



**Inside  
Higher  
Ed**

# **Driving Persistence Through Engagement in Virtual Learning**

**2.21.2024, 2 p.m. Eastern**

# Webcast: Driving Persistence Through Engagement in Virtual Learning

## Hosts:

- Doug Lederman, *Inside Higher Ed*
- Colleen Flaherty, *Inside Higher Ed*
- Jason Bedford, Class

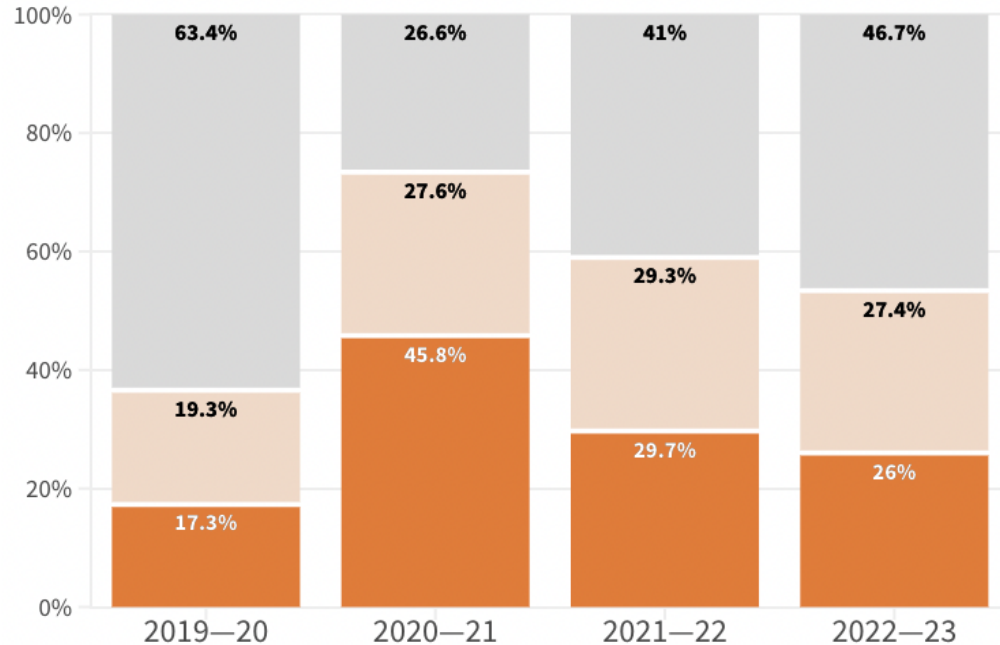
## Panel:

- Justin C. Ortagus, University of Florida
- Evie Cummings, Strategic Leader and Experienced Higher Ed Administrator
- Karen Cangialosi, Every Learner Everywhere
- Kizito Mukuni, Fayetteville State University

# Online Enrollment: By the Numbers

## Online Enrollment on Decline Post-COVID

Online enrollment is seeing a dip post-COVID but will likely never return to pre-pandemic numbers.



- Enrolled exclusively in distance education courses
- Enrolled in some, but not all, distance education courses
- Not enrolled in any distance education courses

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

- Online enrollments continue to decline from COVID peak, but still exceed pre-pandemic levels
- 2/3 institutions still adding online-only programs

**“It’s a continued sign of going mainstream. Twenty-two was an aberration and, yes, online enrollment went down in ’21 and down again in ’22. If it went on the curve we were expecting, then I’d say COVID was just a wash, but these numbers show it as a net positive.” —Richard Garrett, chief research officer at Eduventures**

# Virtual Learning and Outcomes: What the Data Say

- Data are nuanced and often contradictory
- Online learners are not a monolith (nor is virtual learning)

Ortagus and colleagues (2023) recommend:

1. Acknowledge that face-to-face learning has value
2. Use personal engagement as a retention strategy
3. Understand the nuance of online students
4. Invest in wraparound supports
5. Prioritize quality

**“It doesn’t serve students to suggest that online education can’t work. It can work for some, and it can harm some. It’s important to parse through that nuance rather than just seeking one word to capture it all.” —Justin C. Ortagus**

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## The Role and Influence of Exclusively Online Degree Programs in Higher Education

