



**DISTANCE EDUCATION
IN THE
ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

FISCAL YEAR 2019



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Compiled by ICCB

Nathan R. Wilson, Deputy Director for Academic and Institutional Effectiveness

Jay Brooks, Senior Director for Research and Policy Studies

Michelle Dufour, Associate Director for Research and Policy Studies

Jana Ferguson, Associate Director for Research and Policy Studies

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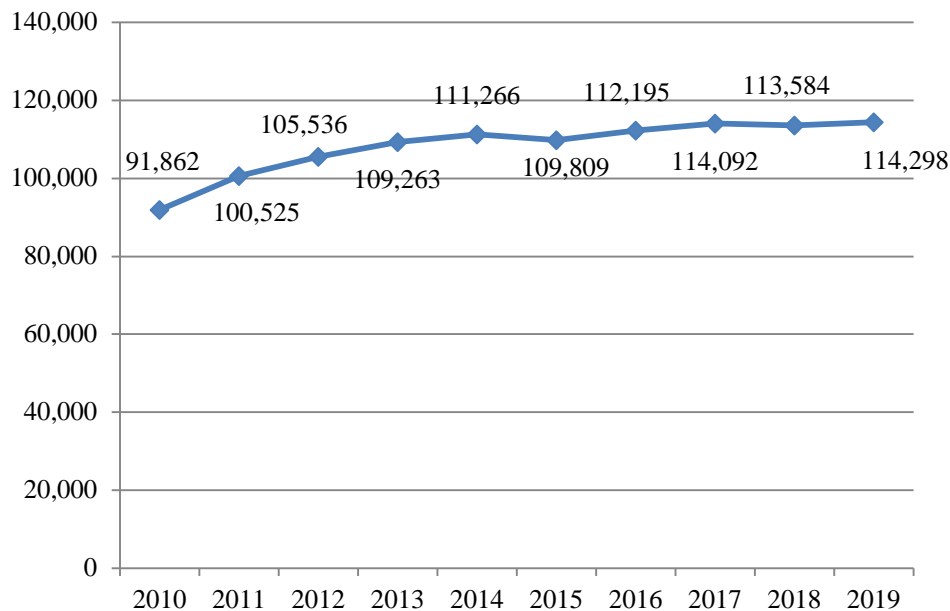
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INTRODUCTION

Distance education courses include online/internet-based instructional delivery, interactive instructional TV/distance learning, broadcast television/audio, stored media, correspondence, and hybrid/blended instructional delivery. Online/internet-based courses are courses in which asynchronous internet/world wide web serves as the primary delivery method for instruction. Interactive instructional TV/distance learning courses include fully interactive video courses provided via two-way video/two-way audio compressed video telecommunication technology and one-way video/two-way audio, which provide for immediate interaction with students. Broadcast television/audio courses are courses broadcasted via one-way audio/video, cable, satellite TV or radio. Stored media courses are courses taught primarily through instructional audiotapes, videotapes, CD-ROM, DVD, or other stored disc/media technology. Correspondence courses are courses provided in print via the mail, fax, etc. Hybrid/blended courses are courses combining traditional and internet-based delivery of instruction, significantly reducing in-class seat-time.

Online/internet-based courses have become an increasingly common method of instructional delivery at community colleges, which offer a convenient and cost-effective way to earn college credits, certificates, and degrees. Illinois community colleges reported a total of 114,298 headcount enrollments in online credit courses during fiscal year 2019. This is a 4.1 percent increase in online enrollments from fiscal year 2015 when there were 109,809 online enrollments and a 24.4 percent increase from fiscal year 2010 when there were 91,862 online enrollments.

Figure 1. Illinois Community College System Online Enrollments, FY 2010-2019



Source of Data: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

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Nationally, 34.5 percent of undergraduate students were enrolled in one or more distance education courses (excluding hybrid courses) in fall 2018. The highest undergraduate distance education enrollment rate was at private, for-profit four-year institutions, where about every four out of five students (80.2 percent) were enrolled in at least one distance education course, with the majority of these students (83.6 percent) enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. Public, two-year institutions enrolled about one-third of students (34.7 percent) in some or all distance education courses with one in seven students (14.0 percent) enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. Out of those students enrolled exclusively in distance education coursework at public, two-year institutions, 93.0 percent of students enrolled in the same state, 3.8 percent of students enrolled in a different state, and 0.5 percent of students enrolled outside of the United States. The location of courses or students was unknown or not reported for the remaining 2.7 percent of students ([National Center for Education Statistics, 2020](#)).

