



News Brief - 5/16/06

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Craig Swenson Appointed Provost of Western Governors University



SALT LAKE CITY -- Western Governors University (WGU) today named Craig Swenson as its new provost and vice president of academic affairs, according to President Robert Mendenhall. Dr. Swenson joins the university after a distinguished career as provost and senior vice president for academic affairs for the University of Phoenix system.

Dr. Swenson replaces as Provost Douglas "Chip" Johnstone, who announced his retirement last year effective at the end of 2006. Dr. Johnstone has been named provost emeritus and will serve as senior advisor to the president through the end of the year.

"We are very pleased to have someone of Dr. Swenson's stature and experience join Western Governors University," Dr. Mendenhall said. "Because of our unique model of competency-based online higher education, our objective was to find an innovative academic leader who had experience with adult learners, proven success managing a fast-growing organization while maintaining high quality, and the ability

to work with students and faculty distributed across the nation. We found that in Dr. Swenson and are very fortunate that he has accepted this position at WGU."

It was a belief in the unique charter and mission of WGU that attracted Dr. Swenson to the job. "I really like the non-profit objectives of expanding access and improving quality in higher education, through technology innovation," said Dr. Swenson. "I believe that WGU is the most innovative higher education institution in the U.S., with a single-minded focus on improving the cost and quality of higher education, and I want to be a part of that.

"Many people think that higher education is all about teaching, but it is really about learning — helping students become learners, gain competencies, and measuring and credentialing those competencies. That is what WGU does and it is why this institution is so important as a model to our higher education system," Dr. Swenson said.

During Dr. Johnstone's tenure as the first provost of WGU, he guided the growth in degree programs from 3 to 35, growth in enrollment from less than 100 to over 5,000, which is still increasing about 50 percent annually, and the recruitment and training of more than 100 faculty mentors. Under Dr. Johnstone's leadership, the university was accredited by the Distance Education Training Council (DETC) in 2001, and in 2003 it became the only institution in to be accredited simultaneously by four regional accrediting associations.

As he considers the future and his contributions to WGU, Dr. Swenson emphasized the importance of retaining WGU's uniqueness. He said that it must continue to avoid the temptation to model its academic structures on old models. "What makes this university unique is what makes it important to our higher education system. New thinking and new structures are essential if our higher education system is to be responsive to the needs of its citizens and to the economic competitiveness of the nation."

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.