

Access to high-speed Internet services – also known as broadband – has become a basic public necessity like water or electricity. Yet despite its importance, broadband in America is far from universal. Broadband Internet Providers have been allowed to remain largely deregulated and to only market service in areas of they're choosing. We need to decide whether like universal mail service or universal basic telephone service whether to make universal broadband a reality. That being said the decisions we make as a country will determine whether such service will remain a luxury marketed by monopoly cable and phone companies to the few who can afford their exorbitant prices and live in areas where they deploy access to broadband or like any public utility/telecommunications service be made universally available to all.

Part of the solution is improving digital literacy for all Americans so they have the skills they need to access the Internet. Already the National Telecommunications Information Administration in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Commerce has established the website digitalliteracy.gov and institutions of higher learning often conduct digital literacy workshops for their instructors so they can learn how to use new technologies in their classrooms. Digital literacy courses are often provided so students can also learn how to use new technologies.

For example, I currently teach part-time for Arizona Western College a local community college where some courses are taught online using Blackboard software. Instructors and students login at blackboard.azwestern.edu from where the course website can be accessed. If an instructor is teaching multiple sections of the same course in a semester a mini website for each section will exist. Unlike traditional

classes where there is set date and time where the instructor and the students have to meet each class day online courses offer the flexibility that students can work on completing assignments at their convenience. Students still have to participate but they have the flexibility to decide from where and when to attend.

Instructors still take daily attendance of course to know who is showing up so attendance is important. Students complete their assignments and submit them electronically either via e-mail to the instructor's email address or through a Digital Drop Box in Blackboard. Online tests and quizzes are electronically scored upon completion of the test but assignments the instructor has to grade. Like any traditional course an instructor has to submit midterm and final grades for his/her students.

New students unfamiliar with Blackboard can contact the campus Blackboard administrator for help or access tutorials online. So students who have never taken an online course before who don't know how their done can learn by soliciting help from a knowledgeable IT rep at the institution or get help from the instructor. As an Arizona Western College Associate Faculty member I have participated in Digital Literacy Workshops for the college faculty during the past 2 semesters.

Still there are too many people who either lack the skills to adopt high speed Internet or won't adopt it because of the cost.

I urge the Federal Communications Commission in looking into this matter to collaborate with other agencies on digital literacy efforts in a cooperative way but also work to address other impediments to achieving universal broadband like

competition, cost and quality whether its wire-line broadband or wireless. I appreciate this opportunity to comment on advancing digital literacy to enhance broadband adoption and look forward to a reasonably fair ruling that benefits the public not just the monopoly phone and cable companies.