

AN INDEPENDENT SUPPLEMENT BY MEDIAPLANET TO USA TODAY

From the top  
Insight from  
industry leaders

Accreditation  
What to look for in  
your online school

Online training  
A glance at healthcare  
programs

**MEDIA  
PLANET**

# ONLINE EDUCATION

5

TIPS

TO EMBARKING ON  
AN EDUCATIONAL  
EXPERIENCE ONLINE



## REDEFINING THE CLASSROOM

Retired US Army Command Sergeant Major Joe Gainey explains how online education best fits his active lifestyle, and why he is an advocate of education

PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



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# CHALLENGES

**Today distance learning** is an ever-growing entity within the education and training industry.

# Moving ahead academically in 2010

**W**elcome to the third installment of the Online Education report series. The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) is pleased to be part of this publication and help reach out to the growing number of online learners with important information and relevant articles written by distance learning industry leaders.

Today distance learning is an ever growing entity within the education and training industry. Distance learners around the world continue to acquire knowledge 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Through the articles and advertisements in this issue, we hope to raise awareness of the many quality courses, degree and certificate programs avail-

able through various distance learning technologies. Great opportunities await today's graduates and I encourage you to use this resource as a means to pursue and fulfill your own personal and educational goals.

USDLA is an association which promotes the development and application of distance learning for a number of different constituencies, all of whom use varied technologies. Whether it is K-12, higher ed, corporate, government, military, telehealth or home schooling, myriad numbers of courses, certificates and degree programs are available to meet anyone's specific need.

Within this dynamic distance learning segment of the education community our advertisers in this edition of the online report series offer quality programs representing excellence and academic rigor. Moreover if you are one of the many millions



**John G. Flores, PhD**  
Executive Director, United States Distance Learning Association

“Distance learners around the world continue to acquire knowledge 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.”

of students planning on taking a course or enrolling in a degree program look at our advertising schools in earnest. All of them stand for value and integrity.

As you move ahead with your education without the constraints of time or place be aware that all schools are not created equal. Be sure to look for regional accreditation or recognition by a respected education agency when enrolling in any type of distance learning program.

Becoming a distance learner and moving ahead academically in 2010 is readily available. Join the millions of students at all levels taking advantage of quality programs anywhere and anytime. It's your opportunity to have learning come to you on your schedule so you can take the next step in your academic and career advancement.



## WE RECOMMEND



**An MBA success story**  
Juggling family and coursework is possible.

PAGE 4

“I've always been a self-starter, but if there's another level to that, I'm there now.”

**Learning on demand p. 10**  
Online education continues growth.

# MEDIA PLANET

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ONLINE LEARNING  
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– Staff Sergeant J. Aiksnoras, Current Post University Human Services Student

*"I was applying things I learned in the classroom days after learning it. It changed my life. It totally changed my life."*

– C. Vargo, Post University Class of 2009 Graduate and Current MBA Student



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## INSPIRATION

**Question:** Is earning a degree while raising a family possible?

**Answer:** Touré Diggs says it is, completing an MBA program online while not only holding a job, but raising his kids as well.



# Going back to school

## HOW I MADE IT

Touré Diggs knew that he didn't know everything. The married father of two had worked in social work and patient care since graduating from Post University with a degree in psychology in 1994. And while he enjoys his work, he also dreamed of developing a clothing line. But there were skills that the Hamden, Conn.-based 38-year-old knew he was missing, and the only way to acquire them was to go back to school.

Needing to maintain his job to support his young family, Diggs explored online degree programs, which would allow him to learn at his own pace and still have time to spend with his children. He looked at online programs all over the country, and then he realized his undergrad alma mater had the exact program he needed. "I'm an entrepreneur at heart, but I knew I was missing some tools," says Diggs. "That's why I picked this MBA. I was a little skeptical about online because I wasn't sure the online schools really



Touré Diggs

existed, but I knew Post was real and that's another reason I picked it."

### Education initiative

Diggs' job was supportive of his educational initiative, being flexible when he needed to finish assignments or letting him do schoolwork during downtime. His children, of course, were a little less understanding—Diggs recalls working on his laptop from his daughter's bed so he could keep her company while she struggled to fall asleep. "It's definitely a family

effort," he says. "My wife was very supportive and took on more responsibilities than before."

