eCampusOntario Strategic Plan 2016-2018

Online and technology-enabled learning continues to evolve and grow

providing increasing access and opportunities for learners to pursue education in flexible ways to meet their needs. In 2013, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) committed $72 million over five years to support the development of eCampusOntario and the provision of high quality online learning experiences for Ontario's postsecondary students.

eCampusOntario initiated the process to build its first strategic plan in late Fall of 2015. After an open call for proposals, StrategyCorp was selected to guide planning activities. Foremost among these activities was a full schedule of consultations with eCampusOntario stakeholders. Multiple focus groups were hosted with students and with member institutions. In addition, surveys were sent to a large and diverse group of learners, as well as to every publicly assisted college and university in Ontario. A separate Faculty Supports Project collected feedback and input from faculty and online learning practitioners across the province.

The eCampusOntario Strategic Plan maps the direction for eCampusOntario to the end of March 2018. This document represents a summary of this plan.

eCampusOntario | Funded by **Ontario**

eCampusOntario at a glance

Active since August 2015, eCampusOntario acts as the keystone of Ontario's online learning environment by:

• facilitating easy discovery of Ontario's online learning opportunities;

• promoting Ontario's unparalleled online learning advantages;

• advancing best practices for elearning across Ontario's postsecondary education (PSE) ecosystem; and

• creating innovative elearning solutions for members, faculty, students and stakeholders.

eCampusOntario is a not-for-profit corporation, funded by the Government of Ontario. Membership is composed of all publicly assisted colleges and universities in Ontario.

By enhancing our members' capacity to innovate, educate, advocate and collaborate, eCampusOntario ensures learners benefit from an integrated, best-in-class elearning environment – one that is easy to explore, highly relevant to all stakeholders and builds a smarter Ontario.

For more information: **ecampusontario.ca/about**

eCampusOntario Portal:

15,277

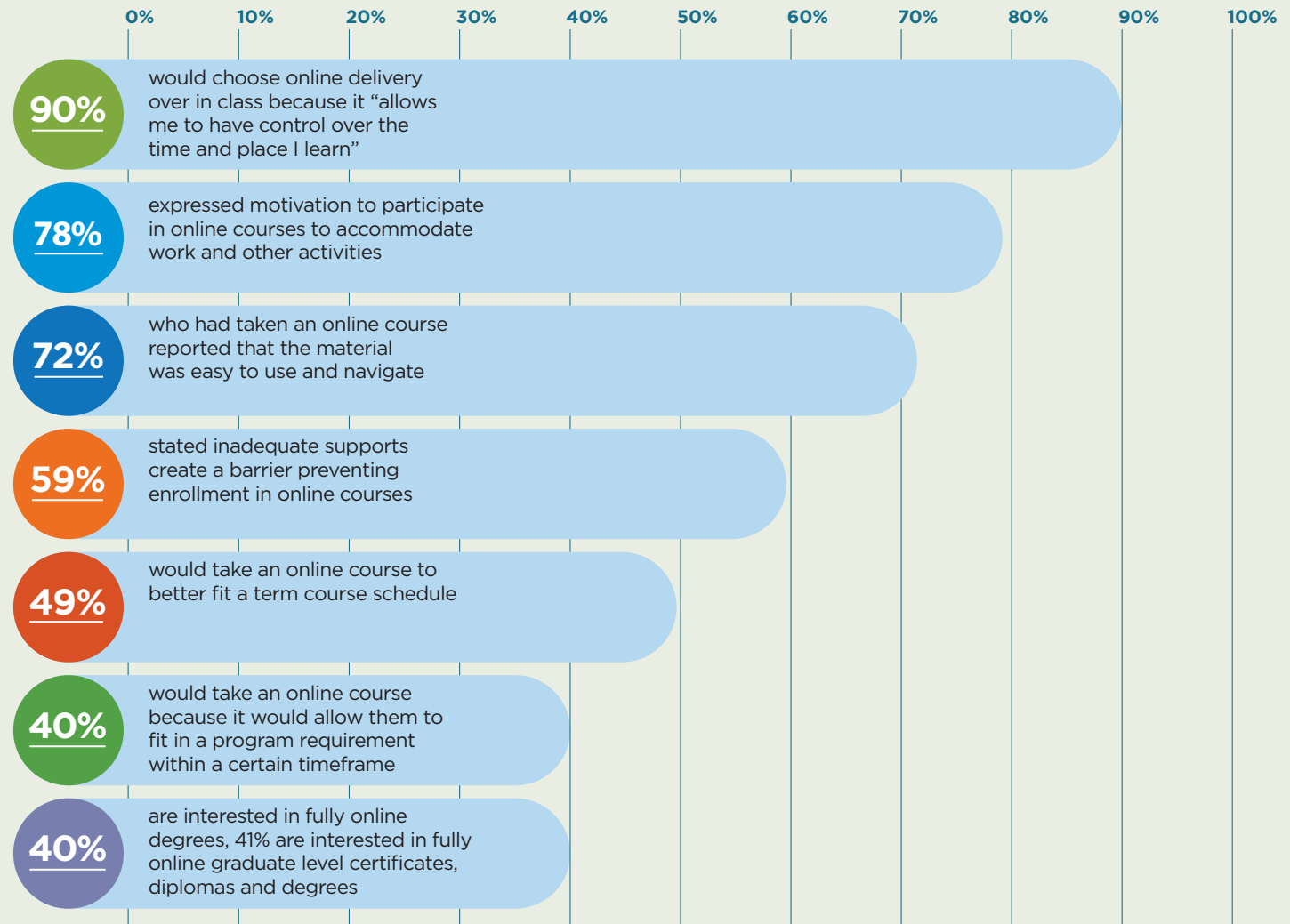Online courses from Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities

755

Online programs from Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities

121,000**

Home page views since launch

What students want*

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

90% would choose online delivery over in class because it "allows me to have control over the time and place I learn"

78% expressed motivation to participate in online courses to accommodate work and other activities

72% who had taken an online course reported that the material was easy to use and navigate

59% stated inadequate supports create a barrier preventing enrollment in online courses

49% would take an online course to better fit a term course schedule

40% would take an online course because it would allow them to fit in a program requirement within a certain timeframe

40% are interested in fully online degrees, 41% are interested in fully online graduate level certificates, diplomas and degrees

What students want statistics are from the eCampusOntario Strategic Plan, Student Online Survey Questions and Results

** Data captured between Sept 30, 2015 and August 8, 2016

Why eCampusOntario

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) funded the creation of eCampusOntario with the ambition to push system improvement through collaboration and innovation and build Ontario's global reputation as a recognized leader in online and technology-enabled education.

"
As a parent, online courses provided me the flexibility to raise kids and deal with learning when I have the time to do it."

Ontario Student

Mandate:

- Support the development and delivery of quality online learning experiences

- Lead in research, development and sharing of exemplary practices in online and other forms of technology-enabled learning

- Support member institutions in fostering innovation, collaboration, and excellence on behalf of Ontario students

- Contribute to the evolution of teaching and learning by:

  - Anticipating and responding to new and emerging technologies

  - Leveraging existing strengths in Ontario's postsecondary system

  - Developing new capacity

  - Supporting the development of state-of-the-art online courses and programs

Mission

Work with member institutions to promote access, collaboration and innovation in online and technology-enabled learning that will enhance the student experience, support faculty development and extend Ontario's global reach.

Vision

Be a centre of excellence that is recognized as a global leader driving the evolution of teaching and learning through technology.

Doing online courses provides the flexibility to have the work/life/educational balance needed to reach my goals.

Ontario Student

Values

Quality: support and encourage exemplary practices to ensure *quality* in the courses, programs and services available through eCampusOntario

Innovation: enable and promote *innovation* by pushing the envelope for online and technology enabled learning

Collaboration: facilitate, encourage and promote *collaboration* in all of our services and activities

Research: support ongoing *research* which promotes quality and innovation in online and technology-enabled teaching and learning

Accountability: be accountable and assume *accountability* in the work that we do

Relevance: demonstrate *relevance* and add value in a way that differentiates us from others and justifies ongoing support and investment

How Canada's PSE landscape is changing

Changing labour needs: As the country shifts to a knowledge based economy, the gap in the labour market could become increasingly significant over the next 5-15 years. For eCampusOntario and its members, this is a critical opportunity to develop flexible, online courses and programs that can help address the projected labour market gap.

Technology: There are several key technology trends and innovations that will continue to influence the evolution of teaching online, the delivery of content and enable new ways for students to connect and learn.

Mobile There is a growing use of mobile devices not only to deliver and gain access to online courses but also to create content. This suggests the need for online courses and platforms to be fully optimized for mobile delivery.

Open educational resources (OER) A leading trend in elearning, etextbooks and media can be used in teaching, learning and research.

