

Lifelong Learning Is Now Just A Click Away

(NAPSA)—In the past few years, the quality, variety of programs and accessibility of online learning has grown tremendously. More than two million students will be enrolled in “distance learning” programs in the U.S. by 2002, according to International Data Corporation.

Virtual classrooms are filling a lifestyle gap for individuals in many different stages of life and career. For the busy professional who wants to stay ahead of the curve by continuing to acquire new skills, the e-classroom offers convenience. For a young mother with children, online learning is an opportunity to sharpen professional skills for re-entry into the job market without leaving home.

Recognizing the need for flexible educational environments that fit a variety of lifestyle needs, The Art Institutes nationwide system of educational institutions created The Art Institute Online to provide timely, accessible and professional development programs.

While there are many online learning opportunities available, educators agree that it's important to pick the right program for you. Lee Park, Vice President and Director of Technology of The Art Institute Online, offers a few simple guidelines:

- Pick a program or area of study that has a direct application to what you do, or one which you are passionate about. Without a compelling need for the course, you're more likely to drop the ball and miss out on a valuable opportunity.
- Make sure to pick a learning institution that offers an asynchronous learning model. That is, you should be able to check into the class at any time and follow along.
- Look closely at the learning model of the institution. Some offer independent study where you



With virtual learning via the Internet, educational opportunity isn't limited to the classroom.

receive instruction, assignments and tests and do them by yourself. Others offer a facilitator lead model which involves direct communication with your instructor and classmates. For some, this interaction is key to making the online learning experience approximate the give and take of a physical classroom.

Lee Park explains, “e-learning has so much to offer—and many online learning programs can truly mimic many of the interactive elements of a physical classroom with the added bonuses of convenience and accessibility.”

Both online students and faculty offer the following advice: Online students must take responsibility for their own learning, be highly motivated and determined to make e-learning work. If they do, they'll find the experience gratifying, productive and personally rewarding.

The Art Institute Online, a division of The Art Institute of Pittsburgh, is a virtual learning platform offering Internet-delivered education. It offers courses leading to both bachelor's and associate's degrees in Graphic Design and a diploma program in Digital Design. Students may take a demonstration course by visiting www.aionline.edu/nz or call 1-877-872-8869 for more information.