Online Education

S U S F

Annual Report 2020

Highlights

The State University System 2020 Annual Report for Online Education provides data that reflect the status and progress made in the provision of online education in the system. While the Annual Report focuses primarily on 2019-20 data, it also provides an overview of universities' responses to COVID-19 in 2020-21, as well as planning e□orts underway for the post-pandemic world in the SUS.

Highlights of the Annual Report include:

- In 2019-20, the State of Florida ranked second in the nation in the percentage of public university students – and third in the number of university students - enrolled in distance learning courses.
- During 2019-20, 78% of undergraduates – and 55% of graduate students - took at least one distance learning course.
- There are 476 online programs/majors in the SUS, with 302 (63%) of those being in Programs of Strategic Emphasis (STEM, Health, Education, Critical Workforce Gap Analysis, and Global Competitiveness).
- Of undergraduate students who took only distance learning courses, 94% were Florida residents, while 91% of those who took no distance learning courses were Florida residents.
- Twelve percent (12%) of undergraduate students took only distance learning courses, while 28% of graduate students did so.
- Undergraduates who took only distance learning courses were older (average age of 27) than students who took no distance learning courses (average age of 22).
- Undergraduate students who took a mix of distance learning and classroom courses had a higher retention rate (90%) than either students who took only distance learning courses (74%) or students who took only classroom courses (88%).
- SUS distance learning programs have won numerous awards and recognitions for their high quality.

U.S. N & W d R
BEST ONLINE GRADUATE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS
FSU #5, USF #12

U.S. N & W d R
BEST ONLINE BACHELOR'S PROGRAMS
UF #3, UCF #14

U.S. N & W d R
BEST ONLINE GRADUATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS
FSU #8, UCF #12, FIU #17

U.S. N & W d R
BEST ONLINE NURSING ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS
FAU #11

Introduction

The State University System 2020 Annual Report for Online Education* is a companion document to the State University System 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education, which was adopted by the Board of Governors in November 2015 to guide the growth of online education in the System and to ensure quality instruction and services are being provided in a cost-e□cient and e□ective manner.

Implementation of the 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education

Upon adoption of the Plan, the Board O□ce immediately began working with institutions to establish a system-wide Implementation Committee that consists of representatives from all institutions, and a Steering Committee that consists of provosts and a non-voting representative from the Board O□ce, which guides the work of the Implementation Committee (Appendix A). These committees have met regularly since then to implement the strategies and tactics in the Plan.

Effect of COVID-19 on Distance Learning

While the data in this 2019-20 Annual Report includes Spring 2020, when the System began reacting to the pandemic, the report would not be complete without also acknowledging actions taken to address COVID-19 during 2020-21, as well as planning activities underway for the post-pandemic world in the SUS.

SPRING 2020

Although many courses began the Spring 2020 term as fully distance learning courses, approximately 50,000 courses began the term in on-campus, hybrid, or primarily online modalities and had to be quickly converted to courses that could be – and were - provided 100% remotely. The infrastructure, resources, and professional networks put in place for distance learning in the past few years provided institutions the ability to convert these courses to a remote format while maintaining a focus on quality.

One of the primary services provided to faculty to assist in their conversion of courses to remote formats was professional development in the form of training and support. The services varied by institution and included rapid course design training in areas such as academic technologies, online assignment and assessment strategies, student engagement activities, and accessibility; web pages with resources; individual faculty consultations; call centers for immediate assistance; facilitating peer interactions for sharing of experiences, resources, and support; and ongoing communications with faculty to identify and resolve issues. In addition, professional development sta□ throughout the SUS had access to the resources available on TOPKit, the site hosted by the University of Central Florida, in partnership with other institutions. The Teaching Online Preparation Toolkit (TOPKit) was developed in response to the SUS 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education and provides online resources for sta□ responsible for professional development of faculty who teach online courses.

---

*Online education is one type of distance learning and is the focus of this report. Distance Learning encompasses other modes of delivery using technology when instructor and student are separated by time and/or distance for at least 80% of the time, such as broadcasting courses over television networks. SUS data elements do not distinguish between those di□erent approaches. Therefore, the term “distance learning” rather than “online education” is used in this report when appropriate.

Faculty and students also needed access to appropriate technology to deliver and take courses remotely. Ways in which technology issues were addressed for faculty varied by institution and included activities such as purchasing web cams, upgrading web conferencing tools, establishing a laptop/webcam loan program, providing software to help make course materials accessible to students with disabilities, and establishing or expanding IT call centers to provide technology assistance to faculty.

Strategies used to assist students in having the equipment and internet access they needed also varied by institution and included establishing a laptop/webcam loan program, purchasing additional units for students, providing a list of Internet providers o□ering free or reduced-price services, increasing computer lab licensing to students, and providing access to specialized software required by some courses.

Institutions also expanded the choices faculty had for proctoring services for exams, and they assisted faculty with strategies for converting labs to remote instruction.

FALL 2020

On May 28, 2020, the Board of Governors approved the State University System of Florida Blueprint for Reopening Campuses for Fall Semester 2020. The Blueprint stated that "The foundational priority of each university's plan will be the health and welfare of all students, faculty, sta□, vendors, volunteers, and visitors."[1] It identified critical elements to guide universities in the development of their plans for Fall 2020: A Healthy Campus Environment; A Healthy Community Environment; COVID-19 Virus Testing; Contact Tracing and Surveillance; and Academic Program Delivery.