Adaptive learning technologies Adaptive learning software helps to identify a learner's capabilities, adapts materials for presentation based on learner needs, monitors their progress and introduces greater challenges as their understanding grows.

Gamification Engagement and retention are critical to student learning. Use of game thinking and constructs (e.g. reward points, badges for student participation) can increase engagement.

Cloud computing and software as a service (SaaS) There are many potential benefits of on-demand network access to shared pools of configurable computing resources for online learning providers.

Learning analytics and big data By using data science and learning analytics, institutions can gain deep insights into student needs, performance and behaviour.

Social networks for collaboration The use of blogs, chats and discussion boards, as well as social networking websites, allow students to discuss and share learning. With collaborative cloud technologies, teachers and learners can communicate more efficiently, track performance, share notes and exchange timely feedback. Educational institutions will also be able to use this information, understand patterns and update content and materials so that students have a better elearning experience.

Augmented and virtual reality Augmented reality (AR) incorporates digital information into real-world spaces. Learners interact with both physical and digital objects. Virtual reality (VR) enables students to enter a computer-generated environment that can create a sensory experiences e.g. using Google Cardboard and Google Maps to create "virtual field trips" for students.

Bring your own device (BYOD) BYOD is a practice which encourages students to use their preferred technology to access educational materials whenever and wherever they prefer. BYOD promotes accessibility and fosters ownership over the learning experience.

> "Flexibility – not having to physically attend lectures gives me more free time and allows me to learn at my own pace using the course materials. Ultimately, online courses helped me become more self-disciplined."

Ontario Student

Key relationships

eCampusOntario's role complements that of many other collaborators in the postsecondary education landscape.

eCampusOntario and ONCAT have the same membership and shared data
- all publicly assisted universities and colleges in Ontario

Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
- conceptual models
- operational requirements
- MAESD funds eCampusOntario, ONCAT and Contact North

eCampusOntario   **ONCAT**   **Contact North**   **Ontario*Learn***
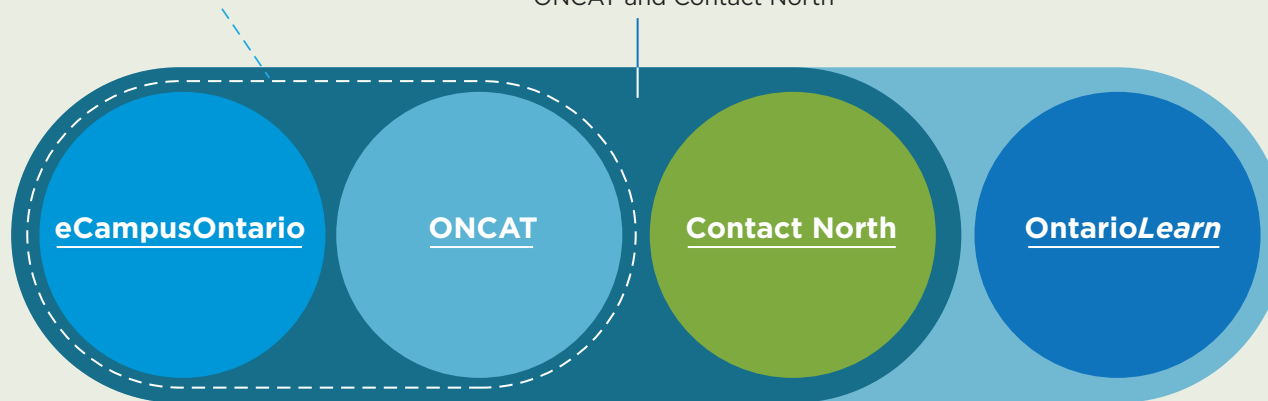
eCampusOntario
Focus on online and technology-enabled learning

ONCAT | CATON
Focus on development and promotion of transfers and pathways

Contact North | Contact Nord
Focus on access to PSE for remote, rural, Aboriginal and Francophone communities

Ontario*Learn*
A College consortium focused on sharing and collaborating in the development of courses and programs for online delivery through a seat sharing model

Our Four Goals

The long term focus of eCampusOntario will be guided by four goals which are intended to support the overall mission and vision of the organization while ensuring alignment of the strategic priorities, short term objectives and performance measures with the long term direction and focus of the organization.

"
It's the convenience factor – I can take my learning wherever I want... Plus, online learning allows me to take a bigger course load and manage it effectively."

