

# Online Learning

As the world grows ever more wireless, online education is increasingly the best option for time-stressed adult learners. Students enrolled in distance learning can earn degrees — or simply learn for knowledge's sake — without ever sitting in a traditional classroom. These top institutions of higher learning offer many of their most popular courses online.

## EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

Well before the Web made distance learning easy, Empire State College's Center for Distance Learning, based in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., was launched as a print-based operation giving adult learners the flexibility to earn degrees from home. Now celebrating its 40th anniversary, it remains on the cutting edge of online education — incorporating social media, mobile learning, multimedia and virtual worlds. Each of its roughly 10,000 distance students is matched with a faculty mentor, and can design an individualized degree plan. The college is generous in awarding academic credit for prior college-level learning, including transfer credits from other institutions, life and work experiences. "This incredible flexibility empowers our students to take control of their futures,"

explained Thomas P. Mackey, Ph.D., dean of the Center for Distance Learning. "It makes them even more committed to learning."

One of the State University of New York's 13 arts and sciences colleges, Empire State is the largest provider of online learning within the SUNY system. Online students pay the same value-added SUNY tuition, currently \$220 per credit, and can choose among 500 fully online courses in topics ranging from business management and economics to the humanities to science, mathematics and technology, among others. New this spring, the college has created an area of study in public affairs, with course offerings including public administration, homeland security and emergency management.

For student Anita Brown, pursuing an arts degree more than 20 years after obtaining an associate's degree has been the opportunity to follow a dream. She has taken 22 classes, including two semesters of Italian with a Florence-based teacher, 10 arts and design classes, an independent study involving community service as well as some courses in a classroom setting. "I became hooked on online learning," said Brown, a Green Island, N.Y., mother of two who works full time in marketing and recently started a photography business. "I was in a 'classroom' with people literally from all over the country — and around the world. It often added different perspectives that aren't always found when everyone is from the same general geographic location."

For more information visit <http://www.esc.edu/learning-centers/distance-learning>.

## HARVARD EXTENSION SCHOOL

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