

THERE'S MORE TO **BLUE.** ONLINE

INDIANA STATE
ONLINE
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Changing direction

Online graduate tells distance learning story

Each Indiana State Online student's story is different. From cities across America to various majors and employment backgrounds, online education draws an eclectic mix of learners. However, there is a unifying thread among all Online students at Indiana State that includes singularity of purpose and hope for opportunity.

For online alumna Angela Yoder, Assistant Director of Student Success and Retention at Ivy Tech Community College-Central Indiana, that thread connected her with a master's degree in [Student Affairs and Higher Education](#) in

2016 and propelled her to a learning experience and career she loves and meets the needs of her family.

Q: What was the path that brought you to Indiana State Online?

A: I decided to make a career change that better suited my family situation and personal goals. I started working in higher education part-time, and I loved it so much I decided to pursue a master's degree in this field to gain the knowledge of what I do daily and

to secure a full-time position in higher education. I live over two hours away from Terre Haute, and with the knowledge and expertise the program had to

our class discussions/meeting times. They would even take time after class to stay online to answer any questions we might have about assignments and



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Angela Yoder, center, celebrates with her classmates during graduation from Indiana State University in 2016. Yoder received her master's degree in Student Affairs and Higher Education through Indiana State Online.

discussion during that class. With working in the field, I was able to apply and connect what I learned in each class to my daily job responsibilities. I could see myself grow through the program, and so could others around me. Studying was challenging for me this time around because I had a family with two small children to take care of and a full-time job. I had to be strategic when I studied and wrote papers, and support from family and friends was also very important.

Q: How do you think online learning affected who you are?

A: I believe online learning made me a stronger individual going into my new profession by allowing me to build my self-confidence and believe I can make this change for myself and my family. There were so many classmates I met through this program that were in different personal situations than I was from across the states, and to see them strive for their goals online allowed me to see that I can do this, too.

offer me, I didn't want to turn it down. With the option of online, it was an easy decision for me and my family to make, so we could stay living where we are, and I could pursue my future career.

Q: How would you describe your experiences with distance learning academically?

A: I really enjoyed my experience and felt really connected to all my professors from a distance. They were responsive through e-mail when I had questions as well as online during



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Online learning is not for everyone. Whether it's technology, time management, or just general trepidation, education at a distance is different in the demands it makes on students.

However, for certain Indiana State University learners, online is the best way to advance their understanding or earn their degree. When environment, flexibility, and skills are the focus, Indiana State Online becomes a perfect fit.

For Katrina McLain, a junior in [Criminology and Criminal Justice](#), online education has provided a way she can truly learn.

"I hate sitting in a classroom," McLain said. "We did that for 13 years – did it when I first started college. My grades between actual class and online are night and day."

McLain attributes her success to the ability to be off-campus and elsewhere, which also leaves room for tremendous flexibility in her personal life.

"If you are a parent at all, emergencies happen all the time, and you can never tell," McLain said.

Jammie Wietholter, a senior in [Mechanical Engineering Technology](#), has created a learning environment through distance education that is both beneficial to him and a help to his family.

"The opportunity I get from an online class versus campus is to be around my animals and

'You can schedule college around your life ...'



Learning Online

my mother," Wietholter said. "I have to find time in my day to make sure they all get food and take walks as well."

Students appreciate the chance to help others in their lives with the flexibility online learning provides, but there is an internal benefit for these learners as well. Many Indiana State Online students note the delivery methods of distance courses has improved aspects of their own work ethic.

"An online class taught me motivation," Wietholter said. "An online class takes dedication and time management skills to be motivated for the class, and [it] enhances your ability to communicate with your instructors throughout the semester."

Online instructor and adviser Felicia Stewart, assistant professor of

"The time is so flexible that it's unbelievable. The stuff that life throws at you, you can work around all that when you are online."

Katrina McLain, junior in Criminology and Criminal Justice

[Advanced Practice Nursing for Indiana State](#), agrees with Wietholter's assessment.

"The time management piece is a huge deal," Stewart said. "If you are taking two, three-credit-hour classes, you need to be dedicating nine to 12 hours a week to each course. That's 24 hours. If you are working 40 hours a week, and also directing the church choir, and also trying to go to every soccer game, you may have to say no to some things ... you need to map out your week."

Students who take courses online learn to navigate the hours in their day differently, but the positive changes in their personal knowledge and skills make the negotiation worth it.

McLain said her computer skill improvement was marked when she began her online learning.

"I had never done Excel, was nervous as can be, so I learned how, and it was wonderful, and of course Word," McLain said, adding that the technology knowledge she has gained in online versus on-campus courses has been a true benefit.

Ultimately for Indiana State Online students, their experience as a distance learner is about putting the elements of their lives into a priority system that works for them.

"You can schedule college around your life," McLain said. "People are crazy for not utilizing online classes."

“I would never have gotten as far as I am right now if I would have not had Online.”

