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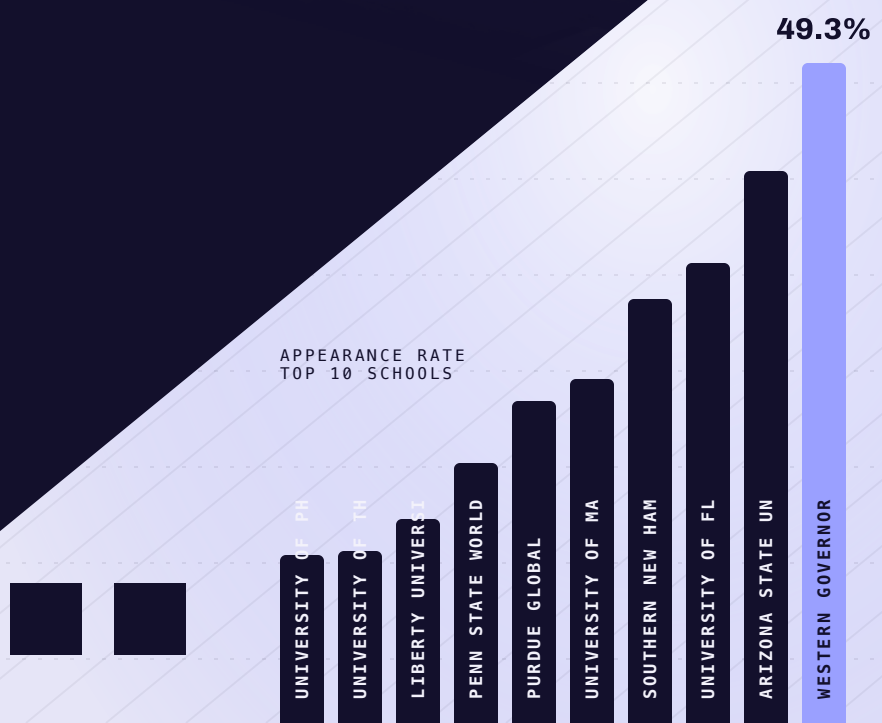
ONLINE UNIVERSITIES VISIBILITY INDEX

Which online universities AI engines name
288 AI answers · October 28, 2026

Measured :
October 28, 2026
24 questions × 3 runs · 288 AI answers

Engines :
ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · Perplexity
plus 69 Google AI Overviews

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AT A GLANCE

WGU and ASU Online lead. The two are within the margin of error.

Western Governors University was the school that ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity named most often. Western Governors University appeared in 142 of 288 answers (49.3%) measured on October 28, 2026. Arizona State University Online came next at 119 of 288 (41.3%). The two confidence intervals overlap, so the data cannot confirm that Western Governors University is ahead. Western Governors University was named first more often than any other school, in 63 of 288 answers. Google AI Overviews appeared on 69 of 70 searches (98.6%).

> Version 2. This version replaces the first version of this study, first published June 15, 2026. It uses measured counts, so the two versions are not comparable.

288
AI answers analyzed across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity

49.3%
of answers named Western Governors University, the most-named (142 of 288)

24
tracked schools named at least once (of 25)

98.6%
of Google searches showed an AI Overview (69 of 70)

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KEY FINDINGS

01 What the data shows

MOST NAMED

142/288 (49.3%)

Western Governors University appeared in 142 of 288 four-engine answers (CI 43.6–55.1%). Arizona State University Online appeared in 119 of 288 (41.3%, CI 35.8–47.1%). The intervals overlap, so the two cannot be separated.

NAMED FIRST

63/288 (21.9%)

Western Governors University was the first school named in 63 of 288 answers, more than any other tracked school. Average first position: 2.5.

GEMINI SKEW

45/72 (62.5%)

Gemini named Western Governors University in 45 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 31 to 35 of 72.

AIO TRIGGER

69/70 (98.6%)

Google AI Overviews appeared on 69 of 70 searches (CI 92.3–99.7%). On the other search, no overview was shown.

