



**Briefing Paper - Digital Learning:
Advancing Higher Education through
OPM Partnerships, May 2025**

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Digital Learning: Advancing Higher Education through OPM Partnerships

1. Key Findings

A. Despite gains in college enrollment, Latino students continue to experience disparities in educational outcomes, which are largely due to the digital divide and socio-economic factors.

B. Online learning has great potential to close these gaps and reduce barriers Latinos face by providing cost-effective, accessible paths to a post-secondary degree. However, many smaller colleges and universities, including Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), lack the resources and technical expertise to develop online programming and reach students with it.

C. Online Program Managers (OPMs) are valuable partners that can help schools overcome start-up costs and challenges by providing technical support and infrastructure; reducing upfront financial burdens and mitigating risk; and offering training that allows administrators and faculty to focus their energy and resources on education.

D. Federal regulatory changes—proposed and later rescinded under the Biden Administration—created temporary uncertainty for OPMs in 2023-2024. However, no new federal regulations are currently expected, likely leading to more OPM-college partnerships.

E. In interviews for this paper, college and university administrators and educators roundly agreed that OPMs fill capability gaps that some schools cannot overcome on their own, or do not have the resources to undertake, and that many institutions' ability to continue to offer online programs relies on the opportunity to freely partner with OPMs.

2. Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, increased Internet connectivity and digital advances have revolutionized higher education. Online learning has helped break down barriers that once prevented students from pursuing post-secondary degrees, and it continues to transform how colleges and universities deliver education. Today's students not only expect to use online programming, but many depend on it.

However, despite the growing availability of online learning options, Latinos have less access to these programs than their peers. Latino students still face disparities in educational access and outcomes, many of which are a result of the digital divide and socio-economic factors.

Colleges have an opportunity to continue to close these gaps by expanding online learning. However, many Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and smaller schools generally lack the technical expertise and resources to develop and deploy programming on their own.

OPMs—specialized vendors that work with institutions to create, manage, market online programs, and help reduce start-up costs—have emerged as valuable partners in the online space. These partnerships have immense potential to improve access for Latino students by equipping otherwise resource-constrained institutions with the tools and expertise to develop high-quality programming and to reach more students with educational paths that align with their career and learning goals.

HSI administrators and educators interviewed for this paper told ALLvanza that OPMs provide



3. Online Learning Has Become a Necessity for Digitally Native Students

Today's rapidly evolving technology ecosystem is transforming the higher education landscape. Improved connectivity and digital tools have helped reduce geographical and socio-economic barriers, empowering ordinary individuals with greater educational and career opportunities.

Perhaps the most transformative change has been the growth of online, distance education. Online programming, which generally offers more flexible schedules, career-applicable instruction, and is often more cost-effective than on-campus programs, has opened more choices to students—especially Latino and non-traditional students, who are more likely to have families and maintain employment during their academic careers.

However, Latinos still disproportionately face barriers that prevent them from realizing the full benefits of online learning, largely due to the digital divide and socio-economic factors. While colleges and universities—particularly Hispanic-Serving Institutions—have made some progress in better serving this student group, many lack the resources internally to close these gaps.

Online Program Managers have become valuable partners with great potential to help HSIs and other smaller schools overcome the challenges of delivering online learning options.

technical expertise, reduce start-up costs, and allow faculty to focus on providing instruction and learning—factors that can often prevent schools from offering online programming independently.

In 2023, the Biden Administration announced it would walk back a long-standing “bundled services” exemption, altering contractual agreements between institutions and OPMs and potentially impeding additional online programs. However, all recent indications demonstrate that fewer federal regulations are expected – especially from the U.S. Department of Education – which likely allows for many more collegiate online partnerships with OPMs.

Regulators would be wise to give institutions autonomy to freely decide if and when OPM partnerships are right for their students and refrain from binding college-vendor relationships with unnecessary, burdensome red tape.

Drawing on interviews with college and university administrators and existing research and data, this paper examines OPMs' role in providing and expanding online education; the relationships between OPMs and institutions; and the opportunities to improve educational access and outcomes for Latino students through continued partnerships.



A recurring theme throughout several interviews conducted for this paper is that OPMs provide the technical expertise that many colleges and universities lack in-house; they help reduce start-up costs, mitigate risks, and enable faculty and administrators to focus their resources on education – ultimately benefiting students.

