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Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grants \$1 Million to Western Governors University

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Representative to Join WGU National Advisory Board

SALT LAKE CITY - Max Farbman, vice president of development for Western Governors University (WGU) today announced that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has granted \$1 million to the university. The Gates foundation grant will support the university's mission of expanding access to distance learning opportunities for students anytime, anyplace through competency-based education.

WGU Board of Trustees Co-Chair Gov. Gary Locke (Washington) stated, "WGU is very encouraged that the Gates Foundation has recognized the vision and potential of the university's emphasis on competency-based education. This grant will allow WGU to continue to move forward with its mission of recognizing and credentialing competencies gained by all types of students from multiple sources."

Gov. Mike Leavitt (Utah) echoed Locke's remarks and said, "WGU is very honored to have received this generous grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates Foundation has made a commitment to lifelong learning through education and technology, and WGU is an important national institution in this arena."

Bob Mendenhall, president of WGU, added, "The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation believes in supporting educational initiatives that are innovative and finding ways to provide opportunities for today's learner. This is the mission and vision of Western Governors University and we are very pleased that the Gates Foundation is supporting our efforts."

Patty Stonesifer, Gates Foundation Chair commented, "The Gates Foundation welcomes the opportunity to support an institution such as WGU in increasing people's access to education through innovative means. The WGU should be commended for its vision in establishing a new means of accessing education through its unique partnerships."

The Gates Foundation joins a prestigious group of entities currently on the WGU NAB, including: 3Com, America Online, AT&T, Apple, Cisco, Drake International, IBM, International Thompson Publishing, KPMG, Micron Technology, Microsoft, Novell, Sallie Mae, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Sun Microsystems, Swartz Foundation, and Sylvan Prometric. The NAB was established in 1997 to provide business, foundation, and industry perspective in the planning and implementation of WGU. Each member company also provides financial and in-kind business support.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation places a major focus on helping to improve people's lives through health and learning. Led by William H. Gates, Sr., and Patty Stonesifer, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is located in Seattle. Significant foundation projects include: the Bill and Melinda Gates Children's Vaccine Program, a \$100 million commitment to speed the delivery of lifesaving vaccines to children in developing countries; the Maternal Mortality Reduction Program, a \$50 million commitment to prevent pregnancy-related deaths of women in developing countries; and the Gates Millennium Scholars program, a \$50 million annual commitment for 20 years to provide financial assistance to high-achieving minority students who are in severe financial need and would otherwise be excluded from higher education.

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.

More information about the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation can be obtained at www.gatesfoundation.org