

## PRESS RELEASES

### News Brief - 2/4/97

[Welcome to WGU](#)

[What We Are](#)

[Who's Involved](#)

[Vision, History  
& Mission](#)

[Press Releases](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Administration](#)

[About Your Privacy](#)

[Glossary](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Return to Archives](#)

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### AT&T Grant Boosts Western Governors' Bold Education Project

WASHINGTON, DC -- The Western Governors University today was awarded a \$250,000 grant from the AT&T Foundation, which will assist the new entity in developing one of the most ambitious and extensive distance learning systems in the country. AT&T's contribution is the largest corporate donation the WGU has received to date.

Colorado Governor Roy Romer and Utah Governor Mike Leavitt serve as co-chairs for the 13-state Board of Trustees.

"We appreciate AT&T's commitment to the Western Governors University," Leavitt said. "This grant will help us reach our goal of providing increased access to students and a broader market for educational services."

"Technology is absolutely revolutionizing education," Romer said, "and AT&T's generosity will help WGU provide new and innovative educational opportunities to people in Colorado and throughout the West."

WGU will bring together and act as a broker for both traditional and nontraditional educational providers, from universities to corporations that train employees for specific skills. In addition, WGU itself will award competency-based degrees and certifications. Students will undergo rigorous assessments to determine what they know and can apply.

"AT&T is committed to supporting projects that benefit education and serve the needs of the public," said Rick Bailey, AT&T's law and government affairs vice president. "The Western Governors University is clearly such a project. It's a bold, 'break the mold' approach to higher education in western states, and we're very excited to be a part of it."

The Western Governors' Association initiated the program in 1995, based on its members' belief that with regional cooperation they could leverage advanced technology to expand their constituents' educational opportunities.

The WGU expects to have a pilot program up and running later this year and to begin brokering courses by early 1998. At that same time, it plans to offer a competency-based associate of arts degree and workplace certification for an electronic manufacturing technician.

Each participating governor has pledged \$100,000 to launch the WGU. In addition, the WGU is seeking necessary start-up funds from corporations and foundations. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has also made a recent award to the WGU. Once it begins offering courseware and certifications, the WGU's operating funds will come primarily from tuition and fees.

The AT&T Foundation is the principal instrument for AT&T philanthropy in the United States and throughout the world. The Foundation awards grants to nonprofit institutions for innovative programs that focus on helping people achieve self-sufficiency and lead productive lives.