Justin C. Ortagus  
University of Florida

Rodney Hughes  
West Virginia University

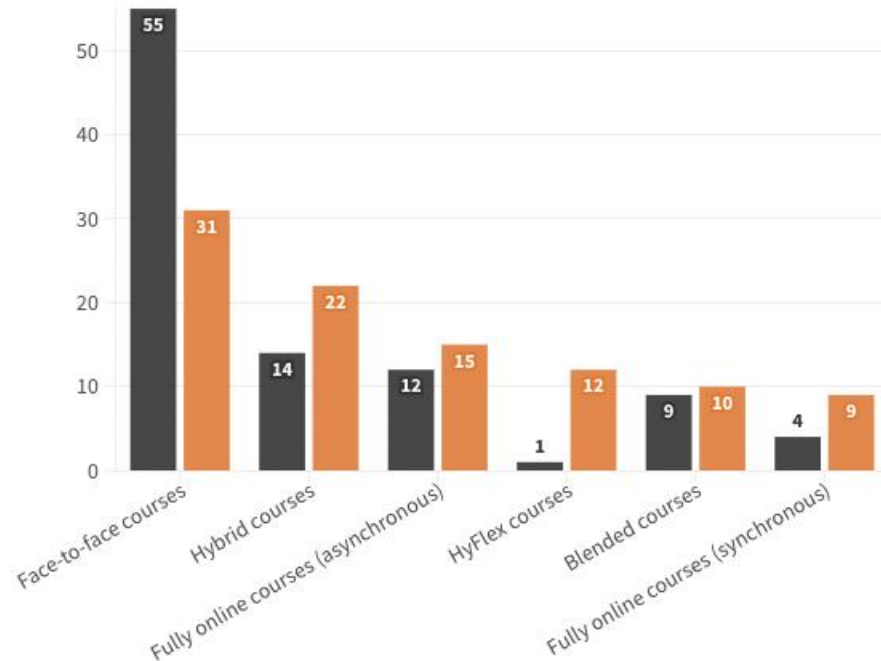
Hope Allchin  
University of Florida

This study leverages national data and a quasi-experimental design to examine the influence of enrolling in an exclusively online degree program on students' likelihood of completing their degree. We find that enrolling in an exclusively online degree program had a negative influence on students' likelihood of completing their bachelor's degree or any degree when compared to their otherwise-similar peers who enrolled in at least some face-to-face courses. The negative relationship between exclusively online enrollment and students' likelihood of bachelor's degree completion was relatively consistent among White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, low-income, and military students. Findings focused solely on those students enrolled in exclusively online degree programs revealed that the negative influence of exclusively online enrollment was exacerbated when the student attended a for-profit four-year institution.

# Student and Faculty Modality Preferences

## Student and instructor preference for course materials and course modality

■ Instructor preferred modality ■ Student preferred modality



Source: [Time for Class survey 2023, Tyton Partners analysis](#)

Listening to Learners (Tyton Partners and Every Learner Everywhere) recommends:

- Increasing the frequency of evidence-based teaching practices among professors, including active learning
- Adding more digital tools to create community and collaboration
- Growing awareness and use of available student support services
- Promoting interaction with academic advising, financial aid and mental health service staff

# Engaging Online Students

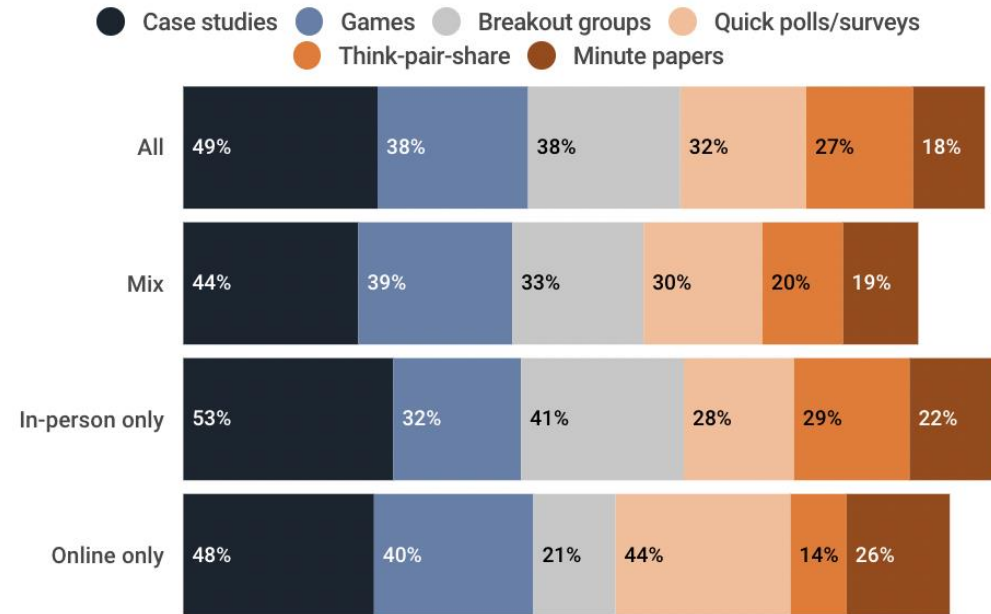
- Student Voice respondents' No. 1 barrier to success in a class since starting college is a teaching style that didn't work for them
- Respondents' No. 1 preferred course format is interactive lecture
- Respondents' preferred active learning strategies vary slightly by modality
- Active learning disproportionately benefits historically marginalized groups

**“The *basis* of teaching is the same for every modality: strong emphases on content, pedagogy, and assessment. Careful planning on these three factors remains central to successful teaching—both residential and online.” —Harvard’s Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning**

## Students’ Preferred Teaching Practices



Share of students (n=1,250), by course modality, who say the following activities are most helpful in learning and retaining information



Source: Inside Higher Ed/College Pulse survey of 1,250 college students.



Student Voice is an Inside Higher Ed and College Pulse collaboration.

# Panel Discussion

# Sponsor Spotlight: class



*Jason Bedford,  
Senior Vice President of Education*



# Audience Q & A

# Thank you!

