



News Brief - 11/1/06

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Western Governors University Teachers College Receives NCATE Accreditation

This is the first online institution to receive NCATE approval

SALT LAKE CITY -- The Teachers College of Western Governors University (www.wgu.edu) has received full and unconditional five-year accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

This is the first ever NCATE accreditation for an online institution. According to NCATE, "In 2001, NCATE modified its standards in part to anticipate the accreditation of non-traditional providers, and WGU is the first to engage the opportunity." The approval ratifies WGU's focus on the quality of its teacher preparation programs. It further validates that WGU's online, competency-based programs meet the highest criteria by which professional education programs are evaluated.

WGU President Robert Mendenhall is elated about the accreditation. "WGU is rapidly becoming one of the largest teacher education programs in the country, and as we have teacher education graduates seeking licensure in all 50 states, it was important for us to have NCATE accreditation in addition to our own quality standards," says Dr. Mendenhall. "We are very pleased with the growing acceptance of competency-based education not only by students, but by accrediting organizations, state departments of education, school districts, and the U.S. Department of Education. It is a tribute to NCATE that they were willing and able to apply their standards of quality to a non-traditional program, that is both online and that measures learning rather than time."

WGU's Teachers College continues to grow more than 40 percent annually. After just three and a half years, the college now enrolls more than 4,000 students, with approximately 1,000 of these students concentrating on math and science education. Approximately 600 candidates for licensure will graduate this year. Because WGU's Teachers College is online, it serves a national audience. Today, WGU graduates can apply directly to more than 40 states for teacher certification, and WGU students are eligible for reciprocity in most of the remaining states. With the NCATE accreditation, WGU students will be able to apply for certification directly in even more states.

WGU offers bachelor's and master's programs leading to initial teacher certification in interdisciplinary studies (primarily for elementary teachers), in the high-need areas of mathematics and science, and in social science. WGU also offers master's programs for already-certified teachers in mathematics, science, English language learning, learning and technology, management and innovation, and measurement and evaluation.

Eighty-five percent of WGU students are from underserved populations. Underserved populations are classified by WGU as either economically disadvantaged, rural, first-generation college student, Hispanic, African American, Native American, or a combination of two or more of these categories. The average age of students is 37; most (77 percent) are female. Most (85 percent) are currently employed, the large majority of them full-time.

NCATE (www.ncate.org) is the largest accrediting body evaluating the professional education programs of universities, colleges, and departments of education. It seeks to determine whether the programs meet rigorous national standards for preparing teachers and specialists for the classroom. NCATE represents a coalition among 35 national education organizations.

WGU received NCATE candidacy in November 2005 and underwent a lengthy and detailed review process, which included an on-site visit during the spring of 2006 by an NCATE Board of Examiners to determine whether WGU met six institutional standards. The examiners determined that the university successfully met all six standards. NCATE's Unit Accreditation Board then made the final decision in favor of accreditation.

The university now joins the ranks of 623 other colleges and universities, such as Stanford, Teachers College of Columbia University, Purdue, Texas A&M, BYU, Southern Utah State, and others with NCATE accreditation. Nearly 100 other programs are currently seeking the highly recognized NCATE accreditation.

Patti Harrington, Utah state superintendent of public instruction says, "Western Governors University is a unique and exciting option in the rapidly changing delivery pattern of higher education. With the newly awarded and prestigious NCATE accreditation to its credit, WGU will attract even more aspiring educators to its electronic campus. I heartily congratulate WGU for earning the accreditation and very much appreciate their innovation and rapid-response approach to online learning."

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 has students in all 50 states and 10 foreign countries. WGU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in business, information technology, teacher education, and healthcare, with students in all 50 states and 10 foreign countries. More information is available at www.wgu.edu.