



Highlights of [GAO-03-900](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Distance education—offering courses by Internet, video, or other forms outside the classroom—is a fast growing part of postsecondary education. GAO was asked to review the state of distance education at Minority Serving Institutions, which are schools that serve high percentages of minority students, including Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians. Under Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act, these schools are eligible for grants that can be used for expanding their technology, including distance education.

GAO's review focused on (1) the use of distance education at Minority Serving Institutions, (2) key factors influencing these schools' decisions about whether or not to offer distance education, and (3) steps the Department of Education could take, if any, to improve monitoring efforts of technological progress under Titles III and V programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Education make its system for tracking technology improvements more complete for the different types of Minority Serving Institutions and consider ways to develop baseline information on technology capacity.

In commenting on a draft of this report, Education generally agreed with GAO's findings and recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-900.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cornelia Ashby at (202) 512-8403 or ashbyc@gao.gov.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

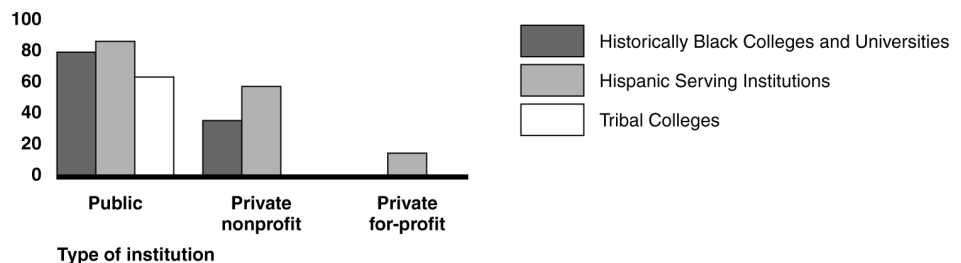
More Data Could Improve Education's Ability to Track Technology at Minority Serving Institutions

What GAO Found

There are some variations in the use of distance education at Minority Serving Institutions compared to other schools. For example, while Minority Serving Institutions tend to offer at least one distance education course at the same rate as other schools, they differ in how many courses are offered and which students take the courses. Also, like other schools, larger Minority Serving Institutions tend to offer more distance education than smaller schools, and public schools tend to offer more distance education than private schools. However, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges generally offer fewer courses than other schools, and a smaller percentage of minority students take such courses.

Higher Percentage of Public Minority Serving Institutions Offer Distance Education

Percentage offering distance education



Source: GAO's Minority Serving Institution survey.

Minority Serving Institutions consider two main factors in deciding whether to offer distance education. The first is distance education's compatibility with the school's preferred teaching method. Many schools that offered no distance education had a strong preference for a classroom-based approach. The second is resources—schools offering little or no distance education had limited technology and support personnel. Also, Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions viewed distance education as a lower priority compared to expanding technology usage in the classroom. By contrast, Tribal Colleges gave distance education higher priority, reflecting the greater geographic dispersion of their students.

Education could strengthen its monitoring efforts of the Title III and V programs by expanding its existing system. Currently, the monitoring efforts for tracking the progress of technological improvements are more complete for Hispanic Serving Institutions than for the other Minority Serving Institutions. Education also lacks good baseline information on technology capacity at Minority Serving Institutions. Expanding current efforts to include such data would provide a basis for measuring the progress being made by Minority Serving Institutions.