Diggs recommends students explore online education, which he says was more challenging than going to a campus. "You have to be self-motivated all the time, but that gives you discipline," he says. "I've always been a self-starter, but if there's another level to that, I'm there now."

JOHN PATRICK PULLEN  
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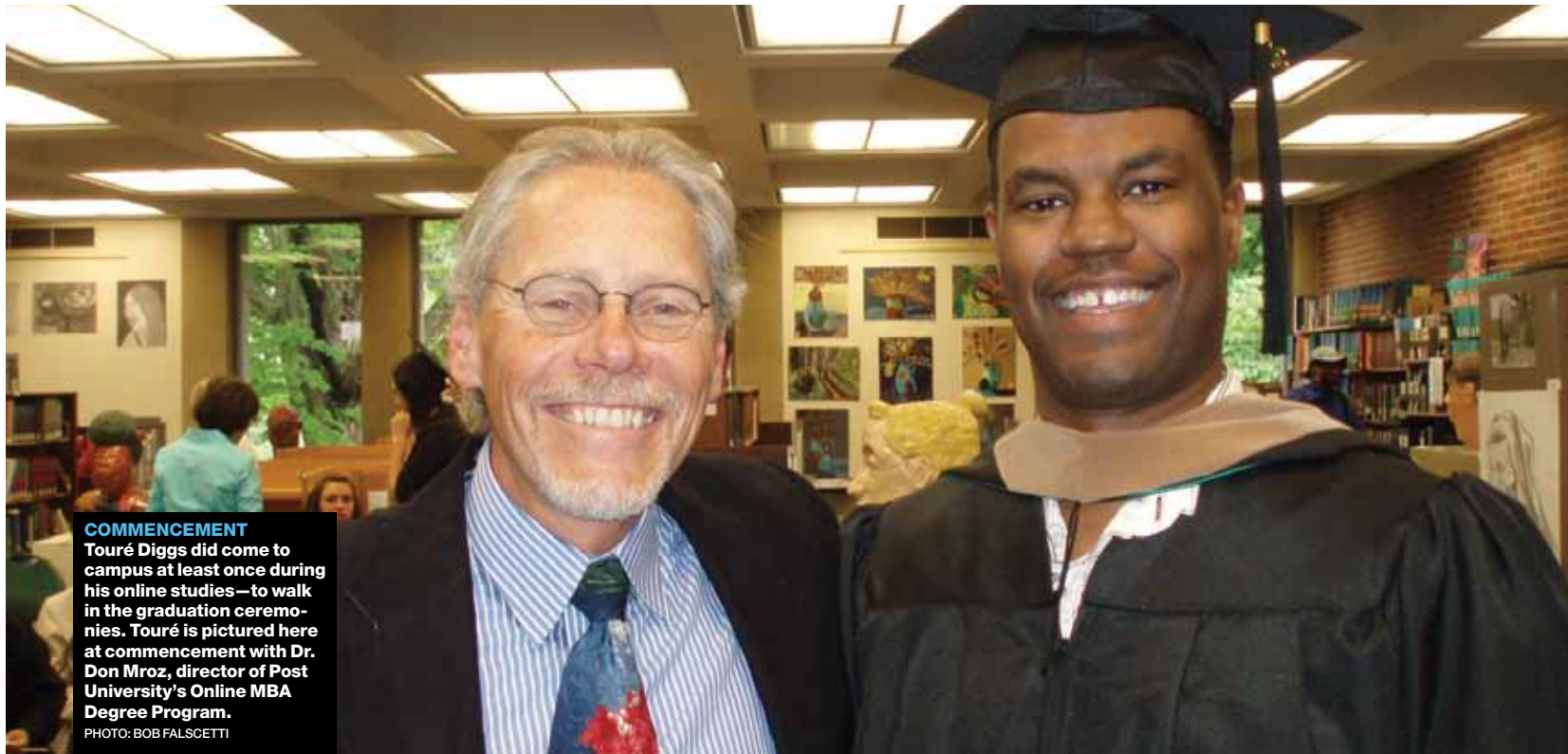
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INSPIRATION



**COMMENCEMENT**  
Touré Diggs did come to campus at least once during his online studies—to walk in the graduation ceremonies. Touré is pictured here at commencement with Dr. Don Mroz, director of Post University's Online MBA Degree Program.

