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Celebrating Excellence in Online Education

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In November the Sloan Consortium will present its 2010 awards, which recognize 'excellence in online teaching and learning.' Read on to learn more about the educators being honored for their contributions to the growing world of long distance and online education.



Online Enrollments Rise Through the Recession

Earlier this year, the Sloan Consortium released its annual report on the state of online education in the U.S. The report showed that in fall 2008, over 25% of students were enrolled in at least one online course. That's an increase of more than 100% since fall 2002, when only 9.6% of college students took any courses online.

These growth patterns have continued through the recession at many institutions. For example, the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) set new records for online and 'blended' student enrollment for the past 36 terms. (Blended students take a mix of online and on-campus courses. Blended courses are those that have both online and on-campus components.) Currently over half of the students at UIS take at least one course online, and more than 5,000 students are enrolled in online degree programs offered by the school.



Raymond Schroeder, director of the UIS Center for Online Learning and winner of the 2010 Sloan-C award for leadership, notes that the economic downturn has led many students to try finishing degree programs as quickly as possible. Online learning is popular among these students because it offers them the scheduling flexibility they need for accelerated learning.

Dr. Anthony Picciano, a professor in the Education departments at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center and winner of a 2010 Sloan-C award for individual achievement in online education, has made a similar observation about his online students. In his online courses, most of which are graduate-level, Dr. Picciano typically teaches adults who also have careers and families. For these students, blended and online learning are invaluable tools that allow them to fulfill diverse responsibilities.

In fact, Dr. Picciano notes that the availability of online courses has dramatically increased college access for single mothers, working professionals and other traditionally underrepresented students. 'Online learning has provided an incredible vehicle for students, especially adult learners, to pursue their higher education goals,' says Dr. Picciano, adding that 'it has been a very important vehicle, probably the most important in the last 15 to 20 years, to expand access to higher education for many, many students.'

The recession has also led to an increase in the number of students who are seeking a career-oriented education. Mr. Schroeder has observed that many of these vocational students are turning to the online programs offered by the UIS Career Services department. And at CUNY, the School of Professional Studies, which focuses on vocational programs, is the department that offers the most all-online degree options.



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Clearly online education is becoming increasingly important to American college students and our postsecondary education system. Each year, the Sloan Consortium, a non-profit organization 'dedicated to integrating online education into the mainstream of higher education,' honors that importance with the Sloan-C awards.

These awards recognize individuals and institutions excelling in the field of online learning. This autumn the Sloan Consortium will present **nine awards** at the 16th annual *Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks: The Power of Online Learning: Stimulating New Possibilities*.

In honor of the awards, Education Portal spoke with Mr. Schroeder and Dr. Picciano about their achievements in online education.



Raymond Schroeder

2010 A. Frank Mayadas Leadership Award: Raymond E. Schroeder, University of Illinois Springfield

Raymond Schroeder is the Director of the Center for Online Learning and Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois Springfield. He became involved in long-distance teaching in the 1980s as a means of satellite conferencing in his new and emerging technologies courses, and it was only natural for him to make the move to online learning in the 1990s.

In 1997, Mr. Schroeder launched the Office of Technology-Enhanced Learning at UIS, which later became the Center for Online Learning. The Center supports UIS faculty in their online teaching, research and service efforts. Mr. Schroeder credits the Center's hard working staff members as well as the online program coordinators and faculty members as the true source of the Center's success.

Mr. Schroeder has united online learners and educators for ten years with his [Online Learning Update blog](#), a chronicle of news, research and trends in the field. With over 10,000 readers each week, the blog has become a key source of information for online learning. Due to the prominence of his writings, Mr. Schroeder has lectured at many institutions seeking to expand their online programs.

In 2007, he co-founded the New Century Learning Consortium, which promotes collaboration among eight universities across the U.S. Soon to be expanded to 14 schools, the consortium offers crucial faculty development and inter-institutional mentoring to online instructors.

