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A Leader in Online Education

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The University of Dayton is the only Catholic school and only Ohio school to make *U.S. News & World Report's* list of the 20 largest online graduate-level programs in education based on fall 2008 enrollment.

The majority of students enrolled in the University's programs are Ohio residents seeking state certifications and licenses, but many across the country and around the world are attracted to the master's degree in educational leadership with a Catholic school concentration, said Jim Rowley, executive director of the University of Dayton's Institute for Technology-Enhanced Learning.

"The typical student pursuing a master's degree in education is already a practicing teacher with a very busy schedule," Rowley said. "We realized early on that the opportunity to do anything in the online environment would be a matter of competition."

The University of Dayton's School of Education and Allied Professions offered its first online graduate-level program in 2001, with a degree leading to principal licensure. Since then, the school has added four online programs with a sixth in development. They are:

- Master of Science in Educational Leadership for Public, Private and/or Charter Schools;
- Master of Science in Educational Leadership with Catholic School Concentration;
- Principal Licensure for Public, Private and/or Charter Schools;
- Computer Technology Endorsement (Teacher Education);
- Reading Endorsement (Teacher Education);
- Master of Science in Teacher Education (available beginning this January).

The online programs offer technical help 16 hours a day and limit class sizes to 22 students to ensure online students experience the same sense of learning community residential students do, Rowley said. The classes also strike a balance between "rigor and relevance."

"We want to be sure that our programs are not viewed as the easy way to get credits, but as a meaningful alternative to traditional courses," Rowley said.

A combination of improving technology and a weak economy have spurred enrollment in online courses across the country, according to *U.S. News & World Report*. The magazine found more than four million people enrolled in at least one online course last fall, up from fewer than two million in 2003. And the number of colleges offering at least one online course has increased by more than 60 percent since 2003.

"There is no question our program is growing and becoming increasingly popular," Rowley said. "There are no signs of online learning being a blip on the screen."

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