



Making outstanding  
online education  
accessible at scale

Arizona State University

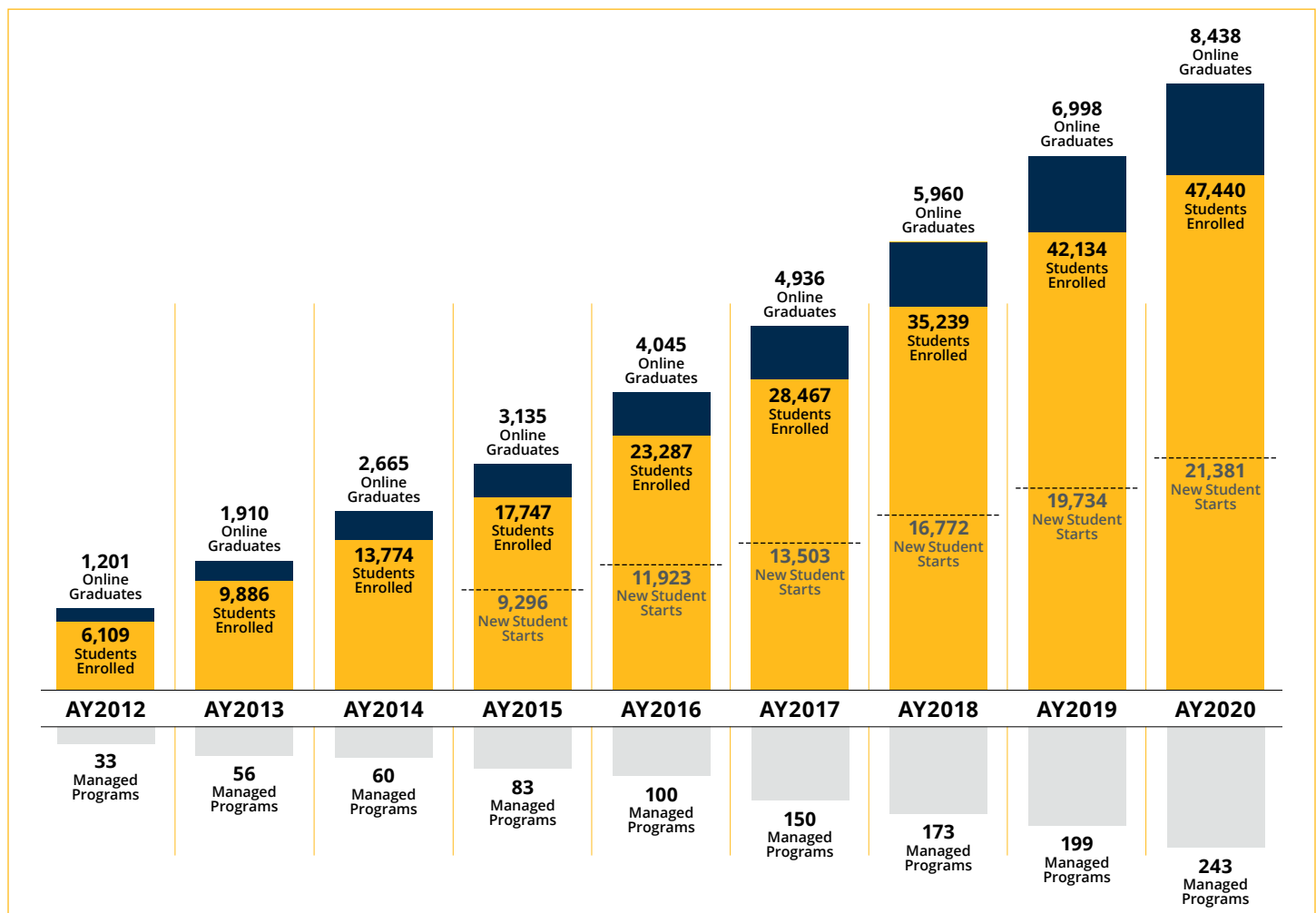


## Combining inclusion, excellence, speed, and scale

Arizona State University's (ASU) mission is to enable every student with a desire to learn to pursue a college degree. As it meets this ambitious goal for inclusion, it's also becoming a national leader in academic quality, a global leader in interdisciplinary research, and an increasingly powerful force for improving communities.