In Illinois, 27.8 percent of undergraduate students enrolled in one or more distance education coursework (excluding hybrid courses) in fall 2018. Private, for-profit four-year institutions enrolled about nine out of ten students in at least one distance education course, with the majority of these students (85.7 percent) enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. Public, two-year institutions enrolled 24.0 percent of undergraduate students in one or more distance education courses in fall 2018, with 7.4 percent of those students enrolled exclusively in distance education coursework. Out of those students enrolled exclusively in distance education coursework through public, two-year institutions, nearly all (97.2 percent) enrolled students were located in the state of Illinois, and only 2.3 percent enrolled students were located outside of the state of Illinois. For the remaining 0.5 percent of students, the location of courses or the location of students was unknown or not reported ([National Center for Education Statistics, 2020](#)).

Data for this report derive from the Illinois Community College Board's (ICCB) Centralized Data System and, specifically, the Annual Student Enrollment and Completion (A1) submission (Tables A-1 through A-19) and Course Enrollment and Resources (SU/SR) submission (Tables B-1 through B-5). Information from the A1 submission is used in the report to describe the characteristics of students who enrolled in at least one online course and earned credit for at least one online course in fiscal year 2019. A1 data are required for all students who are officially enrolled in a credit course at an Illinois community college any time during the specified fiscal year. The A1 record also includes information about student completions during the year. The file includes a variety of demographic and academic information about community college students in Illinois. A1 enrollments are unduplicated end-of-year counts. SU/SR data are used to determine enrollment (credit hour) based funding and are combined with additional data collection to study facilities utilization. The SU contains the credit hours associated with courses that are paid with 50 percent or more from unrestricted funds. The SR contains the credit hours associated with courses that are paid with more than 50 percent from restricted funds. The SU data is used to determine allocations of the credit hour formula driven grant. Both the SU and SR data are used to determine allocations of all other grants that have an allocation based on credit hours. SU/SR enrollments are duplicated counts from midterm.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ONLINE STUDENTS

OVERALL HEADCOUNT AND FTE

OVERALL HEADCOUNT: The Illinois Community College System recorded a total of 114,298 students enrolled in **one or more** online credit courses during fiscal year 2019. **All Illinois community colleges offer online courses.** Annual online credit enrollments increased 0.6 percent compared to the previous year (N = 113,584) and 4.1 percent compared to five years ago (N = 109,809). Out of all credit enrollments in fiscal year 2019 (N = 500,477), 22.8 percent were online credit enrollments. Table A-1 provides online credit headcount enrollment for fiscal years 2015-2019 for each community college. Among Illinois' 48 colleges, 35 colleges reported more than 1,000 online enrollments. College of DuPage (N = 12,014) reported the most online enrollments, followed by Joliet Junior College (N = 6,102) and College of Lake County (N = 5,736). More than half of all credit enrollments at Spoon River College (57.6 percent) and John Wood Community College (56.9 percent) were online enrollments. Parkland College also had a higher percentage of online enrollments in fiscal year 2019 (45.4 percent).

Nearly one out of four credit students at Illinois community colleges enrolled in at least one online course in fiscal year 2019.

OVERALL FTE: Annual online full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollments totaled 61,451, which was 32.0 percent of the fiscal year 2019 total FTE enrollment (N = 192,209). Table A-2 contains online FTE enrollments by college for fiscal years 2015-2019. FTE calculations convert the substantial part-time enrollment into the number of students there would be if everyone attended on a full-time basis (30 credits equals 1 FTE). Twenty-two colleges reported FTE enrollments greater than 1,000. College of DuPage reported the highest online FTE enrollments (N = 5,576), followed by Joliet Junior College (N = 3,305) and Moraine Valley Community College (N = 2,902). Colleges with the highest percentages of online FTE enrollments included Spoon River College (77.5 percent), Southeastern Illinois College (68.3 percent), and John Wood Community College (68.0 percent).

