



About WGU

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Western Governors University Awarded \$400,000 Grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to Benefit Underserved Students

SALT LAKE CITY -- Western Governors University (www.wgu.edu) has been awarded a \$400,000 grant by Lumina Foundation for Education. The grant will provide funds for WGU to conduct in-depth research and evaluate the university's success in meeting its mission to provide improved access and attainment for members of underserved populations seeking degrees. The project will also pinpoint what factors in the WGU model are effective for these populations and identify any necessary changes and improvements to the WGU model to enable sustainable success in serving those populations over time.

Improvement in quality and expansion of access has been part of WGU's mission from the beginning. In the 10 years since its founding by 19 western governors, WGU has built programs and operations, processes and resources that are unique to higher education and have shown early success in meeting the mission. Western Governors University is a fully-accredited, online, competency-based university and provides a means for individuals to learn independent of time and place and at a low cost.

Currently, over 75 percent of WGU's students fall into the underserved category. The criteria for underserved students include living in rural areas, members of ethnic minorities, household income of less than \$35,000 annually, and those whose parents never attended or graduated from college.

With this Lumina Foundation grant, WGU will research and document the experiences of underserved students and how retention, academic progress and assessment pass rates are affected. Researchers will also compare those