Over the past decade, the demand for distance learning has increased dramatically. During the 2022-23 academic year, most U.S. college students ([53 percent](#)) enrolled in at least one online course, and over a quarter ([26 percent](#)) were enrolled exclusively in online courses. Where online programming was once something of a novelty, most students now expect it and, in many cases, depend on it to complete a degree.

About [three-quarters](#) of chief learning officers polled last year reported increased demand for online options among on-campus students, and 60 percent said that online classes typically fill up before in-person classes. Nearly half (46 percent) of the respondents reported that online program enrollment growth is outpacing on-campus enrollment at their institution. Even before the pandemic, fully online enrollment was [growing faster](#) than blended course enrollment.

Overwhelmingly, students are satisfied with the quality of education received through online programs. A full [96 percent](#) of online college graduates would recommend distance learning to their colleagues, and [93 percent](#) believe their degree will result in a positive return on investment. [Three-quarters](#) of students last year said online education was better than or equal to in-person learning, a five-point increase over the previous year.

Evidence also indicates that online and blended learning can improve graduation rates. A 2021 [Brookings Institution study](#) found that students who took online courses were more likely to graduate faster, and within four years, than students who did not have online options. A separate [study in 2022](#) found that Latino, Black, and low-income students in two-year programs who took up to half their classes online had higher odds of completing a degree.

These trends indicate that not only have attitudes towards online learning changed, but that the quality of programs has improved too. In interviews for this paper, participants consistently underscored that their schools' online programs were not second-tier alternatives to in-person programs, but instead rigorous, valuable stand-alone options that provided students with high-quality instruction.



“We design our online courses with the same quality, rigor, and credentialed faculty as our on-campus offerings. Our online programs help remove significant barriers, making education more accessible for our Latino students and for all learners.”

- Raquel Perez, Ph.D., Faculty Administrator & Director of Digital Experience and Performance at Florida International University (Miami, Florida)



The value of distance education is not lost on colleges and universities. Schools are able to serve more students, and often more economically, through online programs, which, as a rule of thumb, aligns with the mission of any post-secondary institution. [98 percent](#) of universities have shifted to offer online courses—a nine-fold increase since 2000—and [4.5 percent](#) of schools now deliver classes primarily online.

It should not be surprising, then, that colleges and universities are leaning into online programs. Last year, approximately [two-thirds of colleges](#) said creating virtual versions of on-campus programs and classes was a priority, and 48 percent said they were focused on launching new programs with no campus equivalent. Almost half ([47 percent](#)) of administrators said their school planned to increase spending on online learning options.

“Online programs have the potential to elevate the human condition, particularly for Latinos and individuals from underserved backgrounds, who lack the flexibility to attend campus-based courses,” Antonio R. Flores, president and CEO of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), said during an interview for this paper.

“Technology is advancing at an incredibly rapid pace, and it is crucial to ensure that students can leverage technology to earn their degrees while utilizing the many online resources available to support their education.”



Staying up to date with technological developments is essential for fostering continuous growth and innovation... OPMs can provide services such as curriculum development, marketing, student recruitment, and faculty training, which can help schools deliver high-quality online education.

- Antonio R. Flores, President and CEO of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)



4. Latino Students Still Face Education Barriers

While college enrollment among Latino students has increased significantly in recent years—[growing 287 percent](#) at four-year institutions between 2000 and 2020—disparities in access and outcomes persist. In 2021, less than a quarter ([23 percent](#)) of Latinos between the ages of 25 and 29 had completed a bachelor’s degree, a nearly 50 percent lower attainment rate compared to Whites and almost 70 percent lower than Asians.

These trends are troubling, and not only because of the educational inequity they highlight. Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the population, accounting for over [70 percent](#) of the U.S. population growth between 2022 and 2023. Latinos now make up about one-fifth of the population, the second-highest group behind non-Hispanic Whites. In 2021, Hispanic Americans created [\\$3.2 trillion](#) in economic output. In that same year, Latino household consumption totaled [\\$1 trillion](#), a six percent annual growth rate over the prior decade.

Over the past two decades, the Latino share of the U.S. workforce has increased nearly [70 percent](#)—a rate more than 10 times higher than the non-Hispanic segment—and Latinos are projected to make up nearly [30 percent](#) of the workforce by 2050.

