant at $\leq .10$

¹Note: Results should be interpreted with caution because one or more cells in the Chi Square analysis have expected frequencies less than 5.

Table 3
Results of t-test for promotional images

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Image Type				
Instruction Group	9	2*	19	10
Professor	5	4	0*	3
Administration	0*	2	9	4
Aspiration Grp	9	9	28**	15
Aspiration Ind	5	4	7	5
Affiliation Grp	30	19	21	23
Affiliation Ind	64	68	44**	59
Ethnicity				
African American	27	44**	19	30
Asian	9	13	16	13
Hispanic	7	11	9	9
White	55**	87*	69	69
Gender				
Male	14	9	7	10
Female	18	21	16	19
Mix	41	55	49	49
Icons				
Buildings	2	28	26	27
Logo or Crest	48	62	70	60
Globe	0*	6	12	6

*T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.05 .

**T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.10 .

Table 4
Results of Chi-Square for testimonials

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Administration	0	1	2	3
Employer	0	2	0	22
Former Student** ¹	0	6	3	9
Current Student	3	4	0	7
Professor	0	2	1	3

**Chi Square was significant at ≤ 0.10 .

¹Note: Results should be interpreted with caution because one or more cells in the Chi Square analysis have expected frequencies less than 5.

Table 5
Results of t-tests for testimonials

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Administration	0**	2	5	2
Employer	0**	4	0	2
Former Student	0*	13	7	7
Current Student	7	9	0*	5
Professor	0**	4	2	2

*T-Test was significant at $\leq .05$.

**T-Test was significant at $\leq .10$

Table 6
Results of Chi-Square for promises and benefits

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Personal Success*	5	16	11	32
Corp. Advancement*	2	12	7	21
Earning Potential * ¹	0	6	3	9
Professional Success*	4	18	8	30
Job Opportunities	3	5	1	9
New Skills	2	6	8	16
Increased Knowledge	3	4	8	15
Quality Education	13	17	12	42
Length of Time	6	6	3	15
Cost Effective* ¹	0	1	5	6

*Chi Square was significant at $\leq .05$.

¹Note: Results should be interpreted with caution because one or more cells in the Chi Square analysis have expected frequencies less than 5.

Table 7
Results of t-tests for promises and benefits

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Personal Success	11*	34	26	24
Corp. Advancement	5*	26	16	16
Earning Potential	0*	13	7	7
Professional Success	9*	38*	19	22
Job Opportunities	7	11	2	7
New Skills	5**	13	19	12
Increased Knowledge	7	9	19	11
Quality Education	30	36	28	31
Length of Time	14	13	7	11
Cost Effective	0**	2	12	5

*T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.05 .
**T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.10

Table 8
Results of Chi-Square for attributes

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Established	7	29	12	28
Experienced** ¹	3	7	1	11
Accredited**	11	19	8	38
Admission Standards	0	0	2	2
Faculty	7	12	5	24
Blended Courses	1	0	0	1
Curriculum	7	13	13	33
Educational Methods*	6	8	15	29
Student affiliation	5	2	1	8
Success* ¹	0	7	5	12
Association with Credible Personality	2	4	5	11
Select, Special**	5	4	11	20
At Home	4	5	3	12
Convenient**	26	23	15	64
Self Paced**	2	8	9	19
Flexible	14	18	17	49
Special Rates	1	3	0	4
Affordable**	1	11	5	17
Tuition Support	2	5	2	9
Resources	6	2	4	12

*Chi Square was significant at $\leq .05$.

**Chi Square was significant at $\leq .10$

¹Note: Results should be interpreted with caution because one or more cells in the Chi Square analysis have expected frequencies less than 5.

Table 9
Results of t-tests for attributes

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Established	16	19	28	21
Experienced	7	15	2**	8
Accredited	25	40	19	29
Admission Standards	0	0	5	2
Faculty	16	26	12	18
Blended Courses	2	0	0	1
Curriculum	16	28	30	25
Educational Methods	14	17	35**	22
Student affiliation	11	4	2	6
Success	0*	15	12	9
Association with Credible Person	5	9	12	8
Select, Special	11	9	26	15
At Home	9	11	7	9
Convenient	59	49	35	48
Self Paced	5*	17	21	14
Flexible	32	40	40	37
Special Rates	2	6	0*	3
Affordable	2*	23	12	13
Tuition Support	5	11	5	7
Resources	14	4	9	9

*T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.05 .

**T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.10 .

Table 10
Results of Chi Square for marketing themes

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Promotion*	8	21	16	45
Access	29	24	24	77
Mentoring	0	0	2	2
Accreditation	9	9	5	23
Brand Name*	13	2	6	16
Culture* ¹	4	0	0	4
Quality	5	9	8	22
Instruction*	7	9	0	16

*Chi Square was significant at ≤ 0.05 .

