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**Ohio's largest campus may be its least visible one!
Online enrollments are big business in state.**

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- If each student stood on a square mile, they would reach from Pennsylvania to Indiana. That's right -- Ohio's 37,421 e-learners would nearly fill the state's 40,000 square miles! E-Learning is big business in Ohio as shown in the first annual report of Ohio e-learners "Bounded Exuberance: e-learning in Ohio" released today by the Ohio Learning Network (http://oln.org/about_oln/pdf/Bounded-web.pdf).

These 37,421 students completing e-learning courses, are mostly female (67%), and more than half of them were over 25 years old and full-time students (51%). Most of them are enrolled in community colleges (22,168) and less than one third (9,639) are enrolled at university main campuses. Data from fall 2004 was provided by the Ohio Board of Regents and member institutions. Data is not yet available from restricted and cohort courses and from the independent colleges. All totaled, its likely Ohio has about 45,000 or more online learners. In comparison, Ohio has approximately 600,000 attending its public institutions.

"Ohio's largest campus might be its least visible one," says Kate M. Carey, executive director of the 72-member Ohio Learning Network (OLN). "This report tallies all the students who completed courses offered at the public colleges and universities in fall 2004. Today, there may be as many as 45,000 e-learners in Ohio's colleges and universities."

Forty-nine institutions offer 155 degrees and certificates and 3,200 courses through OhioLearns!, OLN's statewide online course catalog of distance learning courses and degrees. OLN member institutions include the public community and technical colleges, public universities and the independent colleges and universities. The OhioLearns! catalog does not include courses with restricted enrollments.

Nationally, online enrollment increased from 1.98 million in 2003 to 2.35 million in 2004, according to **Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005** (<http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/survey.asp>). The online enrollment

growth rate is more than ten times that projected by the National Center for Education Statistics for the general postsecondary student population.

Four institutions are profiled in the OLN report – Columbus State Community College, Lorain County Community College, the University of Cincinnati and the University of Toledo. Each institution made strategic decisions about its e-learning offerings.

Anthony Perzigian, provost at the University of Cincinnati, says distance-learning is an integral part of the university's 21st century approach to the diverse educational needs of students. It has carry-over benefits for the traditional classrooms because distance learning has been an impetus for change. UC had 2,174 students complete e-learning courses in fall 2004.

In Columbus, Columbus State uses the Teaching Learning Technology Roundtable (TLTR) model towards governance of distance-learning. The college's TLTR is faculty-led and contains membership from student services, information technology, disability services, the library, faculty, and staff, says Provost Mike Snider. Columbus State had the largest enrollment in the fall of 2004 with 4,273 learners.

At Lorain County Community College, the strategic plan determines e-learning efforts and among future plans are increased opportunities for students to experience online and land-based educational experiences that increase access and flexibility. And certainly, the 2,490 students enrolled fall 2004 appreciate that flexibility.

At the University of Toledo, E-learning will continue to include both web-assisted and online courses and faculty who teach courses are regular, full-time faculty, says Provost Alan Goodridge. Enrollments continue to grow at UT which had the largest enrollment of public universities in fall 2004 with 3,481 students.

In addition to student information, the OLN report details faculty and student reactions to e-learning. Faculties are embracing the use of technology to enhance and extend classroom learning and students are responding enthusiastically. E-learning encompasses multiple delivery modes – online, blended, technology-enhanced, interactive video, television, CD or DVD, and correspondence. Web-based courses are the predominant delivery method, but the technology is not the main story, the people are – students, faculty, and administrators – involved in learning.

Students believed the key indicator of quality of e-learning was the same indicator as a traditional course – the quality of the instructor. Students indicated that the quality of the distance-learning courses was as effective and fulfilling as the quality of the traditional courses.

Several thousand faculty teach online and blended e-learning courses. In the report, one faculty member offers this advice:

“...Teaching at a distance is a very exciting and challenging experience. It is better to start with a course that the instructor has already taught several times. However, an instructor should not expect that putting course notes on the Web will do the job. It is much more than that. “

The new report from OLN points to issues and additional data gathering necessary for a more complete understanding of the growth and potential of e-learning in Ohio. Three main areas raised in the report include:

- Costs, prices, and funding of e-learning courses, certificates and degrees;
- Potential new student markets -- post secondary options, workforce development and expanding graduate and professional courses; and
- Impact of technology in teaching and learning on faculty roles, student learning and administration of collaborative programs.

Data tables and case studies in this report show Ohio colleges and universities mirror the nation and see e-learning as integral to future growth. Within the context of its mission, each Ohio institution will continue to choose how, when, where, and why to provide e-learning to a clientele increasingly hungry for new and different ways to enhance-learning.

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About the Ohio Learning Network

OLN is a consortium of 72 of Ohio's public and private colleges and universities and is an initiative of the Ohio Board of Regents. OLN helps Ohioans access higher education, helps build partnerships among higher education, schools, businesses and communities, and promotes and supports e-learning in the state of Ohio. More information on OLN is available at (www.olin.org).