

May 2015

3 Questions for an Online Learning Leader

Wallace E. Boston
American Public University System

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.apus.edu/internetlearning>



Part of the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Online and Distance Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Boston, Wallace E. (2015) "3 Questions for an Online Learning Leader," *Internet Learning*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 6.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.apus.edu/internetlearning/vol4/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the ePress Journals at DigitalCommons@APUS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Internet Learning by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@APUS. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@apus.edu.

3 Questions for an Online Learning Leader

WALLY BOSTON

President and CEO of American Public University System

What I Think About Student Success in Online Learning

Dr. Wallace Boston is the president and chief executive officer for American Public University System—a four-year fully online university boasting over 100,000 students and more than 90-degree programs. It should come as no surprise that Dr. Boston's research agenda focuses on student persistence, retention and degree completion in online postsecondary learning environments. I had the chance to sit down with this issue's "3 Questions for an Online Learning Leader" and ask him about the continuing hot topic of online education and student success.

1 How would you describe the manifestation of success for an APUS online student?

On the surface, most people think that success for one of our students would be the completion of a degree. Our students have a wide variety of personal and professional goals and that leads me to conclude that success is best defined as the continued academic progression and reenrollment of a student until he/she has completed their individual goal. That goal could be the completion of a single course that enhances their knowledge of a subject or completes their degree at another institution, it could be the completion of a certificate that enhances their knowledge and is valued as a resume booster for a promotion at work, or it could be the completion of a degree that leads to additional career opportunities.



2 In what ways have you seen the needs of online student's change over the last five years?

Five years ago, there were fewer colleges and universities offering fully online degree programs. With more offerings, students are much more selective about degree relevance, course availability, tuition price, quality of the course content, and student service. With prospective and current students seeking these features, I believe it ratchets up the quality

Internet Learning Journal – Volume 4, Issue 1 – Spring 2015

offerings of online programs and provides us a much better platform to compete against traditional face-to-face programs.

3 How do you know that what you have done at APUS has improved student success?

Quality is still a subjective measurement in higher education. A mentor of mine said that we should measure how far our students have progressed during their time at our institution. Using that rubric, I would state that the number of students who have received recognition at work for their learning, who have been admitted to prestigious fellowships and graduate programs at other institutions, and who are satisfied with the education at either American Military University or American Public University has increased substantially. Additionally, our faculty and staff have been recognized nationally by organizations such as NILOA (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment) and the OLC (Online Learning Consortium, formerly the Sloan Consortium) for initiatives that have enhanced student learning and student engagement and which we have shared with the broader higher education community. As the quality of our teaching and student engagement increases, it's not a surprise that the student outcomes improve.