To accomplish all these goals, ASU innovates continuously, learns quickly from experience, and propagates effective innovations widely.

A centerpiece of ASU's innovation strategy is ASU Online, which scaled from 6,109 to 47,440 enrolled students in eight years, as its portfolio of fully online managed programs grew from 33 to 243.<sup>1</sup> "Scaling isn't just about the number of programs," says Leah Lommel, Chief Operating Officer of EdPlus, ASU's central enterprise unit for designing, delivering, and scaling online instruction. "You must also evaluate your marketing efforts to recruit ever-larger numbers of students."



## Understanding the “whole” online student

ASU’s EdPlus teams work together to anticipate and address the needs of online students. For example, recognizing online learners’ preference for taking fewer classes in a faster time frame, the whole university shifted its academic calendar.

ASU innovates to improve the entire online student experience, from course delivery to student support and community. Its recent national rankings — for example, #1 in both online general management and marketing MBA programs; #2 in online business analytics MBA programs; #3 in online finance MBA programs; #6 in online graduate criminal justice programs, #1 online master’s in electrical engineering; and #2 online master’s in educational administration — prove that scale, speed, and excellence are fully compatible.<sup>2</sup>

ASU Online believes in using data to drive its efforts — but never forgetting the human stories. ASU’s focus on student experience proved especially valuable when it was discovered they were attracting an unexpectedly younger online student demographic. Younger students often don’t perform as well online, but ASU saw an opportunity. “We know people are taking more online courses in high school, and living more in online mode,” says Lommel. “So, we asked, ‘How do we support, coach, and engage them better?’”

“We’re also working to see how our messaging works for freshmen, and identify them earlier to serve them differently. We’re still learning, but we’ve grown our online freshman class tremendously - while also being ranked #6 nationally in online bachelor’s degree programs.”

We’ve built a really solid foundation, and that allows us to maximize our efforts, so rapid growth doesn’t have to rely on brute force.

— Leah Lommel  
Assistant Vice President  
& Chief Operating Officer  
EdPlus and ASU Online  
Arizona State University



## Building and sustaining a culture of innovation

ASU has worked to build a culture of innovation since President Michael Crow arrived in 2002. It has topped the U.S. News & World Report “most innovative schools” rankings in every one of the six years they have been compiled. “We have a ‘fail fast’ approach,” says Lommel. “You have to take a risk to find out quickly if something works. If people know it’s OK to fail, they try harder not to.”

Just as innovative technology can improve instruction, it can also help faculty achieve their research goals. “We have faculty who are most interested in teaching, faculty most interested in research to advance the field, and faculty who want to do it all. We need to help them leverage their strengths, so they can all help us achieve our mission.”

ASU and EdPlus know that online innovation can benefit on-campus students, too. Says Lommel, “You’re not only building for online: you’re finding the best learning opportunities for each student, wherever they are.”

Learn more about ASU Online at [asuonline.asu.edu](https://asuonline.asu.edu)

1. ASU Pearson Partnership Update - October 2020.

2. “Arizona State University: Online Programs Overview, Online Programs Ranking.” US News & World Report. 2020-2021. <https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/arizona-state-university-104151>.

3. ASU Pearson Partnership Update - October 2020.

4. “Arizona State University: Online Programs Overview, Online Programs Ranking.” US News & World Report. 2020-2021. <https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/arizona-state-university-104151>.

## ASU by the Numbers 2020<sup>3</sup>

**47,440**

students enrolled

**12.6%**

YoY increase in enrolled  
students, 2019 to 2020

**8,438**

Students graduated, 2020  
(up 20.6% from 2019)

**243**

Managed programs

**#1**

*U.S. News and World Report*  
national university ranking for:  
Online General Management  
MBA, Online MBA Program in  
Marketing (tie), Online Master’s  
in Electrical Engineering;  
Online Master’s in Curriculum  
and Instruction; Online  
Master’s in Instructional Media  
Programs (tie)<sup>4</sup>

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