AIO LEADER

38/69 (55.1%)

Western Governors University was the school named most often in AI Overviews, at 38 of 69, followed by Southern New Hampshire University at 27 of 69 (39.1%). In the four-engine set, Western Governors University was named in 142 of 288 answers (49.3%).

TOP DOMAIN

75/288 (26%)

onlineu.com was cited in 75 of 288 grounded four-engine answers, with 84 of 2,371 citations (3.5%). learn.org came second with 73 citations in 61 answers (21.2%).

NO TRACKED NAME

0/12 (0%)

For 'What is the best online master's in nursing for nurse practitioners?', none of the tracked schools was named in any of 12 four-engine answers.

OWN-SITE CITATIONS

56/288 (19.4%)

Western Governors University's own domains were cited in 56 of 288 grounded answers (19.4%), more than any other tracked name. Arizona State University Online followed at 30 of 288. In Google AI Overviews, Western Governors University's site was cited in 5 of 69 overviews. 3 tracked names had no own-site citation.

THE LEADERBOARD

02 Which schools AI engines name

Appearance rate across 288 four-engine answers. The bar is the 95% confidence interval; overlapping bars cannot be told apart at this sample size.

	BRAND	RATE	NAMED IN
1	Western Governors University	49.3%	142/288
2	Arizona State University Online	41.3%	119/288
3	University of Florida Online	34.4%	99/288
4	Southern New Hampshire University	31.6%	91/288
5	University of Maryland Global Campus	25.7%	74/288
6	Purdue Global	24.0%	69/288
7	Penn State World Campus	19.4%	56/288
8	Liberty University Online	15.3%	44/288
9	University of the People	12.8%	37/288
10	University of Phoenix	12.5%	36/288
11	Oregon State University Ecampus	11.8%	34/288
12	Excelsior University	10.4%	30/288
13	Capella University	10.1%	29/288
14	American Public University System	9.0%	26/288
15	Grand Canyon University	8.3%	24/288

THE LEADERBOARD

02 The full list

Own-domain citation is the share of 288 grounded answers that cited the official domains of each name (subdomains included). Citation share is of all 2,371 citations.

#	SCHOOL	NAMED IN	APPEARANCE RATE	95% INTERVAL	FIRST MENTION	OWN-DOMAIN CITATION	CITATION SHARE
1	Western Governors University	142/288	49.3%	43.6–55.1%	2.5	19.4% (56/288)	2.7%
2	Arizona State University Online	119/288	41.3%	35.8–47.1%	2.8	10.4% (30/288)	1.3%
3	University of Florida Online	99/288	34.4%	29.1–40%	2.4	2.8% (8/288)	0.3%
4	Southern New Hampshire University	91/288	31.6%	26.5–37.2%	3.2	9% (26/288)	1.2%
5	University of Maryland Global Campus	74/288	25.7%	21–31%	3.4	5.9% (17/288)	0.7%
6	Purdue Global	69/288	24%	19.4–29.2%	4	7.3% (21/288)	1.1%
7	Penn State World Campus	56/288	19.4%	15.3–24.4%	3.6	2.8% (8/288)	0.3%
8	Liberty University Online	44/288	15.3%	11.6–19.9%	4.2	6.9% (20/288)	0.8%
9	University of the People	37/288	12.8%	9.5–17.2%	1.9	10.4% (30/288)	2.1%
10	University of Phoenix	36/288	12.5%	9.2–16.8%	3.1	5.2% (15/288)	0.6%
11	Oregon State University Ecampus	34/288	11.8%	8.6–16%	3.4	1.4% (4/288)	0.2%
12	Excelsior University	30/288	10.4%	7.4–14.5%	3.6	2.4% (7/288)	0.3%
13	Capella University	29/288	10.1%	7.1–14.1%	2.8	1.4% (4/288)	0.2%
14	American Public University System	26/288	9%	6.2–12.9%	4.5	3.5% (10/288)	0.4%
15	Grand Canyon University	24/288	8.3%	5.7–12.1%	3.8	1% (3/288)	0.2%
16	Walden University	21/288	7.3%	4.8–10.9%	4.2	2.4% (7/288)	0.3%
17	National University	20/288	6.9%	4.5–10.5%	3.9	4.9% (14/288)	0.8%
18	Colorado State University Global	17/288	5.9%	3.7–9.2%	4.3	2.1% (6/288)	0.3%
19	Charter Oak State College	16/288	5.6%	3.4–8.8%	4.4	0.3% (1/288)	0%
20	University of Illinois Chicago	15/288	5.2%	3.2–8.4%	2.5	3.1% (9/288)	0.4%
21	University of Massachusetts Global	15/288	5.2%	3.2–8.4%	6	1.4% (4/288)	0.2%
22	Strayer University	7/288	2.4%	1.2–4.9%	5.1	0% (0/288)	0%
23	DeVry University	5/288	1.7%	0.7–4%	3.6	0% (0/288)	0%
24	Colorado Technical University	3/288	1%	0.4–3%	3	1% (3/288)	0.1%

