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# Accountability: The Latest (and Greatest) Challenge for Online Learning?

WCET 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

2006

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# The eLearning Revolution

- Overall Percent of Schools Identifying Online Education as a Critical Long-Term Strategy Has Grown from 49% in 2003 to 56% In 2005
- Overall Online Enrollment Increased from 1.98 Million in 2003 to 2.35 Million in 2004
- In 2005, Only 31% of Chief Academic Officers Believed that Their Faculty Fully Accept the Value and Legitimacy of Online Education
- Moving Away from Comparative Studies (or Are We?)

– *Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005*  
(Sloan-C)

# The Spellings Report

- “We want postsecondary institutions to adapt to a world altered by technology, changing demographics and globalization, in which the higher-education landscape includes new providers and new paradigms, from for-profit universities to distance learning.”
- “Only 66 percent of full-time four-year college students complete a baccalaureate degree within six years. (This reflects the percentage of students who begin full-time in four-year institutions and graduate within six years.)”

*A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*

# UT System Board of Regents

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- UT Academic Institution Presidents Charged with Aligning Institutional Policies to Maximize Their Positive Impact on Graduation Rates
- UT Academic Institution Presidents Developed Specific Targets Last April to Meet or Exceed National Averages for Four-Year, Five-Year, and Six-Year Graduation Rates for Full-Time, Part-Time, and Transfer Students

# A Semi-Serious Question

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- Presidents Are Feeling the Challenge Regarding Improvement of Graduation Rates
- The UT TeleCampus Continues to See Substantial Enrollment Growth Across the UT System
- One President Asks...

“Will Your Online Courses Help Me with Student Engagement and Graduation Rates?”

# TeleCampus Survey

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- Sent to Students Who Had Taken One or More Undergrad GenEd Courses Through the TeleCampus
- ~2500 Recipients, 241 Responses
- Survey Asked About Personal Experiences and Motivations

(continued)

# TeleCampus Survey (continued)

- Convenience a Primary Reason Students Opt for Online (76.6%)
  - ❖ 27.1% Prefer Online to On-Campus
- Most Respondents
  - ❖ Are 24 Years Old or Older (69.3%)
  - ❖ Are Female (72.2%)
  - ❖ Have Attended More Than 1 Institution (79.6%)
- Progress to Graduation
  - ❖ 15.8% Used Online Courses to Speed Progress
  - ❖ 53% Say Online Helped Them Stay on Schedule

(continued)

# TeleCampus Survey (continued)

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- Most Respondents Not Traditionally Engaged on Campus
  - ❖ Little Participation in Organized Social or Athletic Groups
- Most Are Good Students
  - ❖ 76.1% Have 3.0 GPA or Better
- Online Courses Were Harder Than They Thought



# Broader Surveys

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- Collaboration among NCHEMS, SREB, UT TeleCampus
- Investigating Perceptions and Motivations About the Role of Online Learning in Student Engagement with Institutions and Progress to Degree

(continued)

# Broader Surveys (continued)

- Key Questions

- ❖ Role of Online in Institutional Mission

- ❖ Does Online Have an Effect on Graduation Rate?

- Will It Have an Effect in the Future?

- Search for Evidence

- ❖ What Types of Evidence Support Perceptions?

- ❖ Share Evidence?

# Broader Surveys (continued)

- Two Separate Surveys with Similar Questions (Underway)
  - ❖ Institution Leaders
    - SREB Effort
    - Sloan-C Effort
  - ❖ Students
    - Reliance on Institutions to Administer Surveys

# Additional Data Gathering and Analysis Planned

- Work With Several Campuses That Feed Students Through the UT Telecampus
  - ❖ Gather Student Unit Record Data
  - ❖ Create Model For Determining The Extent To Which Online Learning May Or May Not Influence Student Progress To Degree And Graduation
- Expand To Other Postsecondary Institutions
  - ❖ Must Have Student Unit Record Systems That Record Student Enrollment And Grades For Online Courses As Well As Traditional Courses

# SREB's Interest in Accountability

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- A New Report on Accountability in June 2006
- Encouraging State Policy Leaders to Ask the Right Questions
- Laying Out the Facts...
- Reporting on Findings Annually
- Creating and Aligning Data Systems to Allow for Real Analysis and Assessments

SREB

Holding Colleges  
and Universities  
Accountable for  
Meeting State Needs

2006

Southern  
Regional  
Education  
Board

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CHALLENGE TO LEAD SERIES

Available in pdf from  
[www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org),  
then click on  
*Challenge to Lead Goals*

# The Questions

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- Do Sufficient Numbers of First-Year Students Graduate from State Institutions?
- Are Graduation Rates Improving?
- Are Different Groups of Students Graduating at Different Rates?
- Are Investments in Postsecondary Education Paying Off?
- Is Online Learning Making a Difference?