Failing to support and uplift the Latino community would not only marginalize a vital segment of the population but would also stifle growth in the U.S. economy, particularly in the face of growing global competition.

Educational discrepancies are partly due to the digital divide. Many Latinos lack the tools and access to take full advantage of the emerging digital education space. Only [two out of three](#) Latino adults own a computer, compared to about eight in 10 White adults, and more than [a third](#) do not have a broadband connection. A quarter of Latinos are “[smartphone-only](#)” Internet users, more than twice the percentage among White adults and the highest of any racial demographic.

Socio-economic factors also play a role. Latino students are more likely than their White peers to have families and work more than 20 hours per week. Nearly one in five Latino undergraduates are parents, and 58 percent of those are unmarried. In a 2021 [Pew Research survey](#), 69 percent of Latino adults who did not have a bachelor’s degree and were not enrolled in college said costs were prohibitive. 71 percent cited the need to work to help support their family.

These factors significantly affect student outcomes. [Inside Higher Ed](#) reported last fall that two-thirds of Latino undergraduates considered dropping out, and about a third did take a leave of absence. That is an increase over 2022, when slightly more than half of Latino students said they considered dropping out—which was then a 10-point increase over 2020. Rates were even higher among single parents; 77 percent considered dropping out, and 44 percent did in 2024.

Moreover, geography can determine Latino students’ educational access, as it does for all Americans. Nearly [six million](#) Latino Americans live in rural communities, accounting for over 10

percent of the country’s rural population, and the rural Latino population has grown in every state over the past decade, except Arizona. Rural Americans are less likely to pursue a college education, with only 19 percent of adults 25 years old and older earning a bachelor’s degree, compared to 35 percent of urban Americans in the same age range.

“One of the largest contributions to the education gap is the lack of resources that rural students have at their fingertips,” the [Harvard Political Review](#) reported in April. The article notes that 58 percent of rural Americans say access to high-speed Internet is a problem in their area. A 2020 Federal Communications Commission [report](#) found nearly one in four rural families do not have broadband Internet.

These realities are why ALLvanza has long advocated for commonsense policies that will help bridge the digital divide for underserved communities, both rural and urban—to ensure all Americans can benefit from and contribute to our innovation-based society.

5. Many Schools are Poorly Equipped to Provide Distance Education—HSIs Especially

With more Latino students enrolling in college—and [greater interest](#) in attending college among Latino students without a degree compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts—many colleges and universities are working to meet demand. The number of HSIs—a designation awarded to schools where at least 25 percent of full-time undergraduate students are Latino and at least half qualify for federal aid—has [rebounded to 600](#) during the 2022-23 school year after [falling below 570](#) during the pandemic.

Online programs are a practical, cost-effective tool for institutions to keep up with this growing demand and provide students with a valuable education.



“Our online programs give our students the flexibility to study on their own schedule, from wherever they are, making it more accessible and manageable for their lifestyle...”

- Evangelia Prevolis, Associate Vice President for Online and Digital Experiences at FIU (Miami, Florida)



However, many smaller schools—including most HSIs—lack the resources to develop, market, and deploy online programming. In the 2023 “Changing Landscape of Online Learning” (CHLOE) [report](#), two-thirds of colleges said they planned to add new online-only programs. However, none had implemented institution-wide adoption of technologies. Less than a quarter of officials said a majority of their faculty were experienced in designing online courses.

Last year, [Inside Higher Ed](#) reported that offering hybrid courses (a combination of in-person and online) “has proved difficult” for HSIs. The article cites a U.S. Government Accountability Office report that found HSIs struggled with more than \$95 million in deferred maintenance, on average, which impacted their ability to offer online and hybrid programming. 90 percent of these schools “report hitting up against at least one technological or financial challenge to continuing them,” the article states. “A lack of IT personnel was a problem for 69 percent of those institutions.”

Compared to larger, better-known public and private universities, HSIs receive less federal funding and usually have smaller endowments. The median per-student endowment at HSIs is [about \\$5,000](#) compared to almost \$16,000 at all other institutions.