The Academic Program Delivery element of the Blueprint emphasized the delivery of courses in a variety of modalities, with flexibility being stressed in acknowledgement of evolving health conditions on each campus and in each community due to the COVID-19 virus. The components of this element were:

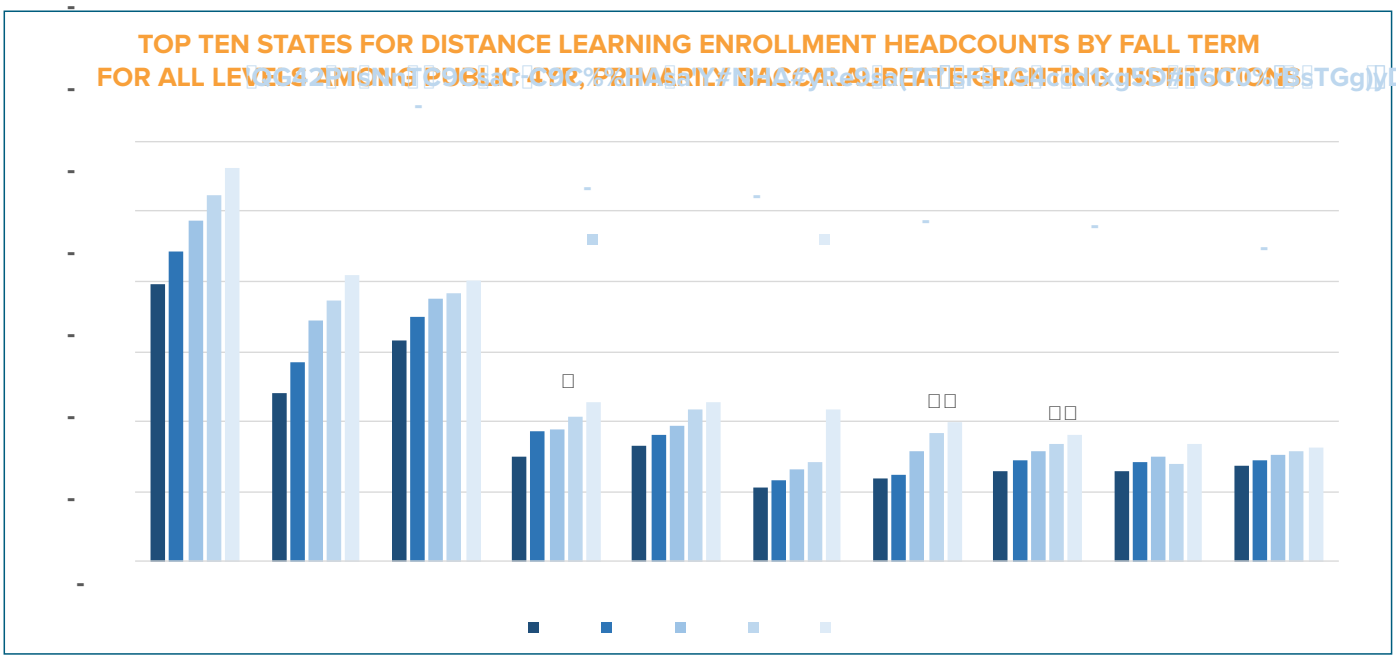
- Universities should continue to explore new and creative ways to use technology to deliver classes in a variety of delivery modes using alternative instructional formats and hybrid combinations of face-to-face and online delivery modes.
- Reasonable alternatives should be made available for faculty and students who are unable to participate in available class delivery formats, including individuals with serious illness, older adults, and individuals of any age with serious underlying conditions who may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Class sizes and classroom densities, as well as outdoor and non-traditional spaces, should be evaluated in consideration of the current CDC, state, and local social distancing guidelines.
- Universities are encouraged to consider varied course scheduling and calendar options to accommodate alternative instructional delivery formats.
- Faculty training and professional development should continue to provide enhanced training and support for new online technologies and non-traditional modes of delivery of instruction.
- Each university plan should acknowledge that from the time of the development of its plan to the time of the beginning of fall semester, the health environment of the local community will likely look very di□erent. The need for flexibility should be stressed to all students, faculty, and sta□ as schedules and delivery modes may need to be adjusted in reaction to the evolving health conditions on each campus and in each campus community.

