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Earning Your Degree Online Growing Among Students

Online college work might come in even more creative formats and be quicker to complete, since the Federal Communications Commission in March provided Congress with a plan to expand broadband network access and speed up Internet services. This very change may allow even more students to obtain college degrees online as services speed up.

The National Broadband Plan is reportedly intended in part to encourage online education and online education tools as well as to enhance education connectivity. And Congress reportedly required it as part of a federal stimulus bill known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Virginia Congressman, Rick Boucher, in a CSPAN interview called the Internet the biggest platform for commercial innovation and business success this country has seen. A Strategy for American Innovation report, prepared by the National Economic Council's Office of Science and Technology Policy, recommends creating [bachelor masters degree](#) that combine high quality subject expertise with the latest technological advancements.

The federal government (according to the report) over the next decade wants to spend up to \$500 million for creating online college classes at community colleges that would allow students to continue their learning and complete online school work. The report also mentions inviting colleges, universities, publications and others to a contest involving state-of-the-art online class development.

Many students already participate in school programs of this nature, accessing a wide variety of online databases and connecting with scholars from around the globe, according to a news release announcing the introduction of the broadband plan. But while studies show that students in online college programs fare at least as well as students in traditional campus settings, a pilot program at one university suggested that online schoolwork might take more time.

The Internet can be accessed via wireless services, dialup and high speed DSL services offered by telephone companies and by broadband services with wireless and satellite options. Broadband service, with content carried through what the FCC calls a transmission "pipeline", provides quality access to streaming media, Internet telephone services, games and interactive offerings, according to the FCC's broadband Web site. More people also want to move toward HD video, Boucher noted. Local telephone carriers have been expanding their fiber-optic networks to accommodate DSL and would continue to receive federal funding until broadband becomes more widely available and even telephone service is carried through the Internet, Boucher said.

Making higher education more accessible to students has been a goal for President Barack Obama, who recently signed an education bill into law that makes more financial aid available to students pursuing [accredited degree online](#). Online college classes and online degree programs themselves make higher education more accessible. Many offer flexible course formats that accommodate students with work and family responsibilities who might not otherwise be able to continue their studies.

The broadband plan's goals include increasing download speeds from what Boucher said is as few as 5 megabits per second to 100 megabits per second by 2020. Expanded network connectivity is needed as well, the FCC reported. There are still about 7 million people throughout the country who don't have access to broadband network services, Florida Congressman Cliff Stearns told CSPAN. Of the 95 percent of households that have access to broadband, 2/3 of them use high-speed Internet services, Stearns noted. Proposals within the broadband plan would reportedly involve establishing new laws and setting new agency rules.

With technology and convenience allowing more and more students to obtain [online degrees](#), speeding up connections and promoting distance learning will help everyone with Internet access. Those who wish to expand can earn a [bachelors degree](#), while continuing to work and take care of what they need to in their life.

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