GENDER, ETHNIC ORIGIN, AND AGE CHARACTERISTICS

GENDER: Overall during fiscal year 2019, nearly two-thirds (63.8 percent) of the online enrollments were females (Table A-3). Online enrollments in Transfer programs were the most popular for both genders (Table A-7). Male students taking online courses were slightly more likely to be enrolled in Transfer programs (68.1 percent) than female students (64.6 percent).

ETHNIC ORIGIN: In fiscal year 2019, approximately one in three (36.1 percent) of those participating in online credit coursework in community colleges was a minority (non-white) student (among those whose ethnicity was known). Latino students were the largest minority group enrolled in online credit coursework during fiscal year 2019 (N = 18,193) and accounted for 16.3 percent of online enrollments among students whose ethnicity was known. African American students accounted for 9.7 percent of online enrollments (Table A-4). In general, minority students

were less likely to pursue online courses than white students. Nearly one in five minority credit students whose ethnicity was known (17.9 percent) at Illinois community colleges enrolled in at least one online course in fiscal year 2019, compared to more than one in four white credit students (27.8 percent). Overall, online minority students (nonwhite including unknown) were least represented in the General Studies Certificate (23.3 percent), Vocational Skills (29.0 percent), Career and Technical Education (35.7 percent), and Transfer (38.3 percent) enrollment areas (Table A-8).

Table 1
**ENROLLMENT IN ONLINE CREDIT COURSES BY ETHNICITY
 FISCAL YEAR 2019**

	Number	Percent
Asian	6,161	5.5%
Native American	238	0.2%
African American	10,761	9.7%
Latino	18,193	16.3%
White	71,175	63.9%
Nonresident Alien	1,408	1.3%
Pacific Islander	100	0.1%
Two or More Races	3,270	2.9%

Source of Data: ICCB Centralized Data System—
 Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

STUDENT AGE: In fiscal year 2019, the average age of Illinois community college students in online credit courses was 26.0, while the median age was 22.4 (Table A-5). The mean and median age have steadily decreased over the last five years. Traditional-aged students—24 or younger—accounted for nearly two-thirds (65.2 percent) of all online enrollments. Online enrollments were the most popular with students aged 24 or younger enrolled in Transfer programs (74.1 percent) (Table A-9).

Table 2
**ENROLLMENT IN ONLINE CREDIT COURSES BY AGE
 FISCAL YEAR 2019**

	Number	Percent
Traditional: 24 and younger	74,472	65.2%
Early to Mid-Career: 25 to 39	30,117	26.3%
Established Workers: 40 to 55	8,273	7.2%
Seasoned Workers: Over 55	1,420	1.2%

Source of Data: ICCB Centralized Data System—
 Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

ENROLLMENT BY INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AREA

Transfer was the largest instructional program area for online enrollments in the Illinois Community College System during fiscal year 2019, accounting for about two out of three online

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enrollments (N = 75,316). Career and Technical Education programs accounted for more than one in four online enrollments (N = 30,701). Another six percent of online enrollments were in General Associate Degree courses (N = 6,850). The remaining one percent of enrollments was in Vocational Skills (N = 787), Adult Education and English as a Second Language (N = 494), and General Studies Certificates (N = 150) programs (Table A-6a).

The largest Career and Technical Education curricula with over 1,000 online enrollments in fiscal year 2019 included Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse; Business Administration and Management; Child Care Provider/Assistant; and Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping. Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse was by far the largest online Career and Technical Education program in fiscal year 2019 with 3,930 online enrollments, a decrease of 3.3 percent (-133 students) from fiscal year 2018. Business Administration and Management was the second largest program with 1,922 online enrollments, an increase of 3.7 percent (+68 students) from fiscal year 2018 (Table A-10).

