



INTERVENTION SNAPSHOT

Supporting Postsecondary Success



Open Learning Initiative (OLI)

Online instruction, including online instruction that is blended with traditional in-person instruction, offers students more flexibility in the timing of their coursework and may deepen students' understanding of the material. By leveraging online courseware, colleges have the potential to expand college access, reduce costs, recruit a more diverse student population, and accelerate instruction under some conditions.

Carnegie Mellon University's (CMU's) *Open Learning Initiative (OLI)* provides online courses and learning materials to instructors and learners at low or no cost that can be presented in blended or purely online formats. *OLI* courses feature learning activities with immediate feedback for students and a dashboard for instructors to monitor student progress.

This What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) report, part of the WWC's Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area, explores the effects of *OLI* on course completion rates and academic achievement. The WWC identified 12 studies of *OLI*, three of which meet WWC standards. The evidence presented in this report includes studies of the impacts of *OLI* on community college students, including students who were White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander.

Findings on *OLI* from three studies that meet WWC standards are shown below. For each outcome reviewed by the WWC, an effectiveness rating, the improvement index, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings are presented. Findings on credit accumulation are based on one study with 605 students. Findings on academic achievement are based on three studies with 795 students.

What Happens When Students Participate in *OLI*?

	Study findings		Evidence meeting WWC standards (version 3.0)	
	Effectiveness rating	Improvement index (percentile points)	Number of studies	Number of students
The WWC found that implementing <i>OLI</i> :				
May increase credit accumulation and persistence	Potentially positive effects	+7	1	605
Has inconsistent effects on academic achievement	Mixed effects	+8	3	795

Note: The improvement index an indicator of the effect of the intervention. The improvement index can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention. An improvement index of +7 means that the expected percentile rank of the average comparison group student would increase by 7 points if they received *OLI*.

FINDINGS ARE BASED ON:

3 studies with 942 students in 8 colleges and universities in Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania



What Does *OLI* Cost?

The WWC identified a number of cost components from the *OLI* website. *OLI* courses may be completed by students who take credit-bearing, instructor-led classes and by independent learners who do not receive credit or instructor monitoring. Most of the *OLI* courses are free to independent learners, but a few charge a \$10 maintenance fee. Most *OLI* courses delivered for credit will charge students a maintenance fee of \$25, with fees ranging from \$10 to \$80 per student. Course fees may be paid by individual students or by colleges. Students are also subject to any tuition fees assessed by their college.

LEARN MORE



Read more about the *OLI* intervention and the studies that are summarized here on the [Intervention Report webpage](#).



Contact The Simon Initiative, Carnegie Mellon University for additional information on implementing *OLI*.