Ohio Board of Regents
Ted Strickland, Governor
Eric D. Fingerhut, Chancellor
University System of Ohio

Dramatic Increases in Distance Learning Enrollments Continue at Ohio's Public Colleges and Universities

Distance learning enrollments at the University System of Ohio's colleges and universities continued the trend of marked growth between fall 2008 and fall 2009. Distance learning courses allow institutions to serve more students than they could through only their traditional "brick and mortar" classrooms. Distance learning courses also allow students a greater flexibility with where and when they take their college courses.

USO enrollment in distance learning courses in fall 2009 reached 93,653, up 25.99% from fall 2008. This is significantly higher than total enrollment growth for the University System of Ohio between fall 2008 and fall 2009 which was 12%. Community and technical colleges accounted for 56,642 of the overall distance learning students (60.5%), regional branch campuses enrolled 7,243 distance learning students (7.7%), and the university campuses enrolled 29,768 distance learning students (31.8%) in fall 2009.

This year, all 37 USO institutions reported their distance learning enrollments. This is the first year 100% of USO institutions reported this data. The 21 community colleges from the 2008 report grew by 10,283 students between fall 2008 and fall 2009, a 23.1% increase. Adding the other two community and technical colleges that reported for the first time, the total distance learning enrollment for two years schools for fall 2009 was 56,642. The 23 regional branch campuses grew by 2,514 students, a 53.2% increase. The 12 university campuses (NEOUCOM and Central State University do not currently offer DL classes) grew by 6,130 students, a 25.9% increase.

Characteristics of distance learning students:

- 66% are women
- 51% are 25 years of age or older
- 54% are full time students
- 9% are graduate students
- 2% attend more than one campus
- 47% attend institutions in their home county
- 8% are full time students and take only distance learning courses

USO distance learning enrollments have increased dramatically since this information was first collected in 2004. University main campuses have had a 116% increase, university regional campuses have had a 383% increase, and community and technical colleges have had a 156% increase. The overall rate of increase for the entire University System of Ohio from fall 2004 to fall 2009 is 150%. The rate of growth does not seem to be slowing either. The rate of increase for DL enrollments from fall 2008 to fall 2009 was 26%, the largest increase yet.

Table 1. Six Year Trends in Distance Learning Enrollments from Fall 2004 – Fall 2009

Sector	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Percent Change 2008-2009	Percent Change 2004-2009
University Main Campuses	13,754	15,183	16,045	18,903	23,638	29,768	25.90%	116.43%
University Regional Campuses	1,499	1,631	2,361	3,234	4,729	7,243	53.16%	383.19%
Community and Technical Colleges	22,168	25,431	31,064	37,549	44,457	56,642	23.13%	155.51%
Total	**37,421**	**42,245**	**49,470**	**59,686**	**72,824**	**93,653**	**25.99%**	**150.27%**

Why does growth in distance learning enrollments matter for Ohio?

In September 2010, the Lumina Foundation for Education issued their report, "A Stronger Nation through Higher Education." In this report, Lumina proposes a 60% higher education attainment rate as a national goal to be reached by 2025. Ohio's current higher education attainment rate is 34.9%. This lags slightly behind the national average of 38%. If Ohio's attainment continues to increase at the current rate, we will have an educational attainment rate of 44.5% by the year 2025 – far short of 60%. We are looking for ways to close the gap. An excellent place to begin is with Ohio residents who have some college without earning a degree (22.0%). These tend to be adult students. The University System of Ohio Strategic Plan indicates a focus on these Ohioans as a way to increase overall enrollments and educational attainment. Online learning is one way to attract these students back to higher education and facilitate the path to earning a degree. The growth in online enrollments over the past six years indicates that this group of Ohioans is beginning to discover online learning, but the awareness needs to increase.

Why can't we compare distance learning enrollments state to state? What does national data say?

Historically, it has been difficult to compare distance learning enrollments between states. In April 2008, IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) put out a report discussing how different states collected data on their distance education activities. They outlined some of the challenges states faced when collecting distance education data and comparing it state to state.