Likewise, [HACU](#) reports that “one of the main challenges HSIs face is persistent underfunding relative to other degree-granting institutions,” even though HSIs “educate a disproportionately low-income student population.” HSIs only receive 74 cents for every dollar that goes to all other colleges and universities annually. Other research pegs that number even lower, at [68 cents per dollar](#) received by other schools.

These unique, persistent financial disadvantages are a barrier that can prevent HSIs from offering online programs, which can cost [hundreds of thousands](#) of dollars to build. And that is not to mention the costs of marketing, faculty training, and platform maintenance once a program is created, nor the expenses of training and preparing faculty. In short, online programming comes with significant start-up costs, which can be risky for resource-limited institutions if they opt to launch these programs on their own.

6. OPMs Mitigate Costs, Allow Schools to Focus on Education

Understanding the significant challenges of developing, marketing, and deploying online programs, many colleges and universities choose to partner with OPMs. Interviews for this paper revealed three common themes among administrators and educators whose schools partnered with OPMs:

- A. OPMs deliver critical technical expertise that many HSIs lack internally;
- B. OPMs help schools reduce start-up costs; and

C. OPMs allow faculty and administrators to focus more resources on education, benefiting students directly.

About [550 colleges](#) partnered with OPMs last year, and approximately a quarter of students in fully online four-year programs were enrolled in OPM-supported courses. Roughly [90 percent](#) of colleges contracting with OPMs are public or nonprofit—demonstrating the value these vendors create across the higher education landscape. Even large, well-endowed schools that could afford to build online programs in-house often opt to partner with an OPM instead.



“OPMs are essential to the success of online education, as they may have a broader understanding of the academic landscape and can identify the courses most in demand based on students’ needs, as well as current career and job trends.”

- Antonio R. Flores, President and CEO of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)



“While many smaller institutions face challenges in launching online programs due to limited resources—and some are only now beginning to develop this infrastructure—external partners like OPMs, when structured thoughtfully and aligned with institutional goals, can play a valuable role in supporting those efforts,” said Ms. Prevolis, Associate Vice President at FIU.

Administrators interviewed for this paper often cited the lack of technical expertise among faculty and staff as a key barrier that OPMs help overcome. Instructors and administrators typically do not have the skills to make programming available online. Even schools with proficient IT departments may struggle to

coordinate the many elements required to launch multiple online programs at scale.



“OPMs can provide a highly beneficial infrastructure that many institutions may not be able to invest in individually...”

- Joseph J. Foy, President of Benedictine University (Lisle, Illinois)



“(OPMs) bring together teams with different backgrounds and skill sets, which smaller institutions, such as HSIs, might not have the resources to assemble on their own. This collaboration offers significant advantages, especially when it comes to expanding and enhancing online educational programs.”

“The OPM we work with for some of our programs supports our faculty in designing courses, creating instructional materials, and managing various aspects of the programs,” said Dr. Joseph Provenzano, assistant provost for Teaching and Academic Assessment at Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia, during an interview for this paper. “This role is certainly valuable.”

OPMs can also alleviate start-up costs, which otherwise might prevent colleges and universities from offering online programs. Many institutions choose to enter into revenue-sharing agreements, through which the vendor (OPM) develops the program at little or no charge in exchange for a portion of the revenue from tuition once active. As of 2021, about [three-quarters](#) of OPM partnerships followed this model (versus fee-for-service).

“Launching, marketing and recruiting qualified students for, and running sustainable, high-quality online degree programs requires significant upfront and ongoing capital,” John Quelch, former Dean of the University of Miami Herbert Business School, Coral Gables, Florida, [wrote in public comment](#) to the Department of Education in 2023. “A revenue share partnership... provides critical upfront investment and capacity, the ability to launch accredited programs quickly, an unparalleled online learning experience, and a partner invested in the long-term success of the program.”

Revenue sharing has been especially advantageous for HSIs and smaller schools. It allows colleges and universities to defer start-up costs until after program implementation and mitigates their risk if a program does not succeed, which is a real possibility.

The Associated Press [reported](#) last year that budget challenges forced a “wave of program cuts” at U.S. colleges. Similarly, respected education commentator Phil Hill [noted](#) that most OPMs in revenue-sharing agreements “either lost money or at best roughly reached break-even” — underscoring the inherent risk that schools would otherwise face.