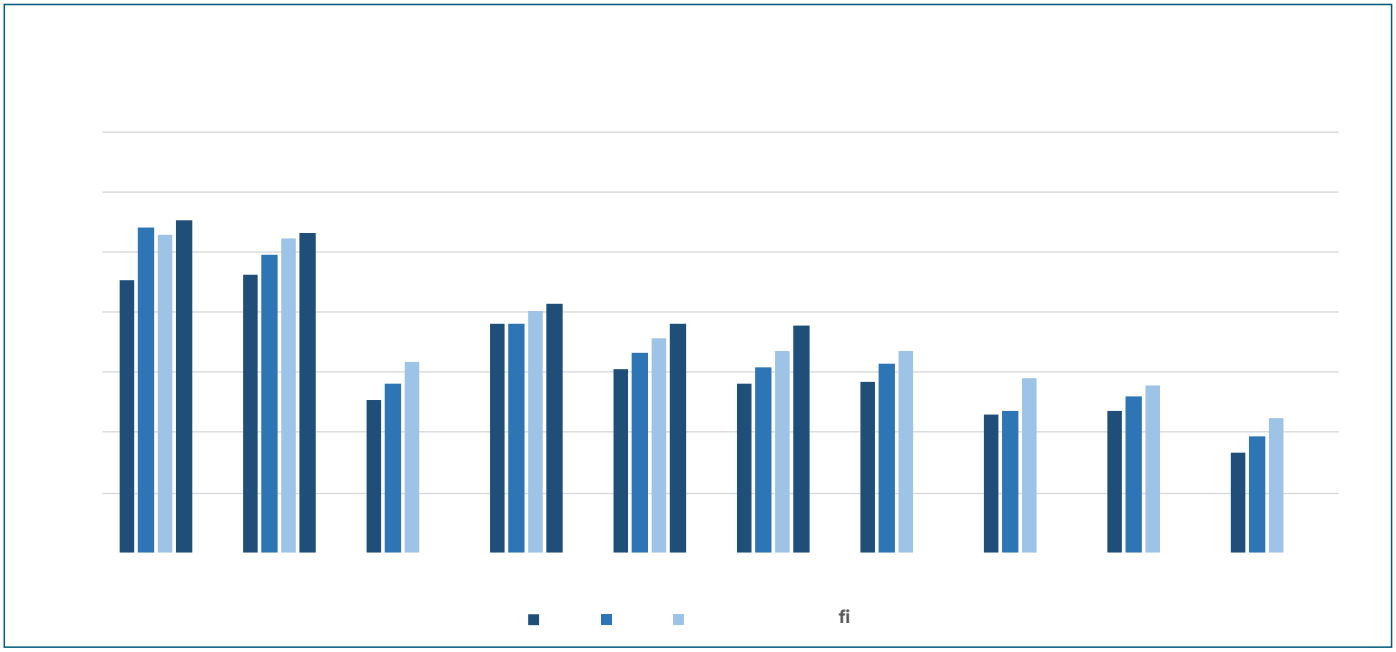
While COVID-19 brought changes in the Fall 2020 term, students continued to enroll in SUS institutions and

Student Enrollment

Florida's Ranking in Distance Learning Enrollments

Florida continued to be a leader in distance learning in 2019-20, ranking second in the nation in the percentage of students – and third in the nation in the number of students - enrolled in distance learning courses in public universities.

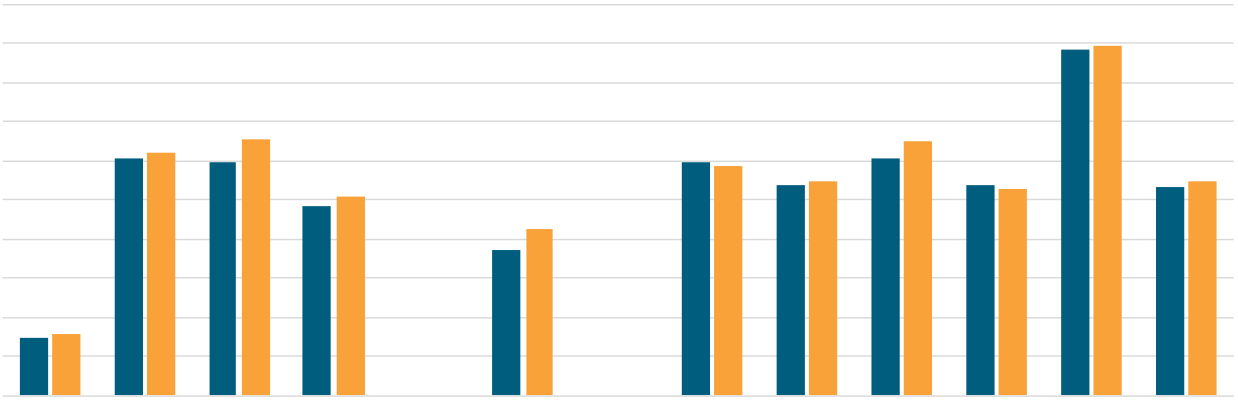




SOURCE: Board of Governors sta analysis of US Dept. of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) available at the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) website (data extracted 3/30/2021). Notes: IPEDS defines Distance Learning as instructional content that is delivered exclusively (100%) via distance education within a Fall term, while section 1009.24(17), F.S., defines a Distance Learning course as one in which at least 80% of direct instructional content is delivered at a distance; full-year data is used in the SUS analyses. The di erences in timespan and definitions result in di erent percentages being reflected on this chart (based on IPEDS timespan and definition) and the chart on the next page of this report (based on the Florida timespan and definition).

