



News Brief - 3/7/06

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WGU Creates New College of Health Professions

HCA signs on as first corporate partner

SALT LAKE CITY -- Rapid changes in the healthcare industry created by technology, policy, emerging health threats, and scientific advances necessitate new workforce skills and expertise. To address the growing need for individuals with bachelor's and master's degrees in the health care industry, Western Governors University (WGU) has formed a new College of Health Professions. According to WGU President Robert Mendenhall, the college's primary focus is on adults who are already working in health and health-related positions, but need access to additional education to further their career goals.

Dr. Mendenhall said the College of Health Professions is the first national, accredited, online, competency-based degree program for healthcare professionals. The college will develop and offer competency-based degrees in health care management, health informatics, public health, and health education. The college will also provide opportunities for RNs to earn bachelor's and master's degrees.

Online, competency-based education is ideal for working adults who have already developed significant competencies in their field but are not able to access traditional education due to employment, family and community responsibilities. WGU degrees define and measure through multiple assessment methodologies the competencies required for each degree.

An important partnership has been created between WGU and Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), one of the nation's leading providers of healthcare services, composed of 182 hospitals and 94 outpatient surgery centers in 22 states, England and Switzerland. HCA has made a significant financial contribution to WGU and will be actively involved in developing the competencies for the degree programs.

"WGU is a wonderfully creative way to help further the skills of health professionals," said Jack O. Bovender, Jr., chairman and CEO of HCA. "We were especially pleased to be able to work with them early in their development to design a high-quality curriculum that will prepare their graduates well for today's healthcare challenge."

HCA joins the WGU National Advisory Board of 22 prestigious companies and foundations, and will be represented by Tom May, president of the Far West Division of HCA.

"We are facing a severe national shortage of health professionals and need more forward-thinking solutions like this," May said. "I am looking forward to working with WGU's Advisory Board on this innovative concept."

Enrollment in the first health-related degree programs is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2006. Find more information regarding the new [Health Professions degree programs](#).

Joining WGU as founding dean of the College of Health Professions is Dr. Michael Graham. Dr. Graham was previously dean of the School of Health and Human Services at Walden University where he led the development of online graduate programs in public health and nursing. He created the first exclusively online graduate degree program in public health at a regionally accredited university.

According to Dr. Graham, the university's goal is to aid the health professions industry in meeting the increasing demand for professionals and educators in the field. "Assisting practitioners in meeting their educational goals provides opportunities for advancement to positions with increased responsibility and compensation, expanded scope of professional authority, and management of complex human and material resources. Healthcare agencies, in turn, benefit from employees who continue to experience enhanced job satisfaction and higher rates of retention," he said.

The national impact of the college will be to prepare a more qualified, flexible healthcare workforce able to respond to the changing needs of our healthcare system.

About Western Governors University (WGU)

WGU is the only accredited university in the U.S. offering online competency-based degree programs. The private non-profit university was founded and is supported by 19 governors, as well as over 20 leading corporations and foundations. WGU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in information technology, business and education. More information is available at www.wgu.edu.