



The Advantages & Opportunities of an Online Degree

Description

We live in a fortunate time where learning opportunities are plentiful than ever. Although the demand for traditional education pursued on campuses is high, there is a high demand for online courses nowadays.



That's where online learning comes in. Admittedly, it won't solve your student loan problems. You'll still be paying for tuition, classes, equipment, and tools, but there are considerable advantages to an online degree. Brick-and-mortar institutions can offer some serious benefits, such as: a community to interact with friends and peers; clubs, sports, and extracurricular opportunities; internships; and more.

For some, however, traditional college is either too expensive, too far away, or simply too inconvenient. At times, it may simply be easier to enter the workforce sooner than spend time at a college.

By working toward an online degree, you can get the best of both worlds. For a significantly lower cost than traditional schooling, digital education can earn you a degree from an accredited university. Online schools have made considerable strides to be more legitimate in the public perception, and more and more workplaces are weighing online degrees with equal weight to those from a traditional school.

Thinking about pursuing an online degree? Whether it's in nursing, law, engineering, or computer science, you've come to the right place. In this guide, I'm going to discuss some of the most pressing advantages and opportunities available to students who enroll in online classes today.

Course Variety

You might have some concerns about online degrees and taking classes outside of a traditional school. You're right to have some concerns: for those who have been in public school up until college, transitioning to an online learning center can be startling.

To dissuade your fears, you should first know that both traditional and online schools offer a broad selection of coursework students can enroll in. Like I said above, you can apply for classes in nursing to engineering and everything in between.

Online classes also offer potentially more freedom than traditional schools. You may be locked into certain course tracks at a brick-and-mortar school. For example: a degree in criminal law might force you to take only classes within the realm of law and leave no room for a humanities or sociology class. By learning online, you can take on as many courses as you want on any topic available.

Even better, you can take the learning journey entirely online. Many online schools offer postgraduate programs and even doctorates. By the time you graduate, you'll be equipped with the right information you need to jumpstart your career.

Access to the Best Teachers

Something that not every student thinks about while attending college is the quality of the professors who teach them. We operate under the assumption that, because they are college-educated professionals themselves, they must be equipped to teach us what we need to know to succeed, right?

Let me tell you that not all professors are created equal. Teachers can operate their classrooms typically in any manner they see fit and assign coursework to a syllabus of their own design. As long as they fit certain requirements determined by the school, they are pretty much free to teach in their own style.

This can actually be a good thing, as a professor at the traditional campus can be flexible in how they teach to optimize how students learn in the classroom.

Online, however, things are more rigid, as students can only learn by the lectures given to them by their professors. These discussions could be prerecorded videos, written notes, or a slideshow deck. The advantage here is that, unlike a sit-in lecture, online lectures can be recorded, re-watched, and reviewed. If you're stuck or need clarification, you have all the time you need to catch up.

Despite these conditions, online classrooms can leverage the best professors worldwide, to tackle any challenge that may be present. Online schools can outsource lectures from professors from prestigious universities and Ivy League schools or deliver presentations from industry professionals in master classes.

The scale is another advantage. In a TED talk held in 2009, an economics professor learned that he could deliver lessons and teach hundreds of thousands of people in the same span of time he could otherwise to a class of only thirty students. This sense of scalability makes online classrooms incredible cost-saving tools for universities. Class sizes can be multiple times larger and still be cheaper than a traditional class of thirty students.



Time & Convenience

It's no surprise to anyone that one of the most prominent advantages of online learning is that you can do it from the convenience of your own home, office, or the coffee shop. Pretty much anywhere you have a computer and a stable Internet connection you can take your online class.

Most classes for an online degree don't follow the same rigid structure that precedes a traditional classroom. You won't have to wake up early for that 8:00 AM psychology class, nor spend the time doing your morning routine to get ready for the day. Turn on the TV and commercials for online learning generally, show students in their pajamas.

Being able to learn and do work from anywhere is only the tip of the iceberg, however. The benefits of working with lectures and class material electronically are considerable. By having everything textbooks to tests to lectures online only, students have the freedom to access these materials at their convenience.

On the other hand, professors can distribute these materials at any time during the day, or even load

them up onto the digital platform at the beginning of the semester. Savvy students can stay ahead of the game by doing next week's assignment this week.

Students will also be able to better balance their work and life. They can tackle lectures or an assignment in between errands, on their lunch break, or in the evening after work. No fighting traffic or parking. No missing important family time.



Personalized Learning

The great thing about online classes vs. traditional classes is the flexibility you have to communicate with your professor. It's not always convenient to see your college course instructor face to face, so between email, live chat and telephone conversations, you should have more opportunities to get feedback or have a great Q&A session with your college professor.

MOOCs

Did you know? Many online courses can be completely free of charge. Called Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), these online courses are designed to be open and available to the general public. Held by some of the best schools in the country like Harvard, Stanford, and MIT, MOOCs are accessible to a wide range of groups and circumstances-including international students. Success in these courses often provide a verified certificate upon completion, which can be a useful asset added to a resume or portfolio.

The downside to MOOCs, however, is that they generally award no college credit.



Lower Costs

I've been mentioning the lower cost potential of online college everywhere in this article, but let's devote some time to fleshing out the full benefits. The fact that online programs are cheaper when compared to the ones held in a traditional campus setting is enough to convince you to consider them.

The average tuition for online courses depends on multiple factors, so it varies from one program to another. Because of this, it may be important to do a budget analysis associated with earning the degree. I won't go into the specific numbers here, but a lot of the costs associated with a traditional undergraduate program aren't faced when pursuing an online degree.

Here are the most common expenses for an online class:

- **Tuition:** The cost for the credits the classes are valued at. Online schools may offer variable payment options such as delayed due date, tiered tuition rates, and interest-free monthly payments.
- **Technology:** You'll have to cover upkeep for tech support, computer fees, and the costs of online

learning management systems. You will also have to buy digital versions of the books and software the class requires.

- Other Fees: Online colleges may charge additional fees, such as for lab work, clinical courses, exam proctoring, and more. Check with administration so you know all the potential charges.

Here are the most common expenses for brick-and-mortar colleges:

- Tuition & Registration
 - Room and board: The cost of housing and meal plans for students living on campus.
 - Textbooks and supplies: According to the College Board, the average four-year student at a public university spends about \$1,100 a semester on books and other course materials, which comes to about \$8,800 for a bachelor's degree program.
 - Transportation: For students living off campus or for extracurricular activities, students need to devise a means to get to where they need to go.
 - Personal Expenses: Students should consider nonacademic costs such as laundry, cell phone bills and takeout food as personal expenses.
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