2019-2020 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ENROLLMENTS

INSTITUTION	STUDENTS WHO TOOK ONLY DL COURSES		STUDENTS WHO TOOK BOTH DL AND CLASSROOM AND/OR HYBRID COURSES		STUDENTS WHO TOOK NO DL COURSES	
	HEADCOUNT	PERCENTAGE	HEADCOUNT	PERCENTAGE	HEADCOUNT	PERCENTAGE
FAMU	166	2%	4,482	53%	3,734	45%
FAU	2,438	9%	17,670	62%	8,429	30%
FGCU	714	5%	9,165	61%	5,121	34%
FIU	10,079	20%	31,351	61%	9,764	19%
FPOLY	0	0%	0	0%	1,362	100%
FSU	1,324					



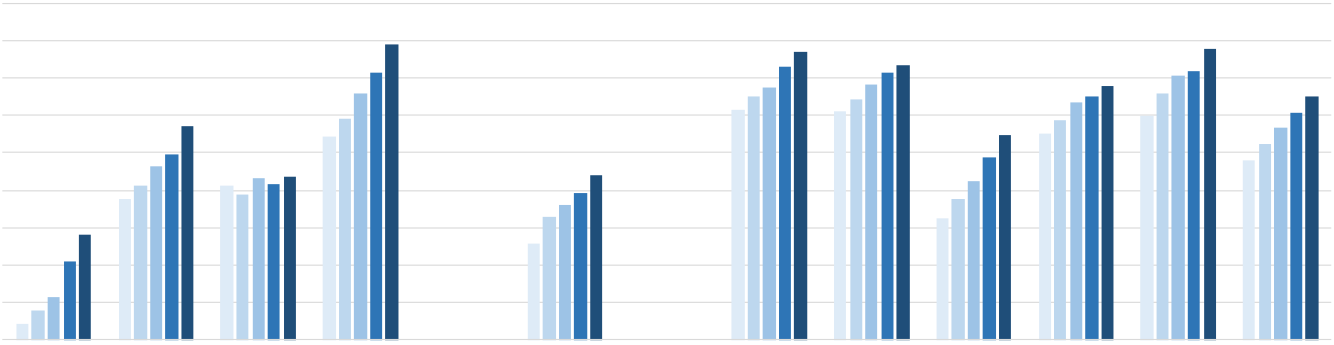
SOURCE: BOG O□ce of Data & Analytics, extracted from datamarts on 3/26/2021. Graduates based on beginning- and advanced-graduate student level. Only includes students enrolled in courses. Distance learning courses are defined as a course in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time or space, or both (per 1009.24(17), F.S.).

Credit Hours by Delivery Method

UNDERGRADUATE CREDIT HOURS

System-wide, 33% of undergraduate credit hours were taken in distance learning courses in 2019-20, an increase from 30% in 2018-19, and an increase from 24% in 2015-16, when the Board approved the Strategic Plan for Online Education. FIU, UCF, and UWF tied for the highest percentage (39%), followed by UF with 37%. FAMU and FAU had the greatest one-year percentage increases: FAMU increased from 10% in 2018-19 to 14% in 2019-20, and FAU increased from 25% in 2018-19 to 29% in 2019-20.

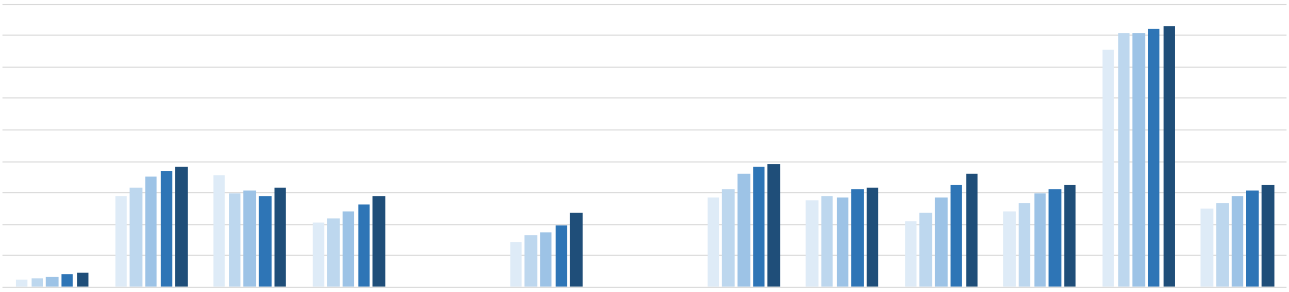
While the above percentages reflect the instructional e□ort within each university, the pie chart portrays each university's undergraduate distance learning credit hours as a percentage of total undergraduate credit hours in the SUS. As in 2018-19, the largest share of SUS undergraduate student credit hours in distance learning was provided by UCF (24%) in 2019-20.



SOURCE: BOG O□ce of Data & Analytics, extracted from datamarts on 3/17/2021. Notes: Undergraduate students include lower- and upper-division students only and excludes unclassified students. Distance Learning is a course in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time or space, or both (per 1009.24(17), F.S.). Delivery Method categories are based on element #2052. Includes all instructional activity regardless of funding sources.

GRADUATE CREDIT HOURS

For graduate courses, 32% of student credit hours were taken in distance learning courses in 2019-20, an increase from 31% in 2018-19. UWF's percentage, the highest in the System, was 83%. Six institutions were in the 30% - 40% range (FAU, FGCU, UCF, UF, UNF, and USF).



SOURCE: BOG Office of Data & Analytics, extracted from datamarts on 3/27/2021. Undergraduate students include lower- and upper-division students only and excludes unclassified students. Distance Learning is a course in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time or space, or both (per 1009.24(17), F.S.). Delivery Method categories are based on element #2052. Includes all instructional activity regardless of funding sources.