¹Note: Results should be interpreted with caution because one or more cells in the Chi Square analysis have expected frequencies less than 5.

Table 11
Results of t-tests for marketing themes

Category	Percent of Traditional-Residential (N=44)	Percent of Online Accredited (N=47)	Percent of Online Non-Accredited (N=43)	Overall Percent (N=134)
Promotion	18*	45	38	34
Access	66	51	56	58
Mentoring	0	0	5	2
Accreditation	21	19	12	17
Brand Name	30**	4*	14	16
Culture	9	0*	0*	3
Quality	11	19	19	16
Instruction	16	19	0*	12

*T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.05 .

**T-Test was significant at ≤ 0.10

Appendix A

Anne Arundel Community College	http://www.aacc.edu/diseduc
Argosy University	http://online.argosyu.edu
Athabasca University	http://www.athabascau.ca
Baker Online	http://online.baker.edu
Bellevue University	http://www.bellevue.edu
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania	http://www.bloomu.edu
Buena Vista University	http://centers.bvu.edu
Concordia University	cu-portland.edu
Concordia University	http://www.cui.edu
Concordia University, St. Paul	http://www.csp.edu
Duquesne University	http://www.distancelearning.duq.edu
Governors State University	http://www.govst.edu/
Hamline University	http://www.hamline.edu/ce/index.html
Holy Names University	hnu.edu
Kansas State University	http://www.dce.ksu.edu/distance
Monmouth University	http://www.monmouth.edu/
New Jersey Institute of Technology	http://cpe.njit.edu/
Northern Arizona University	http://www.distance.nau.edu
Northwestern Oklahoma State University	http://www.nwalva.edu/
Northwestern University	http://www.communication.northwestern.edu/mscstrategy
Ohio University	http://www.ohio.edu/independent/
Oklahoma State University	http://ueied.ue.okstate.edu/dl/index.htm
Quinnipiac University	http://www.quinnipiac.edu/quonline
Regent University	http://www.regent.edu
Roger Williams University	http://www.rwu.edu/Academics/Academic+Programs/School+of+Continuing+Studies/
Sacred Heart University	http://onlinelearning.sacredheart.edu
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College	http://www.smwc.edu/
Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center	http://www.saybrook.edu/
Skidmore College	http://www.skidmore.edu/uww
Sonoma State University	http://www.sonoma.edu/exed/Degrees/dindex.html
St. Cloud State University	http://www.stcloudstate.edu/continuingstudies/distance/
Stony Brook University, State University of New York	http://www.stonybrook.edu/spd/online/
Texas Christian University	http://www.tcuglobal.edu
The University of Iowa	http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/ccp
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro	http://web.uncg.edu/dcl/icampus/online/default.asp
The University of Toledo	http://www.dl.utoledo.edu
Trinity International University	http://www.tiu.edu/etrinity
University of California, Davis	http://www.extension.ucdavis.edu/distancelearning/index.asp
University of Connecticut	http://continuingstudies.uconn.edu/onlinecourses
University of Houston-Victoria	uhv.edu
University of Phoenix Online Campus	http://www.uoonline.com
University of South Carolina	http://www.sc.edu/deis
University of Tennessee	http://www.anywhere.tennessee.edu
University of Toledo	http://www.dl.utoledo.edu
University of Wisconsin-Platteville	http://www.uwplatt.edu/distance.html
Western Illinois University	www.wiu.edu/users/mintp

Western Washington University
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