“In a nutshell, what we have seen in the OPM market is not profit extraction, it is capital injection,” Mr. Hill concluded.

“OPMs help us bring down the cost of education... They allow us to know where we stand in the way of offerings and help us position ourselves as an affordable option,” Mr. Stewart of the University of Mount Saint Vincent summarized.



“Although UMSV has been around for over 100 years, our faculty has limited experience with online learning. Partnering with an expert who can help train our faculty and incorporate social learning into the online classroom allows us to enhance our approach and better serve our students.”

- Cristóbal Stewart, Dean of the School of Professional and Graduate Studies at the University of Mount Saint Vincent, (Bronx, New York)



7. Reaching a Broader Base: Student Recruitment

Developing online programming and making it available is only useful if students can find and enroll in programs that align with their learning and career goals. This marketing is a significant consideration for most schools. In 2019, U.S. colleges spent [\\$2.2 billion](#) on marketing, and schools spent an average of \$429 and \$623 per enrolled student per year.

Since the mid-2010s, advertising among public and private nonprofit schools has increased, while that among technical and career-education schools has modestly declined. Some larger universities channel tens of millions of dollars into advertising, and these campaigns range from targeted ads to professional sports team

sponsorships. In 2019 alone, Johns Hopkins University spent \$29.6 million on advertising, and the University of Maryland Global Campus announced a six-year, \$500 million marketing campaign.

However, as previously noted, HSIs typically receive less federal and state funding compared to other colleges and universities. As a [Third Way report](#) last year explains, HSIs are “generally cash-strapped” and must “do more with less.” Most have modest marketing budgets—if any—relative to their larger counterparts.

OPMs can help fill this gap, offering schools the resources, scale, and specialization to market online programs. These companies generally offer robust marketing strategies and the infrastructure to implement them, which, because of their scale, they can execute more cost-effectively than smaller schools could on their own.



“Partnering with OPMs can make education more accessible to a wider range of students, including Latino students, by involving enrollment representatives who deeply understand students’ diverse backgrounds. These recruiters, who work with a large volume of students, help connect individuals to programs that best align with their goals and life circumstances.”

- Joseph J. Foy, President of
Benedictine University (Lisle, Illinois)



“By utilizing algorithms and social media, OPMs match students with programs based on their demographics, interests, etc. increasing awareness of available opportunities. This approach enables individuals from diverse backgrounds, including Latinos, to find programs that meet their specific needs, providing more relevant experiences and options.”



“Expanding access to online education is no longer optional; it’s a moral and economic imperative for building a workforce that is more competitive, skilled, and forward-thinking.”

-Rosa Mendoza, Founder, President
and CEO of ALLvanza



8. Ways OPMs Are Helping Close the Digital Divide

By equipping institutions with the tools and resources to deliver high-quality online programming, OPMs have been and can continue to be instrumental in improving educational outcomes and closing the digital divide.

A. Technology Infrastructure: OPMs understand the technical needs required to provide online programs, which can inform schools and guide technology infrastructure decisions. While such



considerations may seem commonsensical, many HSIs and other smaller institutions do not have the resources to take a full-picture assessment of their needs or the means to remedy them.

For example, a [quarter of HSIs](#) do not have sufficient internet speeds, and more than 20 percent do not have internet that can reach outdoor areas of their campuses. These deficiencies can extend to more sophisticated software and hardware necessary to launch and maintain online programming.

B. Student Support Services: Many OPMs offer valuable support alongside online programming, which helps schools deliver a better product and better serve students.

As Mr. Flores explains: “OPMs can provide services such as curriculum development, marketing, student recruitment, and faculty training, which can help schools deliver high-quality online education.”

C. Flexible and Affordable Paths to a Post-Secondary Degree: As noted above, the high costs of a traditional college education and family obligations are major barriers that prevent Latino students from attaining a degree.

By providing greater flexibility, career-applicable instruction and skill development, and cost-effective learning options, online programs help break down these walls.

The average in-state tuition rate for in-person classes at private four-year schools for the 2022-23 school year was more than [twice as expensive](#) as that for online instruction per credit.



“OPMs and online programs can greatly enhance student outcomes by providing non-traditional students the flexibility to pursue higher education in a way that suits their schedules and needs. Additionally, online programs can be more affordable for students.”

