Of the three major “flavors” of e-learning employed in the United States—fully online, hybrid, and technology-enhanced traditional—the last is most common. This represents a more incremental approach to e-learning adoption, whereas online distance-learning and hybrid courses typically require major adjustments and training in both technology and pedagogy. Of these two, hybrid courses were somewhat more common (offered at 80 percent of respondent institutions) than online distance learning (offered at 71 percent). As Figure 4-1 shows, this holds true across all Carnegie classifications except associate institutions. The following sections provide an overview of current e-learning activities and a look at how institutions expect to focus their activities in the near term.

### Online Distance Learning: A Model with a Track Record

The adoption of online learning by established distance-learning programs may have encouraged participating institutions

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to adopt e-learning early. Online courses for distance learning are not a recent phenomenon; just over 50 percent of respondents implemented their programs in or before 1999 (Figure 4-2). Doctoral and associate institution respondents began their programs earliest. Few baccalaureate institutions offer online distance learning, having approached such programs cautiously.

The penetration of online distance-learning courses has been gradual. While many programs started before 2000, online distance-learning courses represented only 5 percent (survey mean) of the total courses offered in AY 2001–2002 at the institutions surveyed. As Figure 4-3 illustrates, most institutions reported growth in online distance-learning course offerings in AY 2001–2002. While the survey median is close to 10 percent growth, almost one-quarter of respondents reported growth that exceeds 25 percent.

A closer examination reveals that associate and doctoral institutions continue their aggressive development of online distance-learning courses; at least one in four

Figure 4-2. Implementation Year for Online Distance-Learning Courses
Base: Total Respondents (N = 266)

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 4-3. Growth in Online Distance-Learning Course Offerings in AY 2001–2002
Base: Institutions that Provide IT Support for Online Distance-Learning Courses (N = 177)
of these institution types reported growth exceeding 25 percent. Baccalaureate institutions continue their cautious approach; almost three-quarters of respondents reported less than 10 percent growth. We must note that this growth is on a small base at most institutions but still represents a significant degree of growing interest. While 70 percent of institutions anticipate growth in online distance-learning course offerings in AY 2002–2003, the expected growth is much lower than for the prior year’s growth (Figure 4-4). Only about one-fourth of the respondents reported growth of 10 percent or more. Growth expectations coincide with past experiences—for example, 84 percent of associate institutions anticipate growth. Baccalaureate institutions were the most conservative in their estimates, with just half of the respondents estimating or anticipating growth and 16 percent reporting a declining percentage of course offerings.

Respondents reported that 9 percent (total survey average) of tenure-track instructors teach online distance-learning courses, versus 7 percent of their non-tenure-track counterparts. Survey respondents say 7.5 percent of their students take online distance-learning courses (total survey average). Associate institutions, which report a higher percentage of course offerings, reported the highest percentage of student enrollment (10 percent) in online courses. Baccalaureate institutions, which lag in course offerings, reported that only 3 percent of students take an online distance-learning course.

**Hybrid E-Learning: A Study in Balance**

With hybrid e-learning courses, instructors and students straddle two academic worlds—the physical classroom and the online session—enabling instructors to mix both for optimal course enhancement. Because hybrid courses are not as radical a departure as teaching in the classroom-free online environment, instructors can experiment with e-learning and still use traditional classroom lectures as part of their natural progression of technology incorporation in their courses. “Most instructors are adapting traditional courses, incorporating the use of technology, maybe gradually moving to a hybrid format,” stated Connie Bauer, associate professor of marketing at Marquette University.

Survey respondents noted that hybrid courses evolved more recently than online distance-learning courses; 33 percent of institutions implemented hybrid courses.

![Figure 4-4. Anticipated Growth in Online Distance-Learning Course Offerings in AY 2002–2003](image-url)

**Base:** Institutions that Provide IT Support for Online Distance-Learning Courses ($N = 178$)
in 2000 or later, and 25 percent have not implemented hybrid courses. This might relate to the evolutionary process that some faculty members must experience to develop a hybrid course. First they must get comfortable with using technology in their courses; then they progress to designing and teaching a hybrid course. As Figure 4-5 shows, hybrid course implementation dates vary significantly by institution type. Many doctoral institutions (56 percent) began their programs before 1999, while one-third of baccalaureate institutions launched their hybrid courses in 2000 or later, and more than half have not implemented hybrid courses.