PHOTO: BOB FALSCETTI

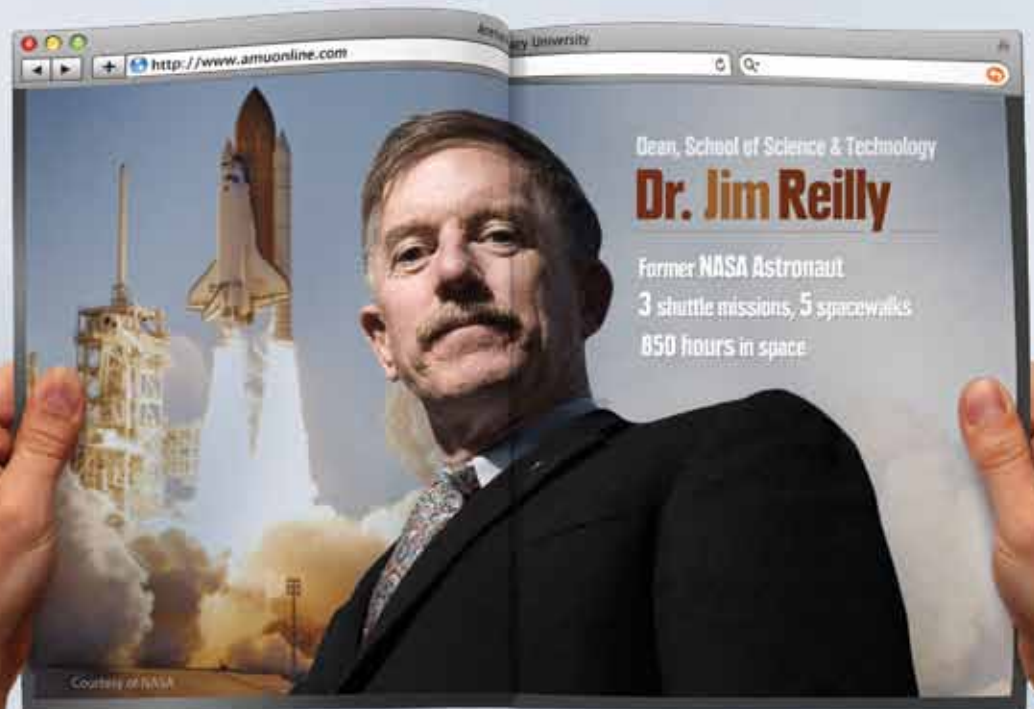
**PROFILE**

**Touré Diggs**

- **Age:** 38
- **Family:** Married to Lonnelle, 38; father of Elijah, 4, and Siophan, 2
- **Education:** Undergraduate degree, Post University, Bachelor of Arts, Psychology 1994
- **Graduate degree:** Master of Business Administration, 2010
- **Occupation:** Continuum of Care, Inc., Program Manager

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## INSPIRATION

**Question:** What did Command Sergeant Major William “Joe” Gainey do when retiring after over 33 years of service in the Army?

**Answer:** Begin a new mission—spreading the word about the importance of education to the troops.



# Never too late to learn

## Retired Army hero on a mission to prepare the troops through education.

While for many, the idea of retirement conjures up visions of pool-side piña colodas in Bora Bora or tooling around in a golf cart in Florida, talk to retired Army Command Sergeant Major Joe Gainey, and you get the sense that maybe that's just not his style.

“My new mission in life is to talk to my brothers and sisters in the military about preparing for their next adventure in life outside of the military,” says Gainey.

Gainey's career includes a long list of positions from driver, loader and gunner in the Army to Command Sergeant Major. Gainey eventually achieved the

highest ranking for an enlisted member in U.S. military history, as the first Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC).

When he retired back in 2008, it was simply the start of a new chapter in his military career.

### Spreading the word

Despite having combat-related hearing loss in both ears and recently overcoming a stroke, Gainey currently travels around the country speaking with the troops, telling his inspirational story and reminding them to take advantage of the tuition assistance offered to them by the military.

“I go out and speak to these young troops and senior leaders, and I'm shocked at how many of

them do not have a degree. In this economy a four-year degree will get you an interview, not a job. I tell them to go out and get their degree, to stop making excuses.”