- Antonio R. Flores, president and CEO of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)



9. Regulatory Uncertainty: Federal Rule Changes

OPM partnerships, which have proven valuable to institutions and students, have steadily grown over the past two decades. At least [550 colleges](#) worked with an OPM to support nearly 3,000 education programs in 2021. This growth is in no small part a result of balanced regulatory oversight, which has given schools and vendors the latitude to develop and enter agreements aligned to their needs and thereby efficiently offer programming to more students.

In 2011, the Obama administration included OPM partnerships under a “bundled services” exemption rule, which was intended to prevent unnecessary federal intervention. Such independence “is absolutely essential for our survival,” [said](#) Dr. Lynne Bongiovanni, Provost

and Dean of Faculty at the University of Mount Saint Vincent.

In February 2023, the Biden administration issued a “[Dear Colleague Letter](#)” announcing its intentions to reclassify OPMs as third-party servicers. The change would have subjected OPM contracts to audits and give regulators greater authority to scrutinize schools’ agreements with OPMs, including revenue-sharing arrangements.

The change was met with immense criticism from administrators and education experts. The guidance would have created “a significant burden for institutions and outside entities that disrupts the ability of institutions to provide critical educational services,” a group of more than 80 education organizations led by the American Council on Education [wrote](#) in March 2023.

“The department seems to be more interested in controlling the actions of private companies and creating unnecessary headaches for institutions than it is ensuring students have every tool to succeed academically,” U.S. Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), then chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, [said](#) of the regulatory change.



Only weeks after its Dear Colleague Letter, the Department of Education rescinded the guidance, keeping the existing framework in place. And while the Department of Education issued another “[midnight](#)” Dear Colleagues Letter during the final days of the Biden administration, the guidance seeks to prevent “false, misleading, or inaccurate information,” not impede partnership agreements.

The Trump administration has not indicated whether it will halt the Biden administration’s final OPM guidance or allow it to take effect. It could (and did during President Trump’s first term) issue a moratorium that would allow it to consider whether the regulation should move forward as is, be adjusted, or permanently halted.

While President Trump’s Secretary of Education, Linda McMahon, has not spoken directly about OPM partnerships, the administration’s actions suggest it will support a regulatory framework that will foster continued growth.

In April, President Trump [signed](#) an executive order, “Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future,” which directs the Department of Education and other agencies to identify “alternative credentials and assessments to the 4-year college degree that can be mapped to the specific skill needs of prospective employers.”

“Not every student needs to attend a four-year university to enter a family-sustaining career,” Secretary McMahon [said](#) in a statement accompanying the executive order above. “The Trump administration will support communities across the country that are offering career-aligned programs. Our goal is to build on their success and align resources across the country to equip the next generation of American workers.”

Regulatory policy has direct bearing on schools' partnership decisions. In 2023, the same year the Biden administration issued its first proposed regulatory changes, 147 OPM contracts [expired](#) or were not renewed—the most of any year since 2020 and nearly as many as in the prior three years combined. The Trump administration would be wise to codify OPM-partnership protections and thereby provide long-term regulatory certainty that will ensure colleges and universities can continue to develop and deploy online programming, which will make education more accessible, inclusive and affordable to students from all backgrounds.



“Online programs are essential, regardless of the future of the Department of Education. They play a key role in addressing workforce needs both regionally and nationally. These programs are important to both students and industries, as they fulfill a critical need and help students move toward better lives—the lives they aspire to live.

- Cristóbal Stewart, Dean of the School of Professional and Graduate Studies at the University of Mount Saint Vincent (Bronx, New York)



Policymakers and the public alike should support these partnerships. Despite notable progress over the past two decades, Latino students continue to face significant, unique challenges, which are both socio-economic and a product of the digital divide. Online learning has immense potential to further reduce educational disparities, put Latino students on equal footing as their peers, and better prepare Latinos for the careers of tomorrow.

Realizing the full capacity of this digital frontier will largely depend on the ability of colleges and universities to partner with OPMs, thereby meeting students where they are and addressing their evolving learning needs. As evidenced by research and input from administrators, many HSIs and other smaller institutions do not have the resources to develop online programming and deliver it to students on their own.

