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### Western Governors University Announces Date for Accreditation Candidacy Visit

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SALT LAKE CITY - Western Governors University announced today that it has been notified by the Inter-Regional Accrediting Committee (IRAC) that the visit for determining accreditation candidacy has been scheduled for the first two weeks of February 2000. IRAC was formed in 1997 to consider WGU's application for accreditation and consists of representatives from four regional accreditation commissions across WGU's 18 member states.

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In making the announcement, Rev. Patrick Ford, chairman of IRAC, and academic vice president at Gonzaga University said, "We are pleased with the progress made by WGU in meeting the standards for candidacy set by IRAC in April of last year, when WGU was granted eligibility status. We are comfortable in scheduling a site visit now to consider their candidacy for accreditation."

"We are pleased that the members of IRAC have recognized the progress made by WGU toward this critical step in our history," said Dr. Robert C. Albrecht, WGU chancellor. "Students and potential students should be assured that although we are doing many innovative things in education and technology, we continue to meet the demanding requirements of the accreditation process to deliver high quality, academically sound higher education to students."

WGU received "eligibility status" in May 1998 as the first step in seeking required accreditation. IRAC subsequently created an extensive list of standards to be met by WGU before being granted "candidacy status." IRAC will select an evaluation team oriented toward virtual universities from among qualified administrators and faculty members at higher education institutions across the regions. WGU has been going through a self-study process which has been underway for the past several months. The self-study will be given to the site visit team to prepare for their review of WGU. Once candidacy status has been granted, the institution will have five years to be granted initial accreditation.

#### About IRAC

The Inter-Regional Accrediting Committee (IRAC) is a 16-member committee formed in 1997, consisting of four individuals, including the executive directors, from the following four accrediting commissions: Commission of Institutions of Higher Education - North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; Commission on Colleges - Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges; Commission for Community and Junior Colleges - Western Association of Schools and Colleges; Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities - Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

#### About WGU

WGU is a competency-based, degree-granting, virtual university that delivers cost-effective education using the Internet and other advanced telecommunications and networking technologies. WGU's mission is to expand educational opportunities for learners everywhere by offering online access to courses from universities, colleges and corporate training programs through its unique online catalog. WGU was formed in 1997 as a result of the vision of the governors of the Western United States to share higher education distance learning resources. WGU's administrative offices are located in Salt Lake City, Utah, and its academic offices are in Denver, Colorado.