Ontario Student

● **Enhance the student learning experience** by providing services and support that increase awareness, access, flexibility and quality in the development and delivery of online courses and programs

● **Support faculty development** with services and support which will enhance the ability of faculty to develop and deliver leading online and technology enabled courses and programs that are characterized by quality, innovation and the use of appropriate leading edge technology

● **Enhance member capacity and participation** Facilitate collaboration, innovation and engagement by member institutions, supported by proactive research that increases the overall quality, reputation and competitiveness of Ontario's online and technology-enabled learning ecosystem and as a result, drives growth in overall demand

● **Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity** Build an organization that has the ongoing capacity to meet Provincial and member expectations and is sustainable over the long term

Strategic projects

Strategic goals for 2016-18 are supported through a number of objectives, each with key initiatives or areas of activity. Some activities are part of the ongoing operations of eCampusOntario, while the majority are addressed through funded strategic projects.

Open content initiatives
Student engagement and supports
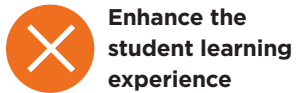**New program development**
Faculty engagement and resources
Marketing, communications and engagement
Research and innovation grants
New course development
Portal 2.0

Goals matched

Enhance the student learning experience

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

Open content initiative

This initiative funds the creation of high quality digital course content that can be freely reused, revised, adapted, remixed, redistributed and retained by institutions to support online and technology-enabled teaching and learning. Digital course content could include a complete set of course modules or a digital textbook, including assessments. Collaborative teams will help to ensure broad buy-in and reuse of the developed content in Ontario.

This initiative will also fund projects to support adoption, adaptation and use of existing open content to develop a fully online course and evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach in course design and delivery.

Creating high quality digital course content

Goals matched

✕ **Enhance the student learning experience**

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

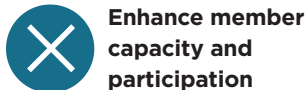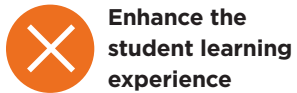**Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity**

Student engagement and supports

Students are the most critical stakeholder group for eCampusOntario. Each strategic project is structured to benefit students by positively impacting the quality, access, affordability and breadth of course and program offerings in some capacity. eCampusOntario will work with students to first determine desired supports and services and then with member institutions to identify the appropriate role for eCampusOntario to assist with addressing any gaps in available supports and services. In addition, eCampusOntario is planning a number of student-focused events throughout the year to connect students, instructors, online learning specialists, technology vendors and other stakeholders. The intent is to give students an opportunity to see and experience offerings from member institutions and provide input and feedback to support the evolution of best practices for teaching and student engagement.

Encouraging the evolution of best practices

Goals matched

Enhance the student learning experience

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

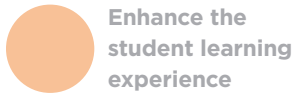Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

New program development

The past three years have seen a focus on supporting development of individual courses through the Shared Online Course Fund. This fund has contributed more than 430 courses and 85 modules to the 14,000+ online courses in the eCampusOntario portal. The strategic plan shifts the focus to the development of new collaborative online programs with a particular emphasis on areas of current and future labour market demand. Innovative delivery of credentials will also be supported and encouraged. In all cases, collaborative multi-institution proposals (within and across sectors) will be sought.

Developing new collaborative online programs

Goals matched

Enhance the student learning experience

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

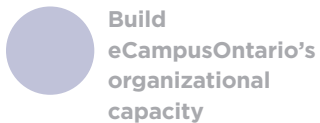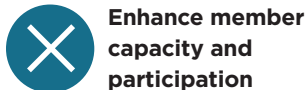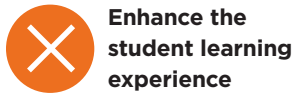Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

Faculty engagement and resources

Faculty are the 'front-line' of online and technology-enabled learning who shape and support the quality of the learning experience for students. Faculty will continue to be a critical stakeholder group for eCampusOntario. The Faculty Supports Project (FSP) was initiated in the summer of 2015 to provide eCampusOntario with recommendations on how to best support faculty, develop research activities and ensure ongoing engagement of faculty and online learning practitioners in the evolution of online teaching and learning practice.

Suggestions and recommendations from each sector were distilled to a coordinated set of recommendations to inform eCampusOntario's strategic activities aimed at the Support and Knowledge Hubs for faculty. Areas of focus include exploring a certificate in online teaching, creating an eFellows program, supporting communities of practice and shared knowledge, promoting creation and use of open resources and funding research and innovation.

