PRESS RELEASES

News Brief - 2/22/99

AT&T Contact:
Sarah Duisik
303-298-6343 (office)
888-787-7032 (pager)
sduisik@att.com

WGU Contact:
Amy Carmer
801-575-5358
acarmer@wgu.edu

Armstrong, AT&T, Grant $500,000 to Western Governors University

Regional Initiative Continues Its Growth Towards International Resource

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Saying that education is too important to be held hostage to geography, AT&T Chairman C. Michael Armstrong today presented a $500,000 grant to the online Western Governors University (WGU) at the National Governors Association annual meeting.

"Life's choices and education shouldn't be limited by commuting distance from where you live," Armstrong said. "Technology can bring education and opportunity to anyone, anywhere, who has the will to learn and grow." Armstrong presented the half million dollar grant to Governors Michael O. Leavitt (Utah) and Gary Locke (Wash.), co-chairs of WGU's Board of Trustees, and Max Farbman, director of development for Western Governors University -- one of the most ambitious and extensive distance learning systems in the world. Governors from the other participating states also were in attendance.

WGU was formed in 1996 as a result of the vision of the governors of the Western United States to share higher education distance learning resources. The university's administrative offices are located in Salt Lake City, Utah, and its academic offices are in Denver, Colo.

WGU is an independent, non-profit organization of governors from 17 states and one territory, including: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. In addition, WGU has participation agreements with major universities in Canada, China, Japan, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

In a joint statement, Governors Leavitt and Locke applauded AT&T's latest contribution. "AT&T has established a strong reputation for supporting innovation, particularly initiatives that benefit education. This has certainly been exhibited through the company's outstanding support of and participation in Western Governors University over the past two years. We appreciate this very significant contribution, along with Mr. Armstrong's personal involvement, and look forward to continuing a strong relationship with AT&T well into the future."

WGU's Farbman also thanked Tom Pelto, AT&T's Western Region vice president for law and government affairs, who serves on the National Advisory Board.

"The commitment and participation of our National Advisory Board members is a vital component to our success," Farbman said. "Through their role as policy advisors and industry advocates, companies like AT&T are helping make WGU the premier distance learning initiative in the United States."

The first corporation to fund WGU, AT&T is the largest single contributor at $1.25 million since 1996, including in-kind support. WGU also is a premiere course-provider of the AT&T Learning Network Virtual Academy, an online centralized resource that gives teachers access to Web-based professional development opportunities and courses. The Virtual Academy underscores AT&T's commitment to support lifelong learning for teachers into the next century by helping them meet their expanding credential requirements -- anytime, anywhere.

The AT&T Virtual Academy course providers include accredited colleges and universities such as George Washington University, Pennsylvania State University's World Campus, Burns Telecommunications Center at Montana State University - Bozeman and Middle Tennessee State University. Other course providers include T.H.E. Institute, a division of T.H.E. Journal, Hunterdon Central Regional High School in New Jersey, and Virtual Blackboard, a division of Tramline, Inc. WGU is a virtual university designed to provide a wide range of distance learning opportunities for post-secondary students. WGU's innovative thrust results from its value-added brokerage of courses through its online Catalog and its unique offering of criteria for competency-based credentials. WGU seeks not to replace traditional campuses, but rather to expand access through technology.

WGU does not employ teaching faculty or develop its own courseware. All academic content, both for the WGU credential and for the brokering function, are furnished by other providers such as educational institutions and corporate training programs.

"(WGU is) not out to replace existing schools," Armstrong said. "It seeks to drastically increase access to those schools. WGU understands that challenge. There's a gold mine of help for teachers in the WGU curriculum."

The distance-delivered degree and learning opportunities available today from Western Governors University include a growing list of more than 300 college-level distance learning courses from 35 affiliated universities and education providers. Some courses include: Teaching in an Online Environment; Internet-based K12 Earth Systems; Science, The Middle School.

AT&T is the world's premier voice and data communications company, serving more than 80 million customers, including consumers, businesses and government. With annual revenues of more than $51 billion and 119,000 employees, AT&T provides services to more than 280 countries and territories around the world. For more information, visit AT&T's Web site at www.att.com.

For more information about the AT&T Learning Network Virtual Academy program, the company's award-winning, $150 million program that links families, teachers and schools to the technology tools and support they need to improve teaching and learning, visit our Web site at www.att.com/learningnetwork or call 1-800-354-8800, prompt 3.