Katrina McLain, junior in Criminology and Criminal Justice

“In some ways it might seem easier at first glance, but you truly never know how easy or hard or class is going to be until it starts online. I had one class I had a paper due every week; *in some ways it’s a lot harder ... like time management.*”

~ Katrina McLain,
Criminology and Criminal
Justice junior

~~It’s Easier~~

“We are only the conduit for educational opportunities. We deliver the *same programs as on-campus with the same faculty and staff.*”

~ Ken Brauchle,
dean of Indiana State
Extended Learning

**~~It’s Lower
Quality~~**

“*Online credits transfer the same as campus sections.* They contain the same content; it is simply delivered in a different mode.”

~ Kara Harris,
associate dean for the
College of Technology

**~~It Won’t
Transfer~~**

“Indiana State University is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and various degree programs offer additional accreditation.”

~ Cynthia Stong,
Online Enrollment Manager

**~~It Isn’t
Accredited~~**

“Last night, I sent a chat message to the librarian, and *in seconds, they replied.* Then in minutes, they gave me an answer to my question.”

~ Amanda Eyre,
Adult and Career
Education senior

**~~I Can’t
Get Help~~**

“*Online education is becoming more available.* Degrees and classes earned from Indiana State Online are from Indiana State University; diplomas and transcripts do not indicate how they were achieved.”

~ Cynthia Stong,
Online Enrollment Manager

**~~I Won’t
Get a Job~~**

THESE MYTHS ARE BUSTED: Online students, staff, instructors confront common misconceptions



allows interaction with online lectures

The new lecture-capture technology is called [YuJa](#), but beyond its unconventional name, it will allow Indiana State Online students to experience and engage with faculty in a whole new way.

“My applied mechanism class uses this feature, and it helps me to understand the concepts more thoroughly,” Jammie Wietholter, senior in Mechanical Engineering Technology, said.

YuJa helps students like Wietholter comprehend better by providing options for students and instructors to interact with content.

According to Jamie Edwards, Indiana State Instructional Design Specialist, Tegrity – the previous technology used to record and stream professors’ lectures – wasn’t as strong as YuJa, particularly when it comes to the needs of diverse students.

“The speech recognition feature in the YuJa Software Station transcribes speech to text at around 85 percent accuracy, but the downloadable text file can also be revised to correct any notable errors,” Edwards said.

This means that students with hearing difficulties – or simply visual learners – can get a transcript for a lecture or a printed version to use for further studying.

From a student’s perspective, YuJa also provides easy tools to record, upload, and store their own video content, as well as engage with instructors’ screencasts.

“They will be able to interact with the video recordings themselves with the ability to add personal notes to videos as thumbnails,” Edwards said.

Beyond just the lecture and video functions, YuJa has social tools as well.



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“Additionally, students can explore in the social learning tool where class discussion feeds, similar to a Blackboard discussion boards or blogs, allow students to interact and contribute to video content through adding hashtags, replies as text, uploading files, creating sketches, and recording video responses,” Edwards said.

Indiana State Online students may also soon see YuJa implemented as an advising tool, as Felicia Stewart has done in the Advanced Practice Nursing program. Stewart used YuJa for the first time this year for group advising appointments, since she has to review much of the same material with each student.

“I was energized during both sessions,” she said.

Stewart also noted that the feed-

“They will be able to interact with the video recordings themselves with the ability to add personal notes to videos as thumbnails.”

**Jamie Edwards,
Instructional Design Specialist**

back from her advisees was great, and during the Q & A section of the advising appointment, the students were able to ask questions and help each other.



Online enrollment up 17 percent

The numbers of students and programs at Indiana State University are up, especially for Indiana State Online, where a total of 2,311 online students means an [increase of 17 percent from 2015](#).

For Ken Brauchle, Indiana State's Dean of Extended Learning, the significant increase was not unexpected.

"While we were very pleased by the growth, we were not surprised," Brauchle said. "The University has very deliberately focused on growing our online degree programs to better serve Hoosiers. Over the last six years, we have doubled the number of online bachelor's degrees offered and significantly improved support to both online students and

online faculty."

Brauchle noted that since 2013, the number of online undergraduates has nearly doubled, which forecasted the latest jump in numbers.

This distance learning momentum at Indiana State is in step with a nationwide trend; online education is becoming more attractive to students.

"Online programs bring educational opportunities to those who would otherwise not be able to attend because of the barriers of place or time," Brauchle said.

This emphasis on the flexibility of distance and extended learning at Indiana State is mirrored in the philosophy of Indiana State University President Dan Bradley.

During his annual fall

"Online programs bring educational opportunities to those who would otherwise not be able to attend because of the barriers of place or time."

**Ken Brauchle,
Dean of Extended Learning at Indiana State University**

address where the five-year strategic plan "There's More to Blue" was detailed, Bradley noted that adding online course and degree offerings will be a priority in the coming years, as a driving force in Indiana State's growth.

Following this lead, Brauchle said Indiana State will be looking to "transition additional existing degree programs to online delivery and develop additional programs based on student demand and university expertise."

In fact, including undergraduate, graduate, certificate, and licensure programs, Indiana State Online now boasts more than 75 opportunities for students.

"The programs we help deliver are those of Indiana State University ... the same programs as on-campus with the same faculty and staff," the dean of Extended Learning said.

"Our online students are seen as true Sycamores in every way."