

# Western Governors U Gets \$10M Grant

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Western Governors University learned Monday it will receive a five-year, \$10 million federal grant to develop a national Teachers College where educators could upgrade their skills and students could earn degrees without attending traditional classes.

Utah teachers in rural areas will be the first to try the new online program, Gov. Mike Leavitt announced at Washington Elementary in Salt Lake City. They will be offered extra training in math, reading, science or information technology. WGU, with the help of education professors at Utah State University and the University of Utah, expects to start offering the math portion within a year; the other subjects will be added later.

Eventually, any Utahn who wants to become a teacher could attend WGU instead of enrolling at a traditional campus. The teacher college, funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Star Schools program, will focus on three populations: Classroom aides who don't have teaching degrees; second-career professionals who want to teach but don't want to return to school; and teachers who want to upgrade their skills.

The state is projected to need 4,000 new teachers in the next decade. Nationally, schools will need to hire 2 million teachers. Through WGU's national teacher college, other states would create their own teacher programs.

Leavitt said the alternative certification program won't lower teacher quality.

"What we will find is it will raise the standard. Teachers will be required to demonstrate their competency," said Leavitt, who was joined in Salt Lake by Bill Hansen, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education.

WGU will give 25 scholarships to current Utah teachers who want advanced training in instructional technology. Rural school districts have pledged to find other teachers who need extra training and pay half the school's \$8,000 tuition.

Leavitt, a WGU trustee, sees the new program as integral to boosting the state's economy. He wants to double the number of engineering and computer science college graduates in five years, partly by hiring better trained math and science public school teachers.

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