# The Backdrop in the South

Increases in Number of Degrees Awarded in SREB States Outpaces the Nation, but:

- Too Few Complete Degrees in 150 Percent of Normal Program Time
- Too Many Students Leave After Their First Year
- Minority Student Awards Are Growing but Lag
- Student “Swirl” Is Undocumented (and at Present Can’t Be Tracked)



# Online Learning in the Mix

- SREB's Commitment to Increasing Access Using Technology/  
Online Learning Is Working
- Sloan C Report "Growing by Degrees" (Southern Edition)  
Indicates:
  - ❖ SREB States Growing at Rates Higher than National Rates (18.2%)
  - ❖ SREB Institutions Are More Positive About Online Learning and  
Importance in the Future
  - ❖ Almost Two-Thirds of SREB Institutions Offer Some Form of Online  
Learning, with Growing Number Offering Complete Degree Programs

# But No “Hard” Supportive Data

- Is Online Learning Reaching Students We Would not Otherwise Serve?
- Is Online Learning Helping Students Reach Their Degree Goals?
  - ❖ Get Ahead, Catch Up or Get Courses They Need
- Is the Investment in Technology Paying Dividends?
- How Can We Make a Stronger Case?

# Framing the Public Agenda

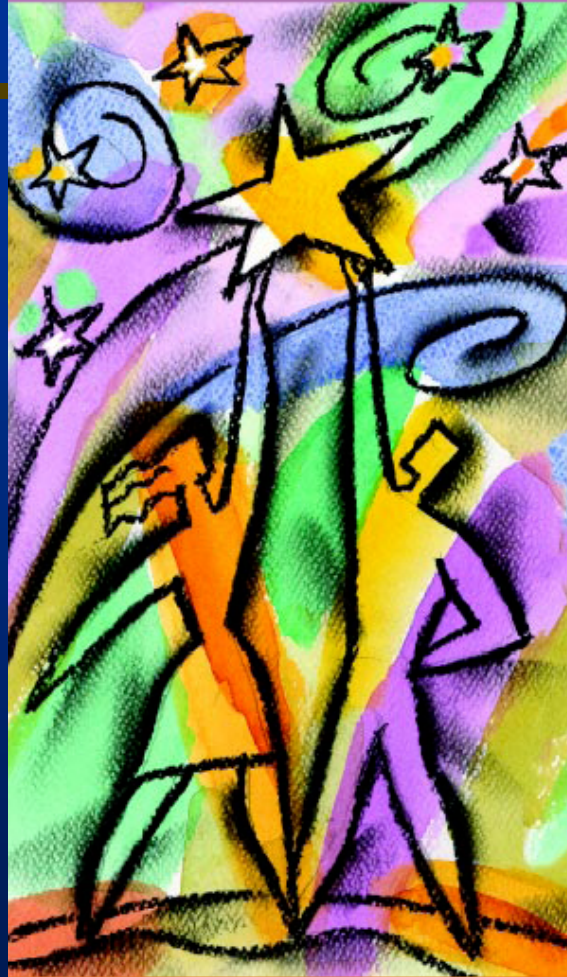
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- Kentucky “Model” Is A Helpful One
- They Raise Five Central Questions, Have Specific Indicators And Outline Benefits
- Most Importantly, These Are Not Internal Questions That Are Not Reported On But Public Questions, Reported On Regularly And Driving Policy Directions And Funding

# Kentucky's Five Questions

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- Are More Kentuckians Ready For Postsecondary Education?
- Is Kentucky Postsecondary Education Affordable For Its Citizens
- Do More Kentuckians Have Certificates And Degrees?
- Are College Graduates Prepared For Life And Work In Kentucky?
- Are Kentucky's People, Communities And Economy Benefiting?



# FIVE QUESTIONS ONE MISSION

BETTER LIVES FOR KENTUCKY'S PEOPLE

A PUBLIC AGENDA  
FOR POSTSECONDARY AND  
ADULT EDUCATION  
2005 - 2010

*Kentucky*  
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT™



Available in PDF from  
[www.cpe.ky.gov](http://www.cpe.ky.gov) ,  
then click on  
“Kentucky’s Public  
Agenda in  
Postsecondary and  
Adult Education,  
2005-2010”

# An Important Effort

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- The Current Study and Survey Effort Is Viewed as an Initial Step to Answering These and Other Important Questions
- We Need to Move Beyond “No Significant Difference” and Start to Document Our Efforts and the Value of Online Learning (and to Head Off the Accountability Challenge Which Is Fast Approaching...)