### A different kind of classroom

While Gainey led troops into combat in Bosnia and Iraq, picking up a chest full of medals and awards in the process, he was also continuously engaged in his own education. Gainey earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from TUI University, taking classes online while serving under then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace.

“It was a running joke on the plane with General Pace. He'd ask me, ‘What are you working



Retired US Army Command Sergeant Major William “Joe” Gainey is enrolling in an Online Master's program in the fall.

on, battle buddy?’ And I'd say, ‘I'm working on a paper comparing Starbucks to Dunkin' Donuts.’ He got a kick out of that.”

Traveling nine months out of the year and taking classes wasn't easy, even for a seasoned warrior like Gainey.

“Getting my degree through TUI was definitely a challenge—they made me work my backside off. They will challenge your brainpower, and they won't give you anything. I counted, and I ended up doing 80 term papers

in that program, but I earned that degree and I'm better for it.”

Practicing what he preaches, Gainey will be enrolling in a Master's program at TUI in the fall.

“I was speaking a while ago to a young woman named Sergeant Silvia Herrera. She received her Bachelor's during combat in Iraq and then got her Master's while she was in the service, and she was getting on me because I haven't gone back to get my Master's,” says Gainey.

“And she's right—I figure between her and my wife telling me to continue my education, I need to get busy quick.”

**RICHARD SHARP**

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INSPIRATION



MILITARY

## Transitioning from the battlefield

**Overseas troops ease into transition with online education**


With wars currently being fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, and hundreds of thousands of U.S. soldiers being stationed overseas, it has become increasingly challenging for members of the military to prepare for the transition from their lives overseas back into the civilian workforce.

Enter online education.

According to Jim Sweizer, American Military University's VP of Military Programs, "online education has really been a blessing for the military environment. Online education starts when you want, and the learning is asynchronous—there is no set time or hours," says Sweizer.


"It allows military personnel to take classes on their schedule, and to get the education they need once they hit the job market back home."

**SHARING HIS WISDOM**  
Gainey currently travels around the country telling his inspirational story and reminding troops to take advantage of the tuition assistance offered to them by the military.  
PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



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**Question 1:**  
What would you say is the greatest advantage that distance learning programs offer?

**Our adult learners tell us** the biggest advantage to online learning is that they not only can earn a valuable degree without having to put their lives on hold, but they also have the opportunity to connect with other working adults in a highly interactive, engaging and supportive learning environment.

**Let me start** by stating that I don't like the description "distance learning" when referring to online learning. Online learning is a type of distance learning but distance learning is not necessarily online. While it seems like a small point, there are some connotations with distance learning that I want to avoid. Now to your question, the greatest advantage is access and convenience. For an adult student with the pressures of family and job, on-line learning offers the epitome of both. It is fundamentally why so many adults are now pursuing their degrees on-line.

**A properly-administered** program creates a global learning community that weaves a web of connections among students, instructors, and material. Students have more time to reflect on their learning as they immediately apply it to their personal and professional lives.

**The ability to "move"** time through asynchronous instruction; the ability to reach across a distance; the savings of costs for travel or child care; the ability to study when and where you choose (and are most able to learn); and the opportunity to reduce carbon emissions.

**Question 2:**  
How do you see the distance learning industry evolving in the future?

**In the future,** I see millions more people taking advantage of online learning along with increased competition from new players, which will result in improved quality in both the educational experience and the support services offered to adult learners.

**Evolution of online learning:** I see the biggest area of evolution being in the merging of technology with how an adult learns. By utilizing an online platform you have the opportunity to fundamentally tackle the way you help a person remember, synthesize, combine concepts, etc. All critical to how we remember and how we learn. The combination in an on-line environment is very powerful and will be the key evolution. I believe adults will actually/are actually learning better online.

**Students are demanding** more hands-on learning, cross-cultural immersion and networking opportunities. The elite programs must be able to provide these opportunities while continuing to offer the highest-quality distance education.

**I predict we will see** more use of online technology to provide both "blended" and fully web-based instruction; more programs from more institutions; reduced costs of learning if it can be done while still employed; more use of simulations to demonstrate integration of learning and to engage students; and more means for reaching students abroad.