<http://www.ExtendedEd.wvu.edu>
<http://www.wpi.edu/+ADLN>

Accredited online

A. T. University
American Academy of Nutrition, College of Nutrition <http://www.nutritioneducation.com/>
American College of Computer & Information Sciences <http://www.accis.edu/>
American InterContinental University Online <http://www.aiuonline.edu>
American Public University System <http://www.apu.apus.edu/index.htm>
Andrew Jackson University <http://www.aju.edu/>
Art institute Online <http://www.aionline.edu/>
Ashford University <http://www.ashford.edu/>
Ashworth College <http://www.ashworthcollege.edu>
Aspen University <http://www.aspen.edu/>
Atlantic University <http://www.atlanticuniv.org/>
Baker College <https://www.baker.edu/>
Benedictine University
California Coast University <http://www.calcoast.edu/>
California College for Health Sciences <http://www.cchs.edu/>
Capella University www.capellauniversity.edu
Colorado Technical University Online <http://aftrk.com/e/ctu/signup.cgi?AffiliateID=309779&c=c=>
Crown College <http://www.crown.edu/548.0.html>
Crown College <http://www.crown.edu/548.0.html>
ECPI College of Technology <http://www.ecpi.edu/online/index.cfm>
Ellis College http://welcome.ellis.nyit.edu/why_ellis.aspx
Everest College Online <http://everestonline.edu-search.com/>
Everglades University <http://www.evergladesuniversity.org/D1index.learn?Action=Welcome>
Fort Hays State University <http://www.fhsu.edu/virtualcollege/>
Golden Gate University <http://www.ggu.edu/cybercampus>
Gonzaga University <http://www.gonzaga.edu/>
Heritage Christian University <http://www.hcu.edu/>
International Institute of the Americas <http://iia-online.com>
Jones International University <http://www.jonesinternational.edu/>
Kaplan University http://www.getinfo.kaplan.edu/Microsite_B/index.aspx
Keiser College <http://online.keisercollege.edu>
Keiser College E Campus http://www.keisercollege.edu/online_degree.htm
Kennedy Western University http://www.kw.edu/online_study.asp?active=online
Lehigh University <http://www3.lehigh.edu/about/>
Life Pacific College <http://www.lifepacific.edu/distance>
Northcentral University <http://www.ncu.edu/>
Norwich University http://www.mba.norwich.edu/distance_learning_mba_difference.htm
Regis University <http://www.regis.edu/regis.asp?sctn=onl>
Saint Leo University <http://www.universityalliance.com/saintleo/>
Schiller International University <http://www.schiller.edu/>
South University http://online.southuniversity.edu/?WT.srch=1&WT.mc_id=51857&IQ_ID=51857
Strayer University <http://www.strayer.edu/handler.cfm?sid=3524A52D-D7>

Union Institute and University	1C-4792-8029BF3D51657E09&cid=BD103F95-6D03-431B-AC9D46D353719A76
University of Scranton	http://www.tui.edu/
Walden University	http://scranton.edudirect.org/&kid=GOG0004837710
	http://info.waldenu.edu/?j_id=942&s_id=4435&affiliateID=google-waldenuniversity
Western Governors University	
Western Governors University	http://www.wgu.edu/
Westwood College Online	http://www.westwoodonline.edu/

Non-accredited

Adams Smith Univeristy of America	http://www.adamsmith.edu/
Almeda University	http://www.almedauniversity.org/?source=149&gclid=COr_nvbtWlMCFsBuNAodnT6HrQ
American Central University	http://www.acusa.net/
American Pacific University	http://www.ampac.edu/
American World University	http://www.awu.edu/
Atlantic National University	http://www.usanu-edu.us/
Baptist College of Ministry	http://www.bcmedu.org/
Belford University	http://www.belforduniversity.net/
Bolton International University	http://www.boltonuniversity.us/
Breyer State University	http://www.breyerstate.com/
Briercrest Distance Learning	http://www.briercrest.ca/bdl/
Bronte International University	http://www.biu-edu.org/
California Biblical University and Seminary	http://www.faithdefenders.com/cbus/
Canbourne University	http://www.uofcanbourne.org.uk/
Carleton University	http://www.carleton.ca/cutv/
Central School of Professional Studies	http://www.cspsuk.com/index.htm
Chadwick University	http://www.chadwick.edu/
Clayton University	http://www.culhk.com/
Columbus University	http://www.columbusu.com/
Edison University	http://www.edison.edu/universitycenter/index.shtml
European Open University	http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/web-focus/events/workshops/webmaster-2002/materials/work/slides/Glencullen%20University_files/home.html
Harrington University	http://www.instantcolleges.com/
Higher learning network	http://www.higherlearningnetwork.com/hln/?s=&m=&r=hln&cmd=&view=
Institute for Christian Studies	http://www.icscanada.edu
International School of Management	http://www.ism.edu/
Laurentian University	http://cce.laurentian.ca
Luther Rice College	http://www.lrs.edu/
Madison University	http://www.madisonu.com/
Memorial University of Newfoundland	www.distance.mun.ca
Middleham University	middleham.org.uk
Mount Allison University	http://www.mta.ca/conted/index.html
Novus University	http://novuscatalog.org/welcome.htm
Pacific Western University	http://www.pwu-ca.edu/
Preston University	http://preston.edu/

Shaftesbury University	http://www.shaftesburyu.org.uk/
South Pacific University	http://www.waytogo.net/spu.htm
Southern Pacific University	http://www.waucglobalaccreditation.org/universities.htm
Stafford University	http://www.stafford.ac/
Stamford International University	http://www.stamford.edu/new_web/index.asp
Thompson International University	http://www.thompsonuniversity.org/
University of Asia	http://www.uap.edu.ph/
University of Calgary	http://www.commonsoncalgary.ca
University of Manitoba	http://www.umanitoba.ca/distance
University of Northern Washington	http://www.unw.edu/
University of Saskatchewan	http://www.extension.usask.ca
University of Toronto	http://learn.utoronto.ca
University of Waterloo	http://dce.uwaterloo.ca
Washington InterContinental University	http://www.usawiuedu.com/
York University	http://www.yorku.ca/

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