Historical Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) in Distance Learning Courses

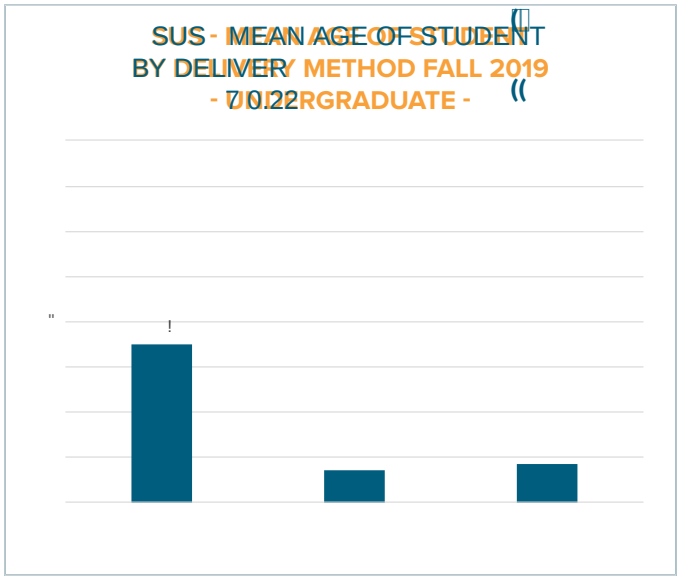
A Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) student is a measure of instructional activity that is based on the number of credit hours taken by students. SUS FTE in distance learning courses increased from 72,595 in 2015-16 to 105,317 in 2019-20. Of SUS FTE in distance learning courses in 2019-20, most (83%) were in undergraduate courses.

STUDENT FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTE) IN DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

Student Demographics

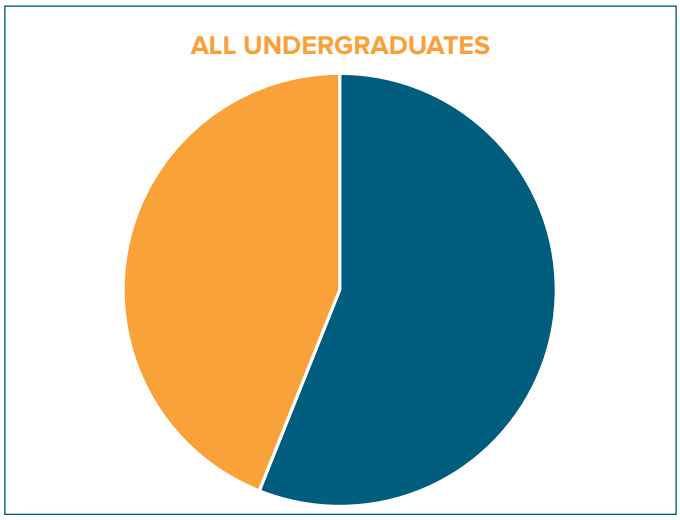
Age of Student

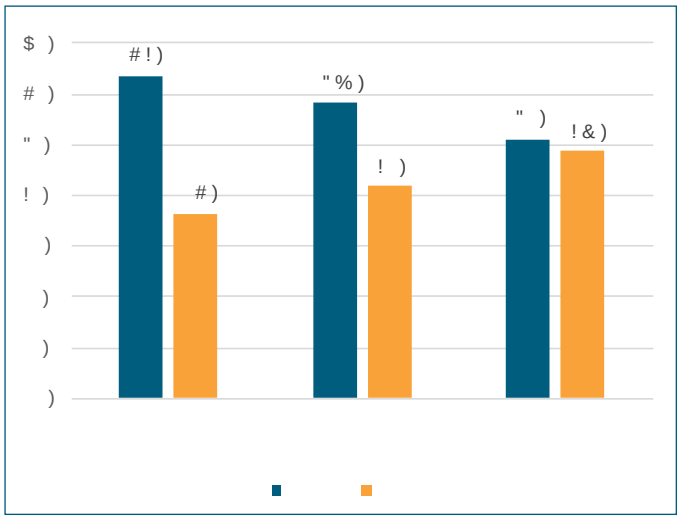
Both undergraduate and graduate students who took only distance learning courses were older than their counterparts who took no distance learning courses or who took both distance learning and classroom and/or hybrid courses. This age difference increases the likelihood that fully online students are working and/or have family responsibilities and need the flexibility afforded by distance learning courses.



Gender

Females comprise a greater proportion of undergraduates who took only distance learning courses than of those who took no distance learning courses. As in 2018-19, sixty-four percent (64%) of undergraduates who took only distance learning courses were female, while 51% of undergraduates who took no distance learning courses were female. Females comprised 56% of the undergraduate student body in 2019-20.





SOURCE: BOG O□ce of Data & Analytics, extracted from datamarts on 3/28/2021. Undergraduate students include lower- and upper-division students only and excludes unclassified students. Students with missing or unreported gender data are also excluded. Headcounts are unduplicated. "Students who took only distance learning courses" include students enrolled in any combination of courses where 80 percent or more of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time or space, or both. "Students who took no distance learning courses" include students enrolled in any combination of courses where less than 80 percent of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space or both. "Students who took both distance learning and classroom and/or hybrid" includes students taking any combination of distance learning courses with classroom and/or hybrid courses.

