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### Western Governors University First Competency-Based University to Achieve Candidate for Accreditation

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH - November 27, 2000 - The Interregional Accrediting Committee (IRAC) today announced that Western Governors University (WGU) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status. IRAC is the sixteen-member committee that represents four regional accreditation commissions that was formed to conduct the accreditation process for WGU. Candidacy for Accreditation has been approved by each of the four member commissions of IRAC.

This accreditation status means that WGU has met the same educational standards met by other traditional institutions of higher education that have been approved for candidacy status. Candidate for Accreditation status is critical for a degree-granting University in that its students are now eligible for tuition reimbursement from corporations, the military, and government entities. Further, it allows WGU students to more easily transfer to other universities.

WGU is one of only a few online, virtual universities to achieve candidate for accreditation status and is the only competency-based university to gain that status. Competency-based education awards degrees based on students demonstrating what they know and can do rather than by accumulating a certain number of credit hours. Thus, students can use prior work, academic, or life experience, coupled with the learning of new skills, to earn a college degree. Competency assessments assure the quality of the educational experience.

"This is the validation of competency-based education that industry has been pushing for years. We are delighted that virtual education and e-learning are gaining the institutional credibility they deserve," added Eric Benhamou, chairman and CEO of the 3Com Corporation, and WGU board member.

WGU was founded to create distance delivered competency-based educational opportunities as an alternative to the more traditional credit-based model. As the first fully competency-based institution to achieve this accreditation status, IRAC has reaffirmed the ongoing viability of WGU as a University.

WGU Trustees' Co-Chair Gov. Mike Leavitt of Utah, stated, "This is a tremendous milestone for WGU. IRAC has provided WGU with a rigorous review process as we seek accreditation, and has affirmed the quality of education being provided by WGU."

President Emeritus of Washington State University and WGU Board member Sam Smith stated, "The accreditation process brings validation and credibility for any institution of higher education. The fact that WGU has been able to gain candidacy for accreditation for its unique and innovative competency-based learning model is a great benefit for adult learners who are taking advantage of the educational opportunities provided by WGU."

"As a unique, online, degree-granting institution that offers competency-based degree programs, this is a great show of progress for WGU and for distance education as a whole," added WGU president Bob Mendenhall. "More important, for our students this means that a WGU education is more valuable than ever."

#### About WGU

WGU is an online, competency-based university. With just a few clicks at [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu), a student can find competency-based degree programs, an online catalog of quality distance-learning courses, an online library, bookstore, and one-on-one access to a personal WGU mentor, who will guide the student through his or her customized degree program. WGU was founded and is supported by 19 states and governors as well as 22 leading corporations and foundations. Current WGU competency-based degree include Associate of Applied Science degrees in IT/Network Administration, IT/CNE, and IT/Software Applications, as well as an Associate of Arts, Associate of Science in Business, Bachelor of Science in Business, and a Master of Arts degree in Learning & Technology.

#### About IRAC

The commissions involved in IRAC are the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (Commission on Institutions of Higher Education), Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (Commission on Colleges), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges).

Since WGU is incorporated in the state of Utah, the Northwest Commission on Colleges will serve as the gatekeeping agency with respect to the University. Patrick J. Ford, S.J., Academic Vice President at Gonzaga University and Chair of the Northwest Commission on Colleges is chair of IRAC. Dr. Sandra E. Elman, Executive Director of the Northwest Commission on Colleges, serves as the liaison between IRAC and WGU.