

Online Education Offers Many Advantages

(NAPSA)—Is online education as good as classroom education? That's been the debate in recent years. But now, experts are asking a bolder question: Could online be better?

According to Daniel Ham-



Daniel Hamburger

burger, executive vice president at DeVry Inc. and head of DeVry University Online, academia has long accepted the notion of “the bell curve”—that students learn at different rates and in different ways.

To strike a balance, teachers end up teaching to the 50th percentile—too fast for some students and too slow for others.

“The online model flattens the bell curve,” he said. “Students have the flexibility to learn at their own pace and the instruction is often much more individualized. Students can take the time of the teacher, without taking the time of the class, through one-on-one, online discussions and instruction. ‘Office hours’ are around the clock.”

With roughly half of today's college students categorized as “non-traditional,” including older students, working professionals and single parents, the ability to take courses and study on a flexible, 24/7 schedule is crucial for many people.

“A growing number of adult learners must juggle the demands of work and family while pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees—making online education

an excellent option,” Hamburger added.

In addition, Hamburger says that the online delivery model provides an environment that more closely mirrors the business world—requiring students to become extremely capable communicators. In online courses, there's no ability to hide in the back of the class. Class participation, through online discussions, is not only mandatory, it is roughly 30 percent of a student's grade—making it imperative to be constantly engaged.

“Online students must be able to formulate questions and articulate responses effectively and succinctly in writing,” he continued. “This skill set cannot be underestimated as more and more business communication is conducted electronically. What's more, the online model requires significant discipline and time management skills.”

DeVry's total number of online course takers for the 2003 Fall term more than doubled to 9,077 compared with 3,824 in the same term a year ago—a reflection of the increasing popularity of the online delivery model. The university is one of the largest degree-granting higher education systems in North America, providing career-oriented associate, bachelor's and master's degree programs in technology, business and management.

“Online education has exploded in popularity in recent years and we expect interest to continue to grow as more and more people become aware of its many attributes,” Hamburger said.