- Definitions of distance learning are not consistent (e.g., % at a distance, duplicated vs. unduplicated enrollments, method of delivery)
- Types of institutions that submitted data (e.g., private, public, for-profit, non-profit) varied widely from state-to-state

Two national reports on distance education are currently available, but they focus on fall 2008 data. The Sloan-C report (which comes out in January each year) indicated that over 4.6 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2008 term, a 17% increase from the year before. Sloan-C also reported that online enrollments now make up 25.3% of overall higher education enrollments. The National Center for Education Statistics also published a report using 2007-2008 data on distance education courses. They found that 20.4 percent of undergraduates took at least one distance education course. This is slightly higher than Ohio's rate of 17%, although Ohio's rate includes all graduate students as well. However, 27% of Ohio's community and technical college students take at least one distance learning course.

Table 2. Distance Learning Students in Comparison with Overall Enrollments

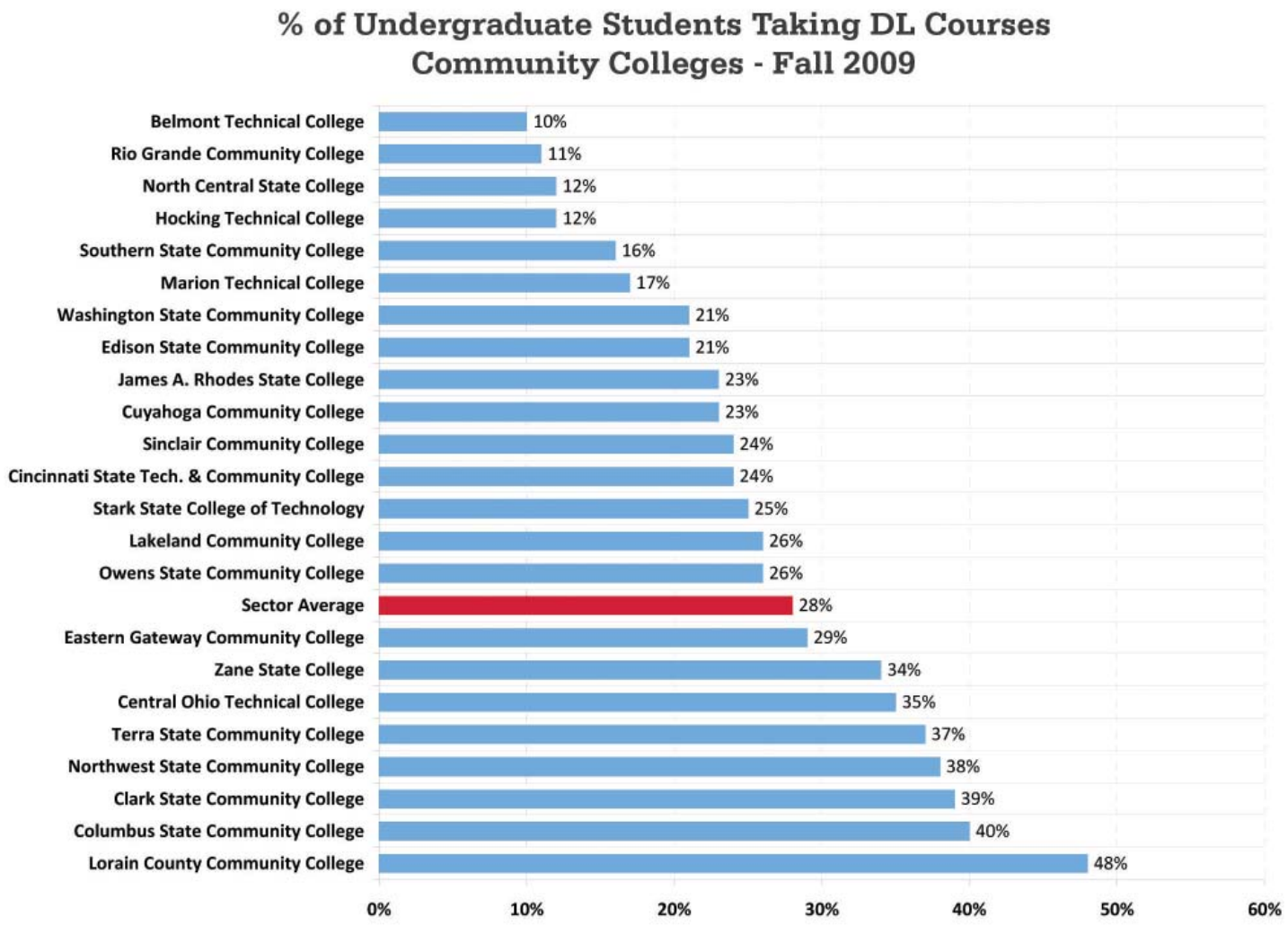
Sector	Number of students who take DL courses	DL students as a percentage of overall enrollment
University Main Campuses	29,768	11%
University Regional Campuses	7,243	12%
Community and Technical Colleges	56,642	27%
Total	**93,653**	**17%**