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## NEWS



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### Learning on Demand: Online Education Continues Growth

For the past six years online enrollments have been growing substantially faster than overall higher education enrollments. The expectation of academic leaders has been that these enrollments would continue their substantial growth for at least another year. Do the measured enrollments match these lofty expectations? Online enrollments have continued to grow at rates far in excess of the total higher education student population, with the most recent data demonstrating no signs of slowing.

! Over 4.6 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2008 term; a 17 percent increase over the number reported the previous year.

! The 17 percent growth rate for online enrollments far exceeds the 1.2 percent growth of the overall higher education s

! More than one in four higher education students now take at least one course online.

! Over one-half (54 percent) of institutions report that the economic downturn has increased demand for existing face-to-face courses.

! The economic impact has been greatest on demand for online courses, with 66 percent of institutions reporting increased demand for new courses and programs and 73 percent seeing increased demand for existing online courses and programs.

Source: The seventh annual Sloan Survey of Online Learning, a collaborative effort between the Babson Survey Research Group, the College Board and the Sloan Consortium. For full survey report [www.sloanconsortium.org](http://www.sloanconsortium.org)

**Online learning** has the power to move a country from the industrial age to the information and knowledge age for a **brighter future** for all.

# Demystifying accreditation

**Although earlier forms of distance learning, such as correspondence courses, have existed in the United States for more than 120 years, the Internet has brought distance learning to a new phase.**

With this tremendous growth comes growing pains and sometimes confusion. One such area would be around the topic of accreditation.

According to Jamie Littlefield, About.com Guide to Distance Learning and USDLA Advisory Board Member, "accreditation is meant to protect students, schools, and employers." Learners need to be proactive in protecting their educational rights and professional associations such as USDLA have begun to provide further clarification for the con-

sumer to make an "informed" decision regarding institutions. If a college/university is accredited by one of the following six regional accrediting agencies, a prospective student can be assured that the institution is eligible for federal student loans and that credits are transferable among institutions.

- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA)
- Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA)

- Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS)
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
- Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NWCCU)

In addition, eLearners.com states that "while there are many organizations that claim to accredit schools, the only legitimate accreditation agencies are those recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and/or Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). National accreditation agencies, such as Accrediting Commission of

Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSC), Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), and Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), to name a few, are different in that they accredit schools located within the United States, as well as some schools abroad." Finally, to provide further rigor and authenticity in the marketplace, USDLA has begun to offer the USDLA/Quality Standards (QS or USDLA/QS) program and the Distance Learning Accreditation Board (DLAB). So as this industry continues to grow, learners need to do their due diligence when looking for an online degree program because if it looks too good to be true it probably is.

**REGGIE SMITH III**

President, United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) and with Booz Allen Hamilton

[editorial@mediaplanet.com](mailto:editorial@mediaplanet.com)


**READ MORE!**

#### Further resources:

To research the accreditation status of an academic institution.

- [ope.ed.gov/accreditation](http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation)
- [chea.org/directories/index.asp](http://chea.org/directories/index.asp)
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## NEWS

# ONLINE LEARNING FILLS DEMAND FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**An aging population has created greater demand for healthcare workers who are getting necessary training through online higher education programs.**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, at least two thirds of higher education facilities offer college-level distance learning courses, most of which contain an online element. And though advances in technology have facilitated great opportunities for students to learn online and take classes from home, there are some limits to what healthcare workers can do with the online degrees.

## Technological know-how

For example, the University of Florida offers an online master's degree in Pharmacy. Students of the program take live, online classes, scheduled in the evenings on set days. An online, interactive software is used to run the class, and students wear a headset with a microphone while accessing text, audio, video and other features to run through course material. Students must



also come to the Gainesville, Florida campus for several weekend seminars.

Chamberlain College of Nursing not only offers fully-online curriculums, but many of their support services are available over the Internet, too. For example, books can be bought through the campus bookstore's website; students can access the library through the school's homepage; and tutoring,

test preparation, and other academic resources are available via the web.

At California Southern University, where they offer several online postgraduate degrees in psychology, students can also take classes online, participate in off-site internships, and use web cameras to participate in practice therapy sessions with licensed trainers.