U.S. N & W d R

Residency

Florida Virtual Campus

participate in, complete, and receive credit for the course, according to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges,

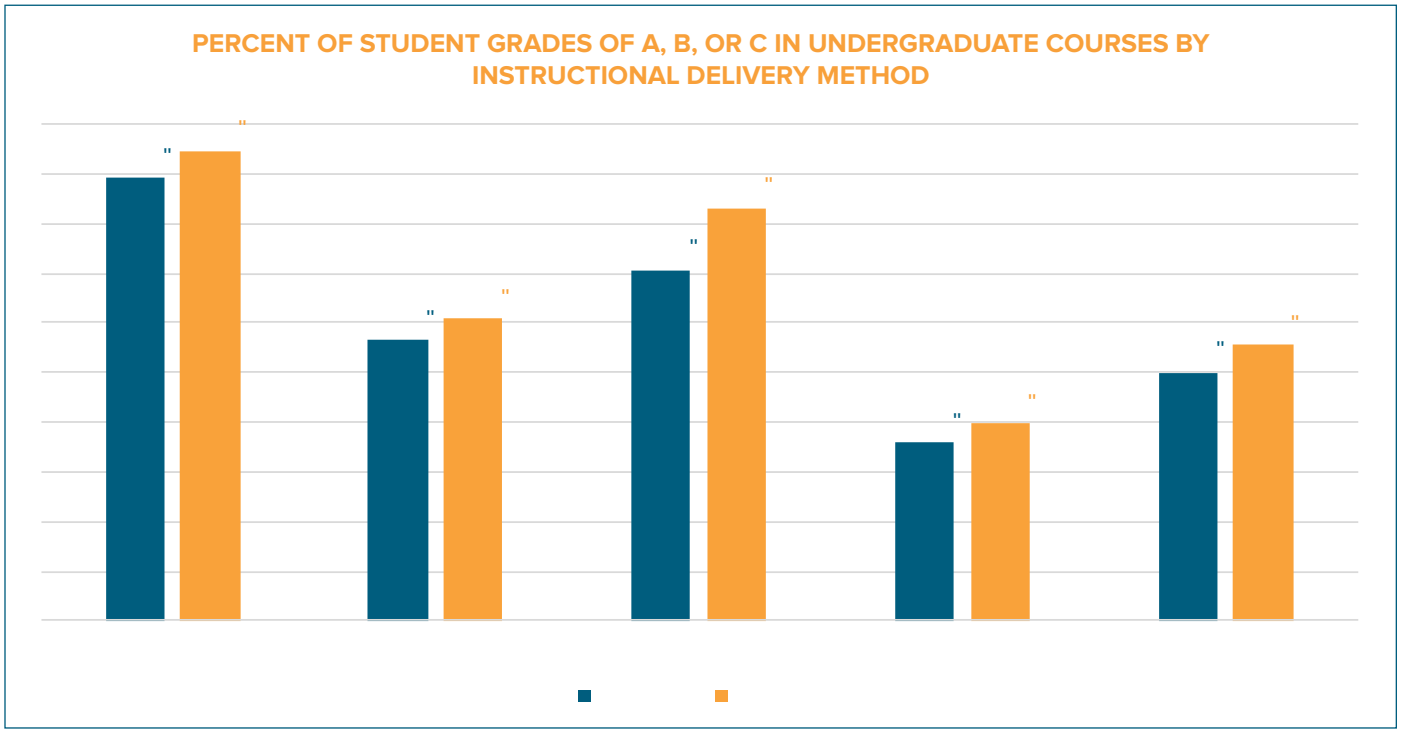
Online Programs/Majors

The following online programs, defined as online majors, are provided in the SUS:

- Shippable Hands-On Mechanical Engineering Teaching Laboratory Kits to

Grade Comparison

Overall, students in distance learning and hybrid courses (Appendix B) performed well in 2019-20, with a higher percentage of students receiving an A, B, or C in these courses than in classroom courses.



SOURCE: BOG O□ce of Data & Analytics, extracted from datamarts on 3/29/2021. Notes: Undergraduate courses include lower- and upper-division only and excludes unclassified students. Course grades of "W" (withdraw) are included in the denominators for calculating percentages (change in methodology from 2017 report). Delivery Method categories are based on element #2052. The share of courses taken by delivery method are as follows: All distance (19%), Primarily distance (1%), Hybrid (3%) and Classroom (76%).

Withdrawal from Courses

The withdrawal rate from courses o□ered fully at a distance in the Fall 2019 term (3.6%) is comparable to the withdrawal rate from classroom courses (3.4%). The withdrawal rate from courses o□ered primarily at a distance is higher (6.3%) than in other modalities.