But Mr. Schroeder emphasizes that online education still needs to do a lot of growing. 'There is much to be learned and much to be built in our field of online and distance learning,' Schroeder observes. 'We can break down the artificial walls of institutions and the now-irrelevant borders of geography that separate us in order to forge new ways to learn together through 21st century technologies.'

Follow the effects of the recession on higher ed at Mr. Schroeder's other blog, [Recession Realities](#).



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Dr. Picciano doesn't contribute content to [OpenCourseWare](#), but he does put many of his introductory lecture videos online! Check out [Dr. P's YouTube channel](#) to learn about education research methods, statistical analysis and more.



The 2010 Sloan-C Award Winners

- › **2010 Ralph E. Gomory Award for Quality Online Education:** Western Governors University
- › **2010 A. Frank Mayadas Leadership Award:** Raymond E. Schroeder, University of Illinois Springfield
- › **Outstanding Achievement in Online Education by an Individual:** Anthony G. Picciano, CUNY, Hunter College and the Graduate Center
- › **Excellence in Online Teaching:** Glenda A. Gunter, University of Central Florida
- › **Excellence in Faculty Development for Online Teaching:** Kennesaw State University
- › **Outstanding Online Program:** Masters of Teacher Leadership, University of Illinois Springfield
- › **Excellence in Institution-Wide Online Education:** Boston University
- › **Excellence in Institution-Wide Online Education:** Drexel University
- › **Sloan-C President's Special Achievement Award:** Valerie C. Haven, UMass Boston / UMassOnline

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Below is a selection of articles you may find helpful while you research schools, careers and degree programs.

Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning: Degree Info

Master's degree programs in teaching and learning provide advanced training in the theories and methods used in learning environments. Students develop professional expertise in classroom research, curriculum development and learning strategies. Read further for more information on Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning programs.

Distance Learning Masters in Teaching: Program Overviews

A Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree is suited to individuals who already possess a bachelor's degree. The bachelor's degree should be in the subject that the candidate wishes to teach; for example, English, math, science or history. Graduates who obtain a MAT typically teach at the middle school or high school level. A number of colleges offer distance learning programs that lead to a MAT.

Pre-K Teacher: Job Description and Requirements for a Pre-K Teaching Career

Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Teachers work in a school or classroom setting and instruct children under the age of five years old. Pre-K Teachers use creative methods of learning, such as music, art and hands-on training to educate students and prepare them for kindergarten.

Kindergarten Teacher: Career Information for Those Interested in Teaching Kindergarten

A Kindergarten Teacher instructs students who are four to six years old using games, technology, group activities, crafts and storytelling. By developing language skills, social skills and problem-solving ability and introducing math and science concepts, Kindergarten Teachers prepare students for higher levels of learning. Kindergarten Teachers generally need a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate to work in public schools; however, licensure is often not required by private schools.

Ancient History Teacher: Job Description and Requirements for Teaching Ancient History

If your passion is for the early written history of the world's civilizations, if you feel that you can inspire students with the love of learning, and if you're willing to get at least a bachelor's degree, a career as an Ancient History Teacher may be for you. Read on to find out more.

American History Teacher: Job Description and Requirements for Teaching American Studies and History

If you've got a passion for United States history, you're driven to inspire that passion in students, and you're ready to get at least a 4-year degree, then a career as an American History Teacher might be for you. Read on to learn more.

Lead Preschool Teachers: Job Outlook and Career Information About Lead Preschool Teaching

A Lead Preschool Teacher is an experienced educator who develops curriculums, supervises staff and teaches on a limited basis. Their primary responsibility is the development of guidelines for the full time preschool teachers that achieves the mission set forth by the preschool and its board of directors.

World History Teacher: Employment Information and Requirements for Teaching World History

A World History Teacher is required to have a license for the state they are teaching in, and a bachelor's degree or greater in History or a related subject. Teachers play an important role in mentoring and developing their students' educations and lives.

Teaching Credential: Overview of Requirements

To earn your teaching credential you must fulfill a series of requirements. It can take four to six years to accomplish, but once you have completed the process, you will be prepared to pursue a Career as a Teacher. Read on for a step-by-step description of what is required.

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