INTENT AND DEGREE OBJECTIVE

Intent data provide the primary goal that students plan to achieve as a result of their studies. Initial intent data are self-reported by students when they first enroll at Illinois public community colleges. College staff is asked to require each student to update goal information each semester and provide a current intent, as well as to retain students' original entry intent. Every other student that completed at least one online credit course in fiscal year 2019 reported a goal of preparing for transfer to a four-year institution (51.9 percent). One-fourth of the students reported a workforce goal, which includes preparing for a job immediately after community college program completion (21.4 percent) and improving skills for a current position (5.7 percent). Seven percent of students indicated a goal of personal interest/self-development. One percent of students reported a goal of High School Equivalency preparation (Table A-11).

Degree objective data are also self-reported and are designed to assist colleges in classifying students by curriculum or course enrollee category. The objective conveys the student's expected outcome from attending the community college. Three out of ten students that completed at least one online credit course in fiscal year 2019 indicated that they were enrolling with no intention of pursuing a degree—only to complete one or several courses (29.5 percent). About two-thirds of students planned to complete an associate degree (63.9 percent), and 6.6 percent of students planned to complete a certificate (Table A-12).

ENROLLMENT BY TERM AND TYPE OF ATTENDANCE

Students taking online courses during the fall and spring semesters were slightly more likely to attend on a part-time basis (52.6 and 55.3 percent, respectively) than full-time (47.4 and 44.7 percent, respectively). Students enrolled for less than 12 credit hours are considered part-time during the fall and spring semesters. Approximately nine out of ten students (89.2 percent) attended on a part-time basis during the summer term of fiscal year 2019 (less than nine credit hours) (Table A-13).

HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED BY STUDENTS PRIOR TO ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The prior earned degree data reiterate that community colleges serve diverse populations. About four out of five of the students that completed at least one online credit course in fiscal year 2019 provided this information (83.7 percent). More than one-half of online students (51.4 percent) entered the community college with a high school diploma/equivalency. Nearly twenty percent earned some type of postsecondary certificate or degree. Fourteen percent had already earned degrees at or beyond the community college level. Twenty-nine percent of the students had previously taken college coursework without completing a certificate or degree (Table A-14).

ACCUMULATED COLLEGE-LEVEL CREDIT HOURS

Of the 112,997 online students for whom data were available in fiscal year 2019 (98.9 percent), 44.3 percent accumulated less than 30 college-level hours (freshman level). Nearly one-third (30.5 percent) accumulated between 30 and 59 credit hours (sophomore status), and one-fourth (25.2 percent) earned 60 or more credit hours (Table A-16).

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Cumulative grade point average (GPA) data were available for 98.8 percent of the online students enrolled in fiscal year 2019. Pre-college coursework does not generate GPA information. More than nine out of ten students had grade point averages of 2.01 or higher, which is a “C” average or above (91.0 percent). More than one-half of the students (55.1 percent) achieved grade point averages in the “B” to “A” range (3.01 to 4.00). More than one-third (35.8 percent) achieved grade point averages in the “C” to “B” range (2.01 to 3.00) (Table A-17).

HOURS ATTEMPTED AND EARNED

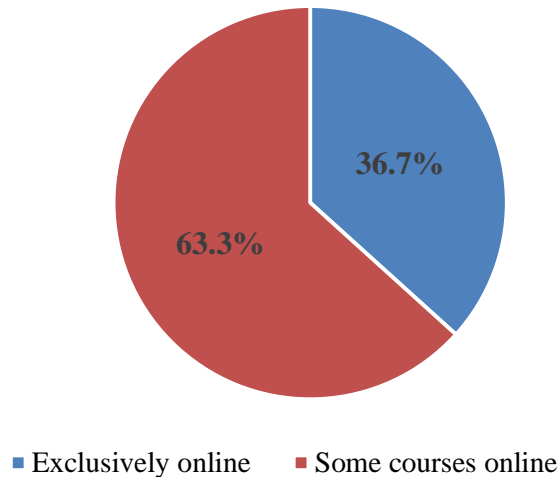
In fiscal year 2019, Illinois community college students that completed at least one online credit course earned on average 88.7 percent of the online credit hours they attempted (N = 1,634,755/1,843,528). Full-time (88.3 percent) and part-time (89.2 percent) students earned a similar percentage of the hours they attempted (Table A-15).