PROFILES

03 The top eight, side by side

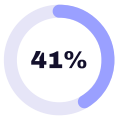


RANK 1

Western Governors University

142/288 answers · 95% CI 43.6–55.1%

2.5	19.4%	2.7%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (56/288)	citation share

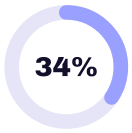


RANK 2

Arizona State University Online

119/288 answers · 95% CI 35.8–47.1%

2.8	10.4%	1.3%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (30/288)	citation share



RANK 3

University of Florida Online

99/288 answers · 95% CI 29.1–40%

2.4	2.8%	0.3%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (8/288)	citation share



RANK 4

Southern New Hampshire University

91/288 answers · 95% CI 26.5–37.2%

3.2	9%	1.2%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (26/288)	citation share



RANK 5

University of Maryland Global Campus

74/288 answers · 95% CI 21–31%

3.4	5.9%	0.7%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (17/288)	citation share

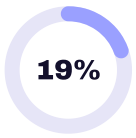


RANK 6

Purdue Global

69/288 answers · 95% CI 19.4–29.2%

4	7.3%	1.1%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (21/288)	citation share

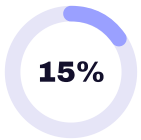


RANK 7

Penn State World Campus

56/288 answers · 95% CI 15.3–24.4%

3.6	2.8%	0.3%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (8/288)	citation share



RANK 8

Liberty University Online

44/288 answers · 95% CI 11.6–19.9%

4.2	6.9%	0.8%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (20/288)	citation share

04

HOW THE ENGINES DIFFER

Same questions, different answers

Gemini named Western Governors University in 45 of 72 answers. The other engines did so in 31 to 35 of 72.

ChatGPT

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Western Governors U...	**48.6%**
Arizona State University ...	**34.7%**
Southern New Hampshir...	**29.2%**
University of Maryland Gl...	**26.4%**
Purdue Global	**23.6%**
University of Florida Online	**19.4%**

Claude

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Arizona State Universi...	**50%**
University of Florida Online	**44.4%**
Western Governors Univ...	**43.1%**
Southern New Hampshir...	**27.8%**
University of Maryland Gl...	**25%**
Penn State World Campus	**22.2%**

Gemini

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Western Governors U...	**62.5%**
Arizona State University ...	**38.9%**
University of Florida Online	**36.1%**
Southern New Hampshir...	**36.1%**
Purdue Global	**31.9%**
University of Maryland Gl...	**27.8%**

Perplexity

72 ASKED | 72 RETURNED | 72 GROUNDED

Western Governors U...	**43.1%**
Arizona State University ...	**41.7%**
University of Florida Online	**37.5%**
Southern New Hampshir...	**33.3%**
University of Maryland Gl...	**23.6%**
Purdue Global	**23.6%**

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS

05 The fifth engine

Google AI Overviews were captured through 70 U.S. desktop searches and scored only where an overview appeared, so five-engine figures use 288 + 69 = 357 answers.

TRIGGER RATE



Google AI Overviews appeared on 69 of 70 searches (98.6%, CI 92.3–99.7%). The other search showed no overview. Within the 69 overviews, Western Governors University was named in 38 (55.1%), Southern New Hampshire University was named in 27 (39.1%), Purdue Global was named in 26 (37.7%), American Public University System was named in 18 (26.1%). reddit.com was the most-cited source, with 34 citations and an appearance in 32 of 69 overviews.