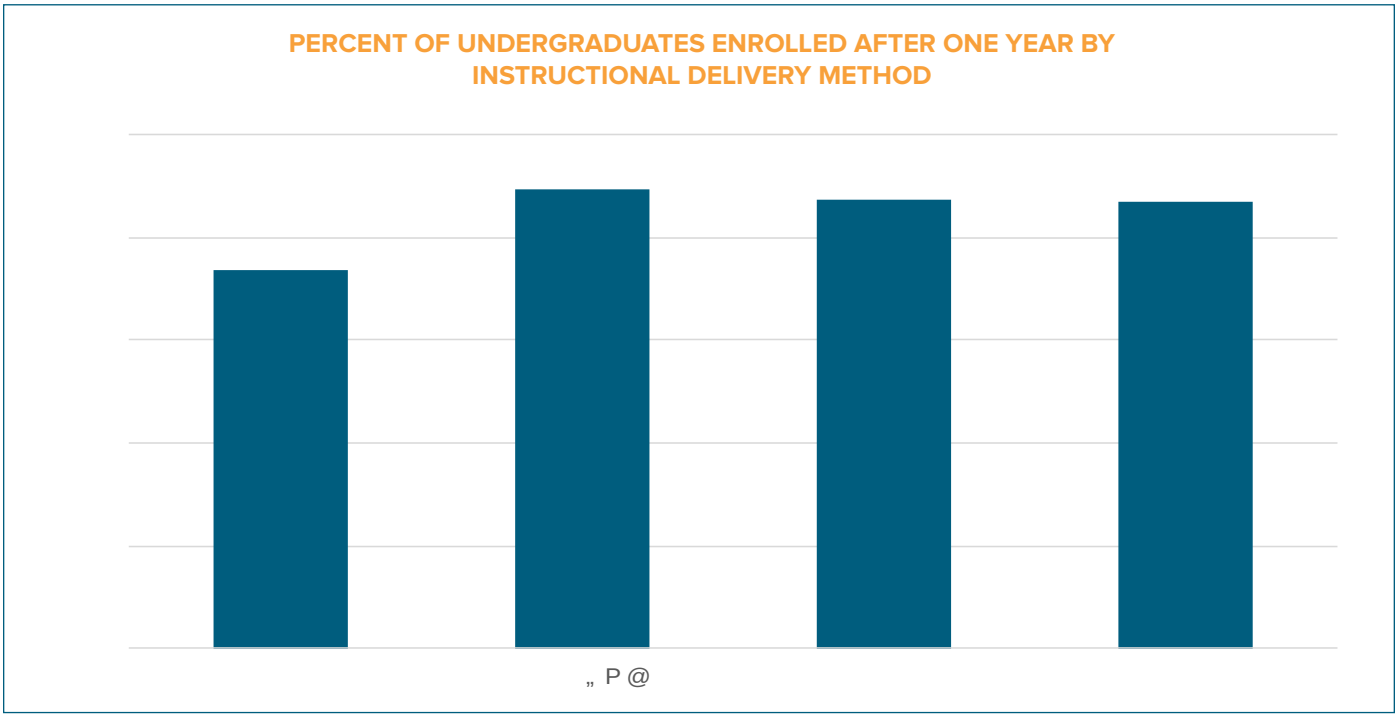
PERCENT OF WITHDRAWAL GRADES AWARDED BY COURSE DELIVERY METHOD

DELIVERY METHOD	FALL 2018		FALL 2019	
	# WITHDRAWALS	% WITHDRAWALS	# WITHDRAWALS	% WITHDRAWALS
ALL DISTANCE	11,327	4.1%	10,642	3.6%
PRIMARILY DISTANCE	1,677	6.2%	1,956	6.3%
HYBRID	2,056	3.2%	1,925	2.9%
CLASSROOM	33,930	3.9%	29,006	3.4%
TOTAL	48,990	4.8%	43,529	3.5%

Note: 'Withdrawals' represents the number of withdrawals divided by all grades awarded in courses by delivery method indicator.

Retention

Seventy-four percent (74%) of students enrolled only in distance learning courses in Fall 2018 were enrolled in Fall 2019. Additional research is needed to determine if those students who were not enrolled in Fall 2019 were enrolled in a subsequent semester, transferred to another institution, or had been transient students with a di□erent home institution in Fall 2018.



SOURCE: BOG O□ce of Data & Analytics, extracted from datamarts on 3/29/2021. Notes: Includes all undergraduates. Delivery Method Categories are based on their enrollments during the Fall 2016 term. The percentages report the proportion of the Fall 2016 undergraduates who were enrolled during Fall 2017. Students who graduated between Fall 2016 and Summer 2017 were removed from both the numerator and the denominator.

U.S. N & W d R

BEST ONLINE GRADUATE ENGINEERING PROGRAM. . . . . *UF #11*

BEST ONLINE ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING PROGRAMS. . . . . *UF #15*

BEST ONLINE INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING PROGRAMS. . . . . *UF #18*

BEST ONLINE MECHANICAL ENGINEERING PROGRAMS . . . . . *UF #13*

Time to Degree

The average time-to-degree in 2019-20 was 3.92 years for full-time students earning Bachelor's degrees in 120-credit-hour programs, the same as it was in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Students who took no distance learning classes and those taking 41%-80% of their credit hours via distance learning graduated in an average of 3.75 years, while all other students graduated in an average of 3.92 years. The number of graduates who took 81% - 100% of their credit hours online was too small to generalize their time to degree.

