

# PRESS RELEASES

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## Western Governors University Awarded \$500,000 Grant

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DENVER -- The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation announced today it will award the Western Governors' Association \$500,000 to complete key tasks in the development of the Western Governors University.

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Governors of 13 western states have committed to participate in the WGU, which will use advanced technology to reach a wider array of students and will move toward competency-based education. The WGU will broker high quality courses from traditional and non-traditional educational providers. It will also offer an Associate of Arts degree and workplace certification based on an assessment of demonstrated competencies, rather than so-called "seat time" or credit hours.

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Colorado Governor Roy Romer and Utah Governor Mike Leavitt serve as co-chairs of the Western Governors University Steering Committee.

"This grant is significant because it will allow the WGU to move forward on several key tasks," said Colorado Gov. Roy Romer. "We are grateful for Sloan's support in this historic undertaking."

Leavitt said Sloan's experience with other institutions using Asynchronous Learning Networks nationwide will be invaluable as the WGU proceeds.

"Our goal is to create new opportunities and new choices for learners throughout the West," Leavitt said. "While WGU won't replace the existing system of higher education, it will be an important means of delivering quality education for all who want it."

The Sloan Foundation has awarded \$15 million since 1993 to pioneering educational efforts throughout the country that provide on-demand learning over computer networks, called Asynchronous Learning Networks (ALNs).

"Our experience with ALN projects nationwide has demonstrated that they provide adult learners of all ages with unprecedented freedom to begin or continue their education while earning their livings," said A. Frank Mayadas, Sloan Program Officer in charge of the ALN projects. "The Western Governors' farsighted approach to using technology to meet their citizens' educational needs is to be applauded. The Sloan Foundation is pleased to support them in their efforts."

The grant will fund the development and design of: an Internet-based catalog/navigator, which students will use to search for course offerings and to assess their skills and knowledge; an associate of arts degree that will be competency-based; workplace certifications that will involve an industry consortium in selecting competencies for certification; a structure for brokering courses from traditional and non-traditional providers; student services for distance learners including a help desk, bookstore, library, financial aid and career counseling; and criteria for local/regional centers, which will provide access to delivering technologies, counseling and assessment services.

In June 1996, 13 governors signed a memorandum of understanding officially launching the WGU and agreed to commit \$100,000 each to move the project forward. Corporations are providing additional support.