Table A-18 demonstrates how many internet hours students earned during fiscal year 2019. Out of 114,298 students that completed at least one online credit course in fiscal year 2019, 47.1 percent of students earned less than four credit hours, 38.3 percent of students earned between four and less than ten credit hours, 9.9 percent of students earned between ten and less than 16 credit hours, 4.5 percent of students earned between 16 and less than 31 credit hours, and 0.2 percent of students earned 31 or more credit hours.

Table A-19 provides the rate of internet hours compared to overall credit hours. More than one-third of the students (36.7 percent) that completed at least one online credit course in fiscal year 2019 took their courses exclusively online. One in two students (53.9 percent) earned 50 percent or more of credit hours through internet-based courses (including students that took their courses exclusively online), one in four students (24.6 percent) earned up to 25 percent of credit hours

through internet-based courses and one in five students (21.6 percent) earned between 25 percent and 50 percent of credit hours through internet-based courses.

**Figure 2. Online Students Enrolled Exclusively or Partially in Internet-Based Coursework
Fiscal Year 2019**



Source of Data: ICCB Centralized Data System—Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) Data

DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE COUNT AND COURSE SECTION ENROLLMENT

COURSE COUNT BY INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

In fiscal year 2019 Illinois community colleges offered a total of 21,731 distance education courses (including hybrid courses), which accounted for 16.7 percent of all courses. Online/internet-based courses, the most common instructional delivery in distance education, accounted for 73.4 of all distance education courses in fiscal year 2019, with hybrid/blended courses accounting for another 23.2 percent, for a total of 96.6 percent of all distance education courses (Table B-1). Distance education courses represented the highest proportion of courses at Carl Sandburg College (38.5 percent), Spoon River College (36.9 percent), and Olney Central College (33.8 percent).

In fiscal year 2019, distance education courses accounted for 16.7 percent of all courses.

COURSE SECTION ENROLLMENT BY INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

All distance education course enrollments (including enrollment in hybrid coursework) totaled 329,633 in fiscal year 2019 and accounted for 18.6 percent of all course enrollments. Online/internet-based course enrollments accounted for 80.2 percent of all distance education enrollments in fiscal year 2019, with hybrid/blended enrollments accounting for another 18.7 percent. Combined, online/internet-based and hybrid/blended enrollments represented 98.9 percent of all distance education course enrollments (Table B-2). Spoon River College had the

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highest ratio of distance education enrollment to all course enrollments (41.4 percent), followed by Southeastern Illinois College (38.6 percent), and Parkland College (36.5 percent).

Distance education course enrollments (including hybrid courses) increased slightly compared to fiscal year 2018. Compared to last year, an increase in enrollment was noted for broadcast television/audio (+150.0 percent) and hybrid courses (+10.4 percent), while a decrease in enrollment was noted for correspondence (-60.9 percent), courses via stored media (-56.4 percent), interactive instructional TV/distance learning courses (-11.2 percent), and internet-based courses (-1.8 percent), (Table B-3).

AVERAGE CLASS SIZE IN INTERNET-BASED AND HYBRID COURSES

The average class size in online and hybrid courses in fiscal year 2019 was 15.5 students per course. Waubensee Community College had the largest average online and hybrid enrollments per course in fiscal year 2019 at 22.5, while Olive-Harvey College had the smallest average online and hybrid enrollments per course at 3.4 (Table B-4).

COURSE SECTION ENROLLMENT IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Table B-5 provides duplicated online course section enrollment in Career and Technical Education by program in fiscal year 2019. Medical Office Assistant/Specialist (CIP 510710; N = 4,345), Computer Programming/Programmer, General (CIP 110201; N = 3,687), Business/Office Automation/Technology/Data Entry (CIP 520407; N = 2,867), Child Care Provider/Assistant (CIP 190709; N = 2,158), and Criminal Justice/Police Science (CIP 430107; N = 2,040) are the five largest Career and Technical Education curricula with over 2,000 duplicated online course section enrollments.

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APPENDIX A

Unduplicated Enrollment

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B-3 Comparison of Course Section Enrollment by Instructional Delivery, Fiscal Years 2018 or 2019

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