Table 3. Reported Distance Learning Enrollment at Ohio Public Colleges and Universities, Fall 2008 & Fall 2009

	Unduplicated Headcount Fall 2008	Unduplicated Headcount Fall 2009	Percent Change 2008-2009	Difference in Head Count 2008-2009
University Main Campuses				
Bowling Green State University	896	1,407	57.03%	511
Central State University	0	0	0.00%	0
Cleveland State University	3,144	2,737	-12.95%	-407
Kent State University	2,577	4,343	68.53%	1,766
Miami University	395	297	-24.81%	-98
NEOUCOM	0	0	0.00%	0
The Ohio State University	3,311	3,787	14.38%	476
Ohio University	522	1,471	181.80%	949
Shawnee State University	199	405	103.52%	206
The University of Akron	902	1,227	36.03%	325
University of Cincinnati	4,185	5,891	40.76%	1,706
The University of Toledo	4,858	5,815	19.70%	957
Wright State University	1,719	1,541	-10.35%	-178
Youngstown State University	930	847	-8.92%	-83
Total	**23,638**	**29,768**	**25.93%**	**6130**
University Regional Campuses				
Bowling Green State University	282	363	28.72%	81
Kent State University	2,088	3,135	50.14%	1,047
Miami University	329	809	145.90%	480
Ohio State University	199	238	19.60%	39
Ohio University	631	890	41.05%	259
University of Akron	46	56	21.74%	10
University of Cincinnati	1,036	1,522	46.91%	486
Wright State University	118	230	94.92%	112
Total	**4,729**	**7,243**	**53.16%**	**2514**
Community and Technical Colleges				
Belmont Technical College	198	225	13.64%	27
Central Ohio Technical College		1,516		
Cincinnati State Technical and Community College	1,628	2,466	51.47%	838
Clark State Community College	1,397	1,690	20.97%	293
Columbus State Community College	8,965	11,122	24.06%	2,157
Cuyahoga Community College	6,445	8,181	26.94%	1,736
Eastern Gateway Community College	497	551	10.87%	54
Edison State Community College	428	693	61.92%	265
Hocking Technical College	537	702	30.73%	165
James A. Rhodes State College	778	930	19.54%	152
Lakeland Community College	2,222	2,438	9.72%	216
Lorain County Community College	4,326	5,672	31.11%	1,346
Marion Technical College	330	396	20.00%	66
North Central State College		386		
Northwest State Community College	1,028	1,337	30.06%	309
Owens Community College	6,364	6,594	3.61%	230
Rio Grande Community College	149	168	12.75%	19
Sinclair Community College	4,867	5,878	20.77%	1,011
Southern State Community College	419	640	52.74%	221
Stark State College of Technology	1,967	2,782	41.43%	815
Terra State Community College	740	985	33.11%	245
Washington State Community College	432	437	1.16%	5
Zane State College	740	853	15.27%	113
Total	**44,457**	**56,642**	**23.13%**	**10,283**
Total - All Institutions	**72,824**	**93,653**	**25.99%**	**18,927**

