



## 74% of Online and Remote College Students Believe That Online Education Is Better Than or Equal to On-Campus Learning

*BestColleges.com Releases 2021 Edition of Their Annual Online Education Trends Report*

**March 4, 2021 (Seattle, WA)** - BestColleges.com's Online Education Trends Report, released Thursday, revealed that a majority (74%) of college students thought that online learning was better than or equal to on-campus learning. Click below for more information:

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/annual-trends-in-online-education/>

The seventh annual Online Education Trends Report includes feedback from 366 school administrators and 1,800 college students. In addition to offering the most current view of the online education landscape, this year's report also includes a look at the remote learning experience caused by COVID-19, with insights from 500 college students who were previously enrolled in on-campus classes that switched to virtual learning.

As the college learning environment changed in 2020, so did students' decision-making process. For the first time since conducting this survey, students indicated "finding a program that meets students' needs and interests" as the biggest challenge when choosing an online program. This marks a shift from previous years' findings, when participants frequently indicated "actual costs" and "applying for financial aid" as the top two challenges.

"This may be a result of several factors, such as the growing number of online programs available, demand for something that isn't available, or difficulty locating needed information," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., the report's author and online education advisor for BestColleges.com. "With a growing number of online programs to choose from, the college selection process can be overwhelming for students, who don't always have all the information they need to make the best decisions."

As more students enroll in online programs, perceptions around distance learning continue to improve, particularly with college students. Ninety-five percent of students overall, and 83% of remote learners, said they would recommend online or remote learning to others.

Furthermore, of the 500 remote learners surveyed, almost half (49%) expected to enroll in online courses once campuses fully reopen.

These shifting perceptions around online education are also shared by many school administrators. One-third (33%) of administrators plan to continue with both remote and online course options once campuses return to normal operations, while an overwhelming majority (83%) agreed that there will be an increased need for online courses over the next few years.

The survey confirms that the switch to remote learning has changed the perceptions many on-campus students and administrators previously had regarding online education. It also suggests that administrators recognize what's possible with online education, and that there is a need for greater investment in the planning and design-related processes.

Despite these positive responses, many remote students still have concerns. Nearly one-third (28%) of remote students believed that the impact of COVID-19-related changes on their college experience will have lasting effects on their mental health. Additionally, 25% of remote students believe it will be more difficult to find a job after graduating college.

"While the positive responses among students and administrators is encouraging, the impact of COVID-19-related changes on college students' lives may have multiple long-term effects," Venable said. "Our findings suggest that while remote students may be more open to enroll in an online course, they have heightened concerns about their health and wellness, as well as their future employability."

## **Methodology**

Two online surveys were conducted in October and November 2020. All data is self-reported.

For the first survey, we connected with schools offering online courses, as reported by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Representatives from public and private two- and four-year institutions provided feedback via the SurveyMonkey platform from October 19 to November 23, 2020. 366 school administrators responded to questions

about online program design and administration, student support needs, and the impact of COVID-19 on their work and higher education in general.

The second survey was conducted from November 10-18th, 2020. Student respondents were fielded by Lucid LLC. Survey participants included 1800 students, representing current remote (500) and online learners (450), prospective online students (350), and online degree program graduates (500). The respondents for the survey were screened by various quality checks, including systems like Relevant ID, and are manually reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy in the responses.

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