Supporting faculty as the front-line

Goals matched

✕ **Enhance the student learning experience**

○ Support faculty development

✕ **Enhance member capacity and participation**

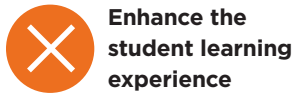○ Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

Marketing, communications and engagement

Through the stakeholder consultations completed as part of the Strategic Plan development, a clear role emerged for eCampusOntario to enhance the national and international profile of Ontario as a leader in online and technology-enabled learning. Additionally, one of the key opportunities identified through these consultations is the idea that eCampusOntario take a more proactive role in marketing the online courses and programs offered by its members in order to drive awareness and enrollment, both domestically and internationally. These were identified as key metrics of success and primary ways to deliver value directly to member institutions. eCampusOntario will achieve these goals via ad campaigns using both traditional and digital media, a member-focused two-day event (sharing best practices, encouraging collaboration), visits to institutions to build awareness, solicit input and deliver topical webinars of value to stakeholders.

Positioning Ontario as a leader

Goals matched

Enhance the student learning experience

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

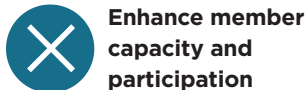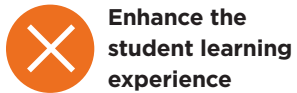Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

Research and innovation grants

As a centre for excellence in online learning, eCampusOntario has a mandate to support leading-edge Ontario research in the field. This mandate also extends to providing support for experimentation with innovative pedagogical approaches and technologies in a safe environment where failure is an acceptable opportunity to learn. As innovative approaches are introduced and new strategies are implemented, it is imperative to continually seek evidence regarding effectiveness and impact—especially with respect to the student learning experience. Supports and opportunities within eCampusOntario to synthesize and disseminate best practices and share lessons learned are important components for the success and evolution of excellence in teaching with technology.

Driving leading-edge Ontario research

Goals matched

❌ **Enhance the student learning experience**

⬤ Support faculty development

❌ **Enhance member capacity and participation**

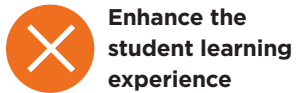⬤ Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

New course development

eCampusOntario will fund the development of a small number of individual course projects. Projects will be considered where such courses will have significant impact; for example addressing the most challenging curricular bottlenecks where online, flexible delivery options would support student retention and progression.

Enabling student retention and success

Goals matched

Enhance the student learning experience

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

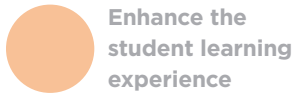Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

Portal 2.0

In 2015, an RFP for the development of the eCampusOntario portal was posted in an open competition. This RFP described an initial suite of features and functionality to be completed for launch in September 2015. In addition to the September deliverables, the RFP included a vision for the mature state for the portal, with a broad description of further functionality to be added in future development phases.

Since the launch of ecampusontario.ca in October 2015, the eCampusOntario team has been working to make those future development phases a reality. Outstanding functionality to be addresses include: adding schedule data, working with institutions to further streamline the registration processes from the student's perspective, improving linkages with ONTransfer.ca data, adding more robust functionality for the student and faculty supports pages and enhancing analytics features.

Building more robust functionality

Goals matched

Enhance the student learning experience

Support faculty development

Enhance member capacity and participation

Build eCampusOntario's organizational capacity

Building capacity

In order to achieve the many objectives outlined in this plan, eCampusOntario must build its team and establish processes to effectively manage activities. This will include the creation of Student and Faculty Advisory Committees, recruiting exceptional staff to enhance the team and building relationships with key partners such as ONCAT, OntarioLearn and Contact North.

Growing the eCampusOntario team

Looking ahead

eCampusOntario will follow implementation of these strategies with evaluative research to identify system impact. Evidence regarding impact, such as enrolments or re-use of content, will demonstrate value to ongoing system sustainability by driving system efficiencies, exploring opportunities for cost-savings and potential revenue.

Beyond fiscal value to the province, there is significant value in continuing to support and promote a centre of excellence in online and technology-enabled learning. Such a centre can support risk-taking and push institutions to innovate. Technology is changing and disrupting delivery of education and new careers of the future will require new skills. eCampusOntario will always strive for a leadership role in online and technology-enabled education.

Thanks and acknowledgements

Thanks to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development for financial support, guidance and vision in promoting online and technology-enabled learning for Ontario.

Gratitude is extended to our member colleges and universities and their students, faculty and staff who have supported us through the start-up phases of this endeavour. We look forward to ongoing collaborative relationships with our many members and partners.

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