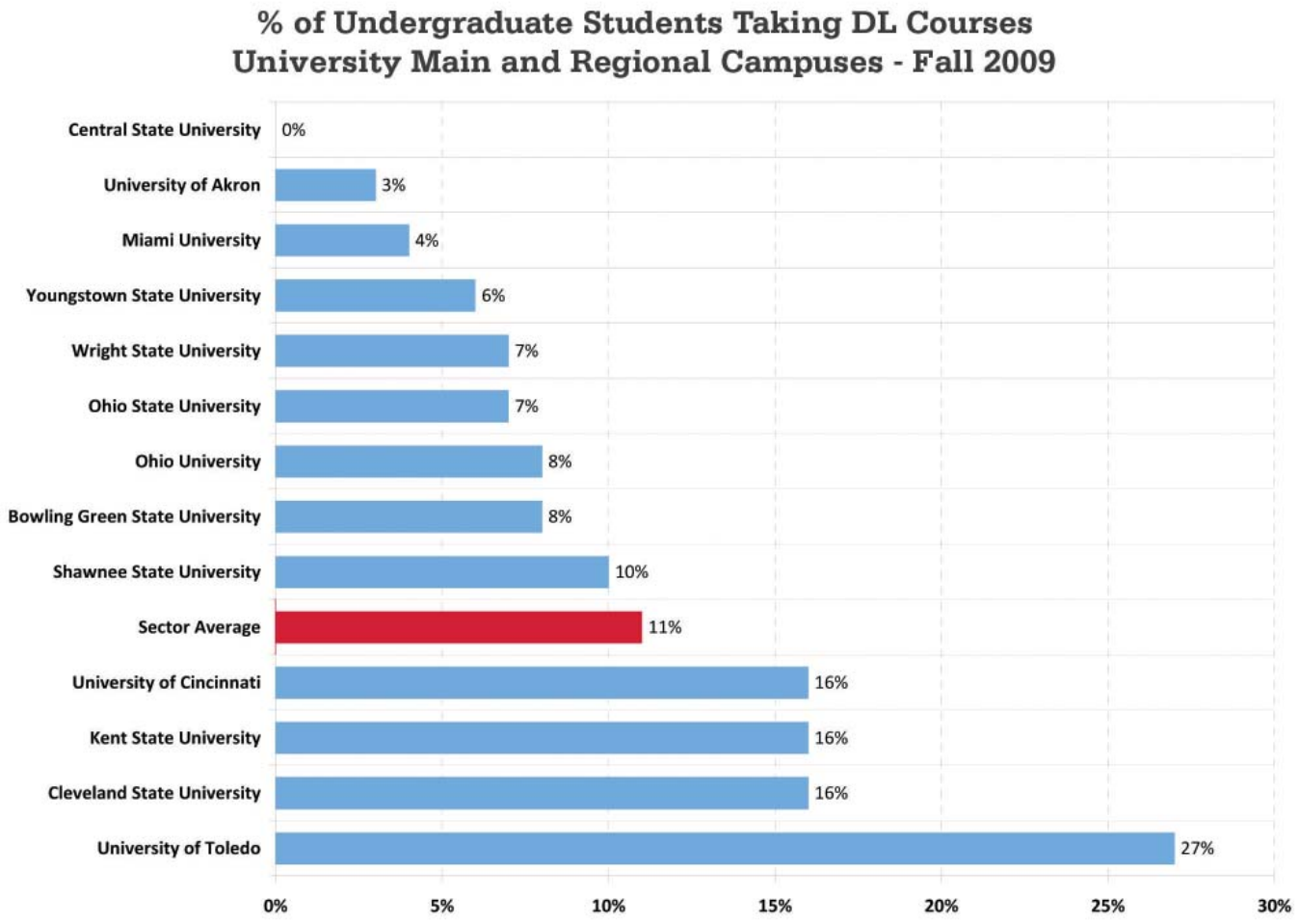
The rate of adoption for distance learning courses is much higher at community and technical colleges than it is at the four year colleges. The percentage of students taking DL courses ranges from 10% to 48% but the sector average is 28%. Some of the institutions with the highest distance learning enrollment rates are Lorain County Community College (48%), Columbus State Community College (40%), Clark State Community College (39%), and Northwest State Community College (38%).