Partnerships with OPMs help them develop quality programs; reduce costs, which in turn enables these schools to keep tuition costs low; focus faculty time and resources on academic preparation; and provide expanded education options to students. These are necessary steps that ultimately benefit students, especially non-traditional learners, including Latinos, who may not otherwise pursue a post-secondary education.

10. Conclusion

The rapid growth of online learning has and continues to open new doors to Hispanic and underserved students, which many colleges and universities could not have achieved on their own. Distance education is no longer optional. Students from all walks of life expect it, and post-secondary institutions must continue to develop, market, deliver, and improve their offerings if they hope to reach all students—which will require support from OPMs.



It is essential that people from all walks of life have the opportunity to earn a college degree. Online learning plays a key role in making higher education more accessible. Expanding access through online programs has and will continue to help secure the U.S.'s position as a global leader and better ensure that our full population—no matter an individual's race, gender, or background—has an opportunity to participate in and contribute to the innovation-based economy of the future.



“We must ensure that every student has access not only to the Internet but also to meaningful, high-quality online learning experiences that can empower and prepare them for success in an increasingly digital world”.

-Rosa Mendoza, Founder, President and CEO of ALLvanza



11. Methodology and Acknowledgements

In researching this paper, ALLvanza conducted interviews with six officials representing geographically and programmatically diverse post-secondary institutions that offer online programs, most of which are HSIs. Interviews were conducted between March 15 and April 30, 2025.

Additionally, the paper drew on existing research, data, and publicly available information and comments from more than 40 sources, which are cited for reference.

A special thank you to the administrators, officers, and experts who participated in

interviews for this paper:

- **Antonio R. Flores**
President and CEO
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
- **Joseph J. Foy, Ph.D.**
President
Benedictine University (Lisle, Illinois)
- **Raquel Perez, Ph.D.**
Faculty Administrator and Director of Digital Experience and Performance
Florida International University Online
- **Evangelia Prevolis**
Associate Vice President of Online and Digital Experiences
Florida International University (Miami, Florida)
- **Joseph A. Provenzano, Jr., Ph.D.**
Assistant Provost for Teaching and Academic Assessment
Marymount University (Arlington, Virginia)
- **Cristóbal Stewart, Ed. D.**
Dean, College of Professional and Graduate Studies
University of Mount Saint Vincent (Bronx, New York)



12. About ALLvanza

This paper was researched and written by **Rosa Mendoza, Founder, President, and CEO of ALLvanza.**

ALLvanza is a nonpartisan, forward-thinking, policy and action nonprofit organization, whose mission is to advance the prospects of all Americans, particularly our youth, so that they can achieve success in our innovation- and technology-driven world. We work toward this goal through education, advocacy and other tangible actions.

13. Author's Perspective

Technology has fundamentally transformed the way we work, access education, and live our daily lives. That's why I founded ALLvanza—to advocate for equitable access to the benefits of technology and innovation for all Americans. At ALLvanza, we work to ensure that every community is not only protected from the potential negative impacts of evolving policies and technologies, but also empowered to take full advantage of the opportunities they bring.

Coming from a conservative family with traditional values and being a first-generation college student, I encountered numerous financial, logistical, and emotional challenges in pursuing higher education. Had I been able to enroll in an online college degree program then, many of these obstacles would have been significantly reduced or even eliminated. Being on a college campus, far from home and unfamiliar with the norms and expectations of higher education felt like I was navigating a new world while blindfolded—trying to survive.

This paper holds special meaning for me because it represents my deep commitment to ensuring that anyone who aspires to earn a college degree, regardless of their background, can leverage technology to accomplish that goal—especially in our current society, which is increasingly shaped by digital innovation. The availability of online courses is especially valuable for nontraditional students and those who face barriers to relocating to a college campus. I hope this paper helps inform students about their options and educates policymakers on the importance of avoiding burdensome regulations that could stifle innovation by preventing colleges from partnering with OPMs—partnerships that provide significant value to both students and universities.

14. About The Author

Rosa Mendoza is the Founder, President and CEO of ALLvanza. Her experience as a first-generation college student sparks her passion to help others and gives her particular insight to advocate for education and opportunity.

Ms. Mendoza has a Master of Education, with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from Washington State University. She has written extensively about education and technology issues, including [online learning](#) and the [digital divide](#).

For more information and media requests, please contact: info@allvanza.org