



State of Tennessee

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New Report Chronicles Growth of Online Learning in Higher Education

The number of students in the United States enrolled in at least one online course has increased faster than overall enrollment growth in higher education, a new report from the state Comptroller's office shows.

The report, released today by the Comptroller's Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA), found that between 2002 and 2010, the number of students enrolled in online courses throughout the U.S. grew 283 percent - from 1.6 million to 6.1 million. Nearly one-third of all higher education students took at least one course online in 2011.

Tennessee's higher education institutions have offered flexible online course options for the last decade. In the 2011-12 academic year, about 14 percent of courses at Tennessee four-year institutions and more than 23 percent at community colleges were classified as e-learning courses in which 50 percent or more of the content is delivered electronically.

Online learning options continue to increase in Tennessee along with the state's effort to boost the number of citizens with college degrees or certificates. The newly-opened Western Governors University Tennessee, a nonprofit online higher education institution, is designed to enroll adults with some college credit but no college degrees.

The OREA report examines why students enroll in online courses, whether online education is effective, the costs of online education and how online learning is offered through Tennessee's higher education institutions.

OREA is an agency within the Comptroller's Office that is charged with providing accurate and objective policy research and analysis for the Tennessee General Assembly and the public.

To view the report online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OREA/>.

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