Despite their later implementation, respondents reported that hybrid courses make up a higher percentage of the total courses offered (11 percent) than online distance-learning courses (5 percent). Interestingly, associate institutions pursue hybrid courses less aggressively than they do online courses, and they reported the lowest percentage of hybrid course offerings by Carnegie classification.

As Figures 4-6 and 4-7 show, many institutions reported modest growth in hybrid course offerings for the past and

![Figure 4-5. Implementation Year of Hybrid Course Program, by Carnegie Classification Base: Total Respondents (N = 265)](image)

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

![Figure 4-6. Growth in Hybrid Course Offerings in AY 2001–2002 Base: Institutions that Provide IT Support for Hybrid Courses (N = 191)](image)
current academic years. Associate institutions in AY 2002–2003 show a particularly interesting trend: 14 percent reported a decline in hybrid course offerings, yet more than three-quarters reported an increase in online course offerings. Baccalaureate institutions lag in plans to increase hybrid course offerings; 42 percent plan to keep their hybrid course offerings at the same level in AY 2002–2003.

As with online distance-learning courses, respondents reported a higher percentage (total survey average) of tenure-track instructors teaching hybrid courses than their non-tenure-track counterparts (11 percent versus 8 percent). More students enrolled in hybrid courses (13 percent survey average) than in online distance-learning courses (7.5 percent) in AY 2001–2002.

### Technology-Enhanced Classroom: A Vibrant Proving Ground

The most prevalent form of e-learning is the use of technology in traditional classes, perhaps because it is the easiest to adopt. Instructors can start with small activities—posting class notes online, for example—that require less technical proficiency and pedagogical adaptation than teaching an online distance-learning or hybrid course.

Indeed, the incorporation of technology in the classroom could be considered just part of higher education’s evolution. Penn State’s John Harwood, senior director of teaching and learning with technology, cited an example: “The majority of faculty members are like my wife, who is a professor of French,” he explained. “She uses technology to reinforce and supplement, but she will always meet in the classroom three or four times a week. She does, however, change her classroom activities based upon her knowledge of her students’ activities outside of class. Simply having universal access to technology has changed her assumptions about pedagogy. That is nothing at all peculiar to Penn State; it is happening all over.”

As noted in ECAR’s study *Faculty Use of Course Management Systems*, many institutions cite course management system implementations as a primary driver to technology adoption in the classroom. “A major goal of course management software is to integrate a suite of teaching technologies into a powerful set of tools that make it easy for faculty to use technology in instruction.” 1 Several institutions interviewed agreed. Marquette’s Bauer described the general institution experience: “The availability of an institution-wide course management

![Figure 4-7. Anticipated Growth in Hybrid Course Offerings in AY 2002–2003 Base: Institutions That Provide IT Support for Hybrid Courses (N = 198)](image-url)
system has made it easier for instructors to place materials online,” she explained. “Its usage has grown quickly over the last couple of years.” Virginia Tech’s Tom Head of instructional services agrees: “Increasingly, the faculty put full courses online through the Internet, and as course management software came on board, it allowed them to do that more easily.”

Colgate experimented with its CMS’s capabilities to stir up instructors’ interest. “Just after we installed our course management system, we took on a pilot project involving 25 faculty members across our four academic divisions to investigate the use of asynchronous threaded discussion,” recalled David Baird, director, innovative technology solutions for learning, Colgate University. “The success of that program interested many faculty members in using our course management system more broadly. From there they have utilized it in a lot of different ways.”

Students’ exposure to a CMS drives some instructors to adopt it. “A faculty member will come to us to adapt a course because the students used WebCT in another class,” explained Georgia State’s Karen Oates, information systems training manager, “and now they want one for this subject area. The students like it because they can get everything online—wherever. We have a large number of students who work full time, and they can do their coursework from their office.”

The University of Arizona’s CMS helps save money through reduced copying of course materials. “With the advent of our course management system at Arizona, there are many more instructors developing online resources for traditional courses,” explained Barbara Hoffman, associate director of the University of Arizona Center for Computing & Information Technology. “The budget situation has instructors looking for alternatives to paper distribution of course materials.”

Using technology in the classroom can enhance students’ academic experiences. At USC and Colgate, instructors use technology to enhance the learning environment. As a result, e-learning is used in areas where instruction and learning can derive significant benefit from the infusion of technology. The University of Arizona’s Hoffman concurred: “Increasing use of technology in courses is seen as improving the classroom experience.” It is a planned, not a whimsical, activity. “Technology as it enhances the in-class experience is fine by the faculty,” stated Colgate’s Baird. “But technology for technology’s sake is not the focus here.”

Endnote