

# PRESS RELEASES

## News Brief - 2/25/03

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### Western Governors University Receives Accreditation

SALT LAKE CITY - Western Governors University (WGU) announced today that it has been granted accreditation from the Interregional Accrediting Committee (IRAC), representing four regional accreditation commissions. Based upon a comprehensive full-scale evaluation, WGU received accreditation at the associate, baccalaureate and master's degree levels. In addition, three new programs — the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS), the Master of Arts in Mathematics Education (MAME), and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) — were reviewed and approved for inclusion under the accreditation of the university.

As a result of the actions taken by IRAC, WGU's accreditation was approved by each of the four members of IRAC: the Commission on Colleges and Universities of the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This represents an historic event in accreditation, as WGU is the only university ever to be simultaneously accredited by multiple regions. WGU is already nationally accredited by the Distance Education Training Council (DETC).

More importantly, according to Gov. Michael O. Leavitt (Utah), a founding governor and current co-chair of the university's Board of Trustees, "this represents a watershed event in American higher education, in that regional accreditation provides a significant external validation of competency-based education as an accepted, viable alternative to the traditional credit-based system. At WGU, students graduate by demonstrating their competencies, rather than by accumulating credits."

"This is the first online competency-based institution to receive accreditation and the first time that four regions have collaborated on overseeing the multi-year evaluation process whereby an institution goes through the various stages in seeking regional accreditation," said Sandra Elman, executive director of the Commission on Colleges and Universities of the Northwest Association and the executive director of IRAC. "Our work with WGU demonstrates the value and flexibility of accreditation in ensuring quality in U.S. higher education," she added.

"This is a great day for WGU, and for the future of distance education and competency-based education," said WGU President Bob Mendenhall. "WGU has been recognized for its focus on student learning, and for implementing new models in higher education that have been demonstrated to be effective for students." WGU Provost Douglas Johnstone said, "WGU learned a great deal by working with IRAC on our accreditation over the last five years, and the benefits of this process will be passed directly to our students."

WGU offers the only online competency-based degrees in the country. At the university's Web site, [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu), students can find competency-based degree programs, an online catalog of quality distance-learning courses, an online library, bookstore, and access to a personal WGU mentor who will guide a student through his or her customized degree program. WGU was founded and is supported by 19 states and governors, as well as 25 leading corporations and foundations. WGU offers associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees in three areas: IT, business and education.