## FACTS

- **3.2 million** new healthcare jobs, more than any other field, will be created by 2018
- **25.3 percent** of students took at least one course online in 2008, up from 11.7 percent in 2003
- **10 of the 20** most in-demand jobs are related to healthcare
- **4.6 million students** were enrolled in at least one online course in fall 2008, a 17 percent increase over 2007



Online education benefits service members



**T. McCreary**  
President, Military.com and Rear Admiral (Ret.), U.S. Navy

Online courses allow service members, veterans and their families to take college classes when there are no traditional universities in their area, their operational tempo doesn't allow them to attend classes regularly, or if they are deployed at sea or overseas.

In addition, online classes can be offered year-round which allows individuals to take more courses over a given period than traditional semester scheduling.

Online education has become so prevalent, that today many traditional universities offer upper division as well as post-graduate courses. The end result is more opportunities for those who serve, a more highly educated military and those transitioning out of the military don't have to put their job search on hold until after they earn their degrees.

Visit [www.military.com/education](http://www.military.com/education) today for more information and to find out how you can use your benefits to enroll today.

## Advancing in the workplace

California Southern's master degree graduates can take the exam in California to become marriage and family therapists, and doctoral degree holders can pursue a license to become clinical psychologists in that state.

Chamberlain's online program caters to a wide range of students looking to either join or advance in the field of nursing. Students who are already registered nurses can either become board-certified or receive a Masters Degree. However, students pursuing an Associate Degree in nursing must plan to spend some time at the school's Columbus, Ohio campus, where their clinical requirements are fulfilled.

The Florida's program centers around pharmacy policy, regulation, compliance, and other topics, but does not allow graduates to legally dispense medication. Instead, students with backgrounds in other fields—like lawyers, pharmaceutical sales, insurance executives, and journalists—can apply the knowledge in their other areas of expertise.

**JOHN PATRICK PULLEN**  
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## NEWS



# Your K-12 toolbox

■ **Question:** Is online learning a necessary tool in the K-12 classroom?

■ **Answer:** Some schools say incorporating this technology into the classroom can increase quality educational opportunities for today's children.

Technology plays a vital role in our lives today, but what about our children's education? Sadly, many of us may be overlooking a tool of proven technology: online learning.

Commitments to educational excellence remain mostly unchanged, but the need to implement new tools is now becoming a necessity. Students engage in technology every day, and they're so comfortable with the speed at which it changes, they expect to see new ways to use it. How does online learning strike them? Some seem to say—Bring It On!

## Online curriculum partnership

One model that can deliver this engaging environment is online curriculum partnership. This model of curriculum provision involves a school and supplier stretching capabilities and expanding the toolbox of student opportunities. Such partnerships customize education so students are prepared to think critically and process information independently.

For instance, Protestant and Catholic schools who partner with a rigorous online curriculum provider can offer Chinese and Latin, and dual credit courses from selected colleges. They also can offer a "blended learning" classroom where a teacher combines traditional instruction with web resources, creating a global information environment; a "field trip" in the classroom. Talk about adding a tool to the toolbox.

Over 10 million people are expected to engage in online learning by 2014. What about your K-12 child? With online partnerships schools can experience AP classes, summer school, credit recovery programs, and possibly new sources of school revenue. Outreach efforts can touch unique family travel requirements, special sports situations and homeschoolers. All of this and national accreditation and support from organizations like iNACOL, the College Board, and the NCAA.

We all want quality educational opportunities for our children. Today, those are found not only in the home, classroom, or library, but on a laptop, cell phone, or iPod. It might be time to consider putting a new tool in your toolbox—online learning.

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## LEADER PROFILE

### Education pioneer

While visiting the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., in the late 80's, cable and internet pioneer Glenn Jones had an idea. He wanted to help lessen conflict around the world through education.

"JIU was founded with the belief that the fusion of technology and education could democratize education and result in less armed conflict around the world," says Jones.

In 1987, Jones launched Mind Extension University, a cable education channel. With advancements in the Internet, he founded Jones Interna-

tional University in 1993 to enable students to learn from anywhere in the world, at any time.

In March 1999, JIU became the first fully online university to receive regional accreditation, the highest accreditation a university in the U.S. can be granted.

The biggest compliment paid to JIU thus far, says Jones, "is the number of institutions that have taken lessons from JIU; from using our learning management system to asking for guidance in how to set up and manage an online unit."

## Put a new tool in your toolbox

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