Figure 1.



The sector average of distance learning enrollments at the university main and regional campuses is 11%. Although this is significantly lower than that of the community and technical colleges, students are still using this mode of delivery, particularly at some four year institutions. The University of Toledo has the highest distance learning enrollment rate (27%), while Kent State University, Cleveland State University, and the University of Cincinnati all have 16% of their students taking distance learning courses.

Figure 2.



The amount of content available to students at a distance in Ohio continues to grow as well. There are now 436 degrees and certificates available at a distance in the OhioLearns! catalog. The largest percentage of these are associate degrees (36%), followed by certificates (35%), graduate degrees (16%), and bachelor degrees (13%).

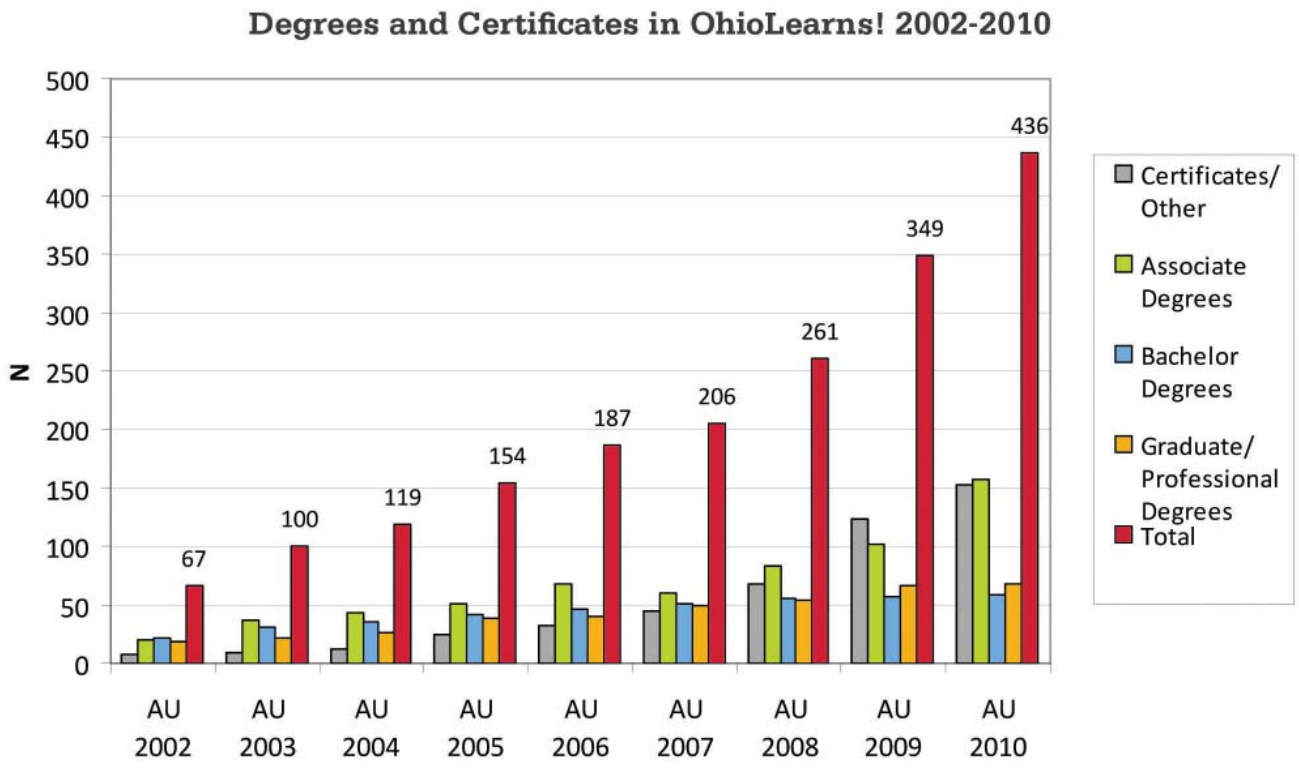



Figure 3.