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# In search of higher persistence rates in distance education online programs

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### Abstract

Tinto's [Rev. Educ. Res. 45 (1975) 89; Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving college. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press] student integration model and Bean and Metzner's [Rev. Educ. Res. 55 (1985) 485] student attrition model have been influential in explaining persistence and attrition in higher education programs. However, these models were developed with on-campus programs in mind and, although they are broadly relevant to distance education programs, their ability to explain the persistence of online students is limited. Distance education students have characteristics and needs that differ from traditional learners and the virtual learning environment differs in important ways from an on-campus environment. This article draws chiefly from Tinto's and Bean and Metzner's models and the results of research into the needs of online distance education students in order to synthesize a composite

model to better explain persistence and attrition among the largely nontraditional students that enroll in online courses.



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## Keywords

Persistence; Dropout; Retention; Attrition; Online; Distance education; Adult education

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