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### Western Governors University Continues Expansion

Salt Lake City, UT -- Western Governors University (WGU) today released its annual status report. Two and a half years after introducing its first competency-based degrees, the private non-profit university founded by 19 western governors, is now widely recognized and is expanding its student base, financial support, partnerships and national influence.

WGU President Bob Mendenhall said the university is achieving its goal to expand access to higher education, particularly for working adults. "The constraints on time due to work and family commitments are access issues just as real as those imposed by geography, so the flexibility provided by WGU's online, competency-based model is very appealing to a broad spectrum of students," he said.

"I was almost going to give up working towards my educational goals when I discovered WGU," said Dennis Nalder, Boise, Idaho. "I had started my master's program twice through regular universities and found the class schedules impossible to fit into my schedule," he said.

The university currently has almost 2,500 students enrolled, up from 500 students one year ago. The average WGU student is 40 years old, and over 90 percent work full-time. The university has students enrolled from 46 states and 9 countries. The university budget increased to \$5.3 million in FY 2001, up from \$3.9 million in FY 2000, while net assets continued to increase. WGU now has 40 employees and faculty members, and contracts with some 60 additional faculty members that serve on the university's program and assessment councils.

Several important milestones were achieved in 2001, including the first five graduates, an additional accreditation, receipt of several major grants, and new partnerships.

WGU graduated its first five students in 2001. Students in Alaska, Utah and Washington were among these first graduates. Each student had a unique reason to enroll in WGU, but they all shared a common desire to study at their own pace and time, and to receive validation for the knowledge they had previously earned.

In June, the university received national accreditation from the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC). The Accrediting Commission of the DETC is a nationally recognized institutional accrediting agency approved by the U.S. Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. WGU also has accreditation status as a candidate with four regional accrediting associations.

In September, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education William Hansen announced a grant from the Department of Education to support the WGU Teachers College, a national telecommunications network that will provide accredited, online degrees and certificates to K-12 teachers and prospective teachers. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation also announced a \$1 million grant, which was matched by the State of Utah, to train Utah school principals and district superintendents in technology leadership.

Partnerships announced in 2001 with the National Urban League, state governments, and Sitting Bull College in North Dakota, provide new educational opportunities to underserved populations.

Of the nearly 2,500 enrolled students, 2,050 are taking courses through the university, while 450 are enrolled in WGU degree or certificate programs. The university now offers eight competency-based degree programs including associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees in three areas: information technology, business and education. WGU offers over 1,000 courses in its online catalog from 45 colleges, universities and commercial providers. Since launching its Web site, WGU has had over 1.5 million users and logged over 30 million hits.

The university has 23 corporate and foundation partners who financially support the university in its mission, including America Online, Apple Computer, AT&T, Cisco Systems, Convergys, Drake International, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Hewlett Packard, IBM, KPMG Consulting, Marriott Corporation, Micron, Microsoft, Novell, Oracle, Qwest, Sallie Mae, SCT Corp, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Sun Microsystems, Swartz Foundation, Thomson Learning/Prometric, and 3Com.