AVERAGE YEARS TO DEGREE FOR FULL-TIME, FTIC BACCALAUREATES IN 120 HR PROGRAMS

% DL	2018-2019			2019-2020		
	N	%	MEDIAN	N	%	MEDIAN
0%	1,011	4%	3.75	819	3%	3.75
1-20%	11,536	44%	4.00	10,984	41%	3.92
21-40%	9,520	37%	3.92	10,229	38%	3.92
41-60%	3,363	13%	3.92	4,139	15%	3.75
61-80%	473	2%	3.75	663	2%	3.75
81-99%	37	0.1%	*	53	0.2%	*
100%	17	<0.1%	*	20	<0.1%	*
Total	**100%**					

A ordability

Cost of Online Education

The Cost of Online Education report was produced in 2016 and discussions are underway to update it in 2021. The cost report was described in previous annual reports as follows:

- Presented to the Board's Innovation and Online Committee in October 2016, the Cost of Online Education report produced by the A ordability Workgroup found that the average incremental cost of online learning was $41.48 per credit hour, with 42% of incremental costs for the development of the online course and 58% for the delivery of the online course.
- The analysis of the 2015-16 data showed that institutions increased costs for developing and delivering online education were from the investment in sta ng, the cost of creating online courses with high interaction levels and media-rich content, and the technology infrastructure. The report found that the development and delivery of online education requires additional human resources and technology resources that are not necessary for face-to-face education, increasing the cost of online education.

Common LMS

In 2015, a master agreement that could be used by institutions in both the SUS and FCS was signed for a common, opt-in learning management system. FSU renewed the contract on behalf of the System in 2020.

Impact of Online Enrollments on Facilities

The Board O ce is continuing to remove 80% of the distance learning FTE from classroom, teaching labs, gymnasium, and auditorium space types from the facilities planning model, thereby decreasing the amount of funds needed to meet minimum required space standards. This revision to the model was made in 2017 in response to a joint meeting of the Board's Facilities and Innovation and Online Education Committees.

Infrastructure

FLVC is continuing to populate its site for sharing available statewide agreements, services, and contracts related to distance learning, as described in last year's Annual Report.

U.S. N & W d R
BEST ONLINE MASTER'S IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS
FSU #7

U.S. N & W d R
BEST ONLINE MASTER'S IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS
FSU #3, UWF #13

Endnotes

1. Florida Board of Governors, “State University System of Florida Blueprint for Reopening Campuses,”

Bibliography

"7 Things You Should Know about Adaptive Learning: EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative," EDUCAUSE, 2017. https://library.educause.edu/-/media/files/library/2017/1/eli7140.pdf

A□ordability Workgroup, 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education. "The Cost of Online Education." October 17, 2016. https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/03a_2016_10_07_FINAL-CONTROL_Cost_Data_Report_rev.pdf

"Best Online Bachelor's Programs." U.S. News & World Report. Accessed April 7, 2021. https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/bachelors/rankings

"Best Online Colleges & Top Online Universities of 2021." Best Colleges. Accessed April 7, 2021. https://www.bestcolleges.com/features/top-online-schools

"Best Online Graduate Programs." U.S. News & World Report. Accessed April 7, 2021. https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education#GraduatePrograms

Criser, Marshall, III. "Propelling Students Forward: COVID-19: SUS Key Progressive Metrics," Chancellor's Newsletter, Board of Governors. March 5, 2021. https://www.flbog.edu/2021/03/05/chancellors-newsletter-march-2021-update

Florida Board of Governors. "Annual Report for Online Education," Board of Governors. March 30, 2017 and July 21, 2020.

Florida Board of Governors. "State University System of Florida Blueprint for Reopening Campuses," May 28, 2020. https://www.flbog.edu/the-state-university-system-of-florida-blueprint-for-reopening-campuses-fall-semester-2020

Straut, Terri Taylor and Marianne Boeke. "NC-SARA 2019 Data Report: Enrollment & Out-of-State Learning Placements," December 2020. https://www.nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf

Appendix A

Dr. Joseph Glover
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic A airs
University of Florida

Dr. Ralph Wilcox, Chair
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic A airs
University of South Florida

Dr. Tom Cavanagh
Vice Provost for Digital Learning
University of Central Florida

Robert Fuselier
Director, O ce of Distance Learning
Florida State University

Dr. Andy McCollough
Associate Provost,
Teaching and Technology
University of Florida

Dr. Cynthia DeLuca, Chair
Associate Vice President,
Innovation Education
University of South Florida

Dr. Julie Golden-Botti
Executive Director for Online
and Continuing Education
Florida Atlantic University

Dr. Deb Miller
Assistant Vice President for
Digital Learning
University of North Florida

Dr. Tom Dvorske
Vice Provost, Assessment & Instruction
Florida Polytechnic University

Dr. Michelle Horton
Executive Director
Glovs3 (c)nor (ti)(yn(on)]TJ /N [(Dr)e Pr0-5.)7 (, As)2 (s)-3.9 (ovs)1utivcniversity of Nor,oron
,8.1j 0 11.368 Td [(U)5 (niv.25of Dis)2 (tance L)-10.9 (e)1 (arnin)4 (g)]T368 c(U)5 (niv)3 (er)1

Appendix B

Instructional Delivery Methods

Code	Description
AD	***F D a c L a C*** Full Distance Learning Course - 100% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All special course components (exams, internships, practica, clinicals, labs, etc) that cannot be completed online can be completed o□-campus.
CL	***P a C a C*** Primarily Classroom Course - Less than 50% of the direct instruction of the course section is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space or both. This designation can include activities that do not occur in a classroom (ie, labs, internships, practica, clinicals, labs, etc). These course sections are required to have records on the COURSE MEETINGS taE4 3 cmhavs

Appendix C

Online Programs/Majors Definitions

Metric	Definition
Fully Online Program	100% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All program requirements that cannot be completed online can be completed o□-campus.
Primarily Online Program	80-99% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.