FIVE-ENGINE RANK (FOUR-ENGINE RANK IN ARROWS)

1	Western Governors University	50.4%	=
2	Arizona State University Online	37.3%	=
3	Southern New Hampshire University	33.1%	▲ 1
4	University of Florida Online	32.2%	▼ 1
5	Purdue Global	26.6%	▲ 1
6	University of Maryland Global Campus	25.5%	▼ 1
7	Penn State World Campus	18.2%	=
8	Liberty University Online	16.0%	=
9	University of the People	13.4%	=
10	American Public University System	12.3%	▲ 4

LEADERS BY QUESTION

06 Who each question surfaces first

Six questions from the set. Each tile uses that question's own four-engine answers as the denominator.

Q01 · 12 ANSWERS

Arizona State University Online — 100%

Western Governors University	91.7%
Southern New Hampshire University	91.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q02 · 12 ANSWERS

University of Florida Online — 58.3%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q03 · 12 ANSWERS

University of Florida Online — 50%

Arizona State University Online	25%
Western Governors University	25%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q04 · 12 ANSWERS

University of the People — 100%

Western Governors University	66.7%
University of Florida Online	50%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q05 · 12 ANSWERS

Western Governors University — 83.3%

University of Illinois Chicago	66.7%
University of Florida Online	58.3%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q07 · 12 ANSWERS

Oregon State University Ecampus — 91.7%

Western Governors University	75%
University of Florida Online	50%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Most-cited domains

The four engines produced 2,371 citations in total. onlineu.com was cited most often, with 84 citations (3.5%) across 75 answers. Next came learn.org (73), wgu.edu (64), research.com (58), forbes.com (56), usnews.com (56).

FOUR AI ENGINES · SHARE OF 288 GROUNDED ANSWERS

onlineu.com	**26%**
learn.org	**21.2%**
wgu.edu	**19.4%**
forbes.com	**16.3%**
research.com	**14.2%**
usnews.com	**13.2%**
collegetransitions.com	**13.2%**
uopeople.edu	**10.4%**
asuonline.asu.edu	**10.4%**
nexford.edu	**9.7%**

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS · SHARE OF 69 OVERVIEWS

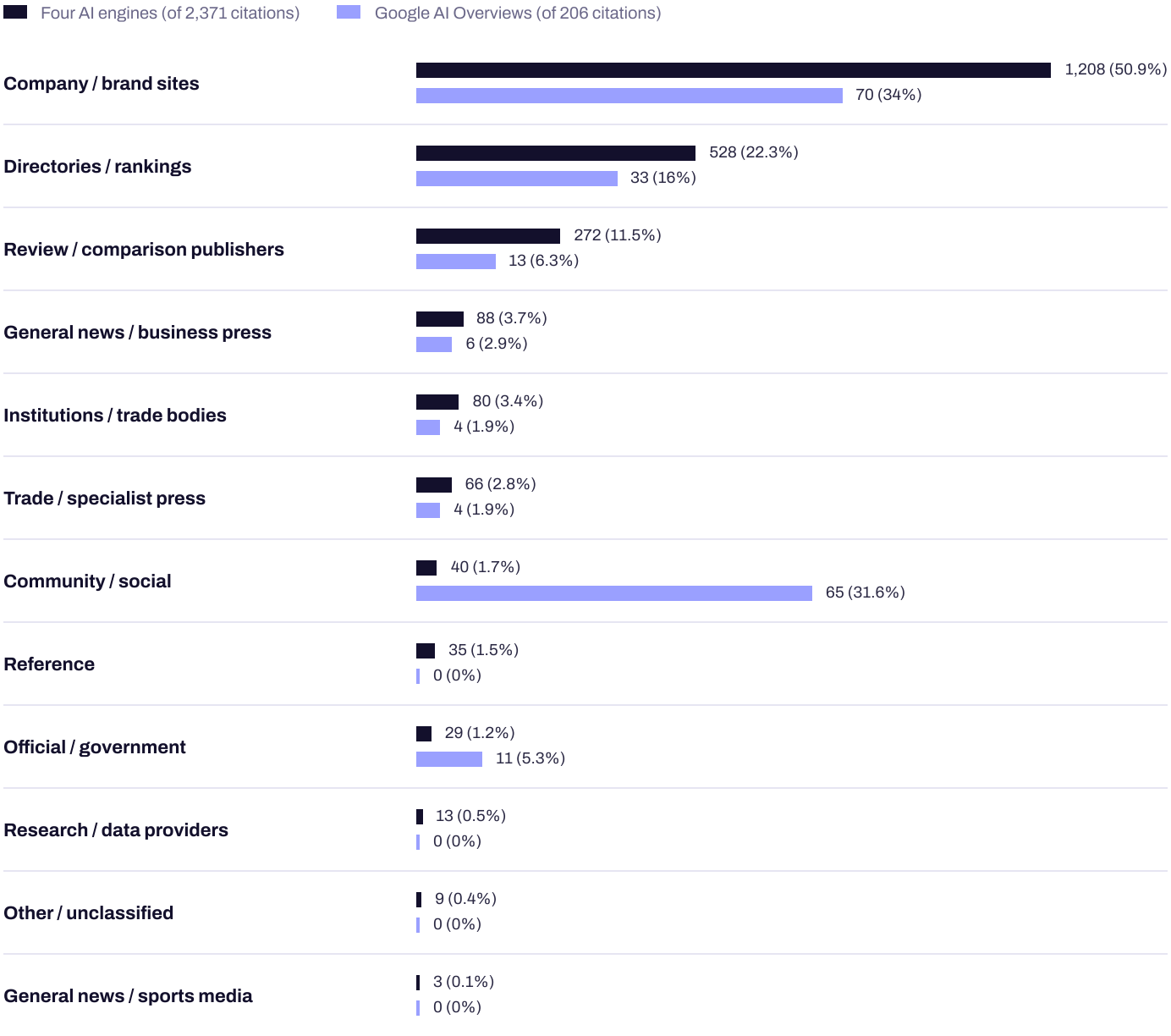
reddit.com	**46.4%**
youtube.com	**29%**
usnews.com	**14.5%**
wgu.edu	**7.2%**
newlane.edu	**7.2%**
research.com	**5.8%**
purdueglobal.edu	**5.8%**
amberton.edu	**4.3%**
bestcolleges.com	**4.3%**
cybersecurityguide.org	**4.3%**

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Citation share by source type

Share of all citations by the type of site cited. Source types were reclassified on October 29, 2026. 'Company / brand sites' now covers only the official sites of companies, brands and schools; publishers, directories, trade bodies and other sites have their own types, and sites that could not be placed are 'Other / unclassified'.



QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

08 What AI answers

Q1 Which school do AI engines name most often?

Western Governors University, named in 142 of 288 four-engine answers (49.3%, CI 43.6–55.1%). Arizona State University Online was second at 119 of 288 (41.3%). The intervals overlap, so the two cannot be separated statistically.

Q2 Which school is named first most often?

Western Governors University was the first school named in 63 of 288 answers, with an average first position of 2.5.

Q3 How often do Google AI Overviews appear for these questions?

An overview appeared on 69 of 70 searches (98.6%, CI 92.3–99.7%). Within those 69 overviews, Western Governors University was named most often, in 38 (55.1%).

Q4 Which sources do the engines cite?

Across 2,371 four-engine citations, onlineu.com was cited most (84 citations, in 75 of 288 grounded answers), followed by learn.org (73 citations).

Q5 Do the four engines agree?

Only in part. Gemini named Western Governors University in 45 of 72 answers, against 31 to 35 of 72 on the other engines. Claude named Grand Canyon University in 12 of 72 answers, against 3 to 5 of 72 on the other engines.

METHODOLOGY

09 How this study was measured

24	×	3	×	4	=	288	+	70
questions		runs each		AI engines		answers		Google searches · 69 AI Overviews

24 questions, each asked 3 times on each engine, measured October 28, 2026. Market: United States, English. The destination site was not mentioned to any engine. Gemini answers were produced by gemini-3.6-flash; every Gemini answer in this report used that one model. All 72 Gemini answers had search sources. Schools count as named when they appear in the answer text; products and name variants roll up to the tracked name. Longer names take precedence over shorter overlapping ones, and common words count only in context. Unicode apostrophes and dashes are normalized.

ENGINE	MODEL IDS CALLED	ASKED	RETURNED	GROUNDED
ChatGPT	gpt-5-mini	72	72	72
Claude	claude-sonnet-5-5	72	72	72
Gemini	gemini-3.6-flash	72	72	72
Perplexity	sonar-pro	72	72	72
Google AI Overviews	DataForSEO Google SERP (live, advanced)	70	69 shown	69

Own-domain citations count a domain plus all its subdomains, with the same rule in every table.

METRIC DEFINITIONS

- Appearance rate: answers naming the school ÷ answers returned, with Wilson 95% intervals.
- First mention: average order in which the school first appears (1 = first).
- Own-domain citation: grounded answers citing the school's domains ÷ grounded answers.
- Citation share: citations to the school's domains ÷ all citations.

LIMITATIONS

- Measured on one day, October 28, 2026. Each engine answered 24 questions 3 times. Answers came from each engine's API (model IDs above); the consumer apps can answer differently.
- Only 25 tracked schools were scored. Untracked names that appeared often were not scored, including Georgia Institute of Technology (33), Thomas Edison State University (25), University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (24), Pennsylvania State University (17).
- AI Overview figures are based on only 69 overviews, so estimates for individual schools are less precise than the four-engine figures.
- 2 Google searches could not be fetched by DataForSEO after three tries. They are excluded from the AI Overview figures, so the trigger rate uses 70 searches.
- Reports describe what the engines said, attributed to the engines. They make no judgement about the people or organizations named and are not legal or financial advice.
- Some answers were asked again on October 28, 2026 after a storage error. The earlier texts are kept in the evidence archive and are not used in the counts.
- Intervals treat each answer as independent, so they understate uncertainty for the 24 repeated questions.
- Corrected October 29, 2026: own-domain citation now uses each name's official domains (subdomains included), listed in the evidence file entity_rollups.csv. Names without a resolvable official site count zero.

APPENDIX

A The 24 questions

Questions marked "Core question" are the original study questions, asked word for word. The others are added neutral questions.

#	QUESTION	GROUP	SOURCE
01	What are the best online colleges for working adults?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
02	What is the best online MBA?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
03	What is the best online MBA without the GMAT?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
04	What is the cheapest accredited online bachelor's degree?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
05	What is the best online RN to BSN program?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
06	What is the best online master's in nursing for nurse practitioners?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
07	What is the best online computer science degree?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
08	What is the best online cybersecurity degree?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
09	What is the best online master's in education?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
10	What are the best online colleges for military and veterans?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
11	What is the most affordable accredited online college per credit hour?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
12	Are online degrees from for-profit universities respected by employers?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	CORE QUESTION
13	Which accredited online universities offer competency-based degree programs?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
14	Which online MBA programs hold AACSB accreditation?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
15	Which online bachelor's programs accept transfer credits from community colleges?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
16	Which online universities publish total program costs including fees?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
17	Which online nursing programs disclose state authorization and clinical placement requirements?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
18	Which online computer science programs offer asynchronous classes?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
19	Which online cybersecurity programs are designated by the National Centers of Academic Excellence?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
20	Which online education programs lead to teacher licensure?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
21	Which online universities participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
22	Which online colleges offer credit for military training and prior learning?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
23	Which online universities offer part-time master's programs for working adults?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION
24	Which public universities offer fully online bachelor's degrees nationwide?	Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026	ADDED QUESTION

5W

5W PUBLIC RELATIONS · RESEARCH

Online Universities AI Visibility Index 2026

Measured October 28, 2026 across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity and Google AI Overviews.

WEB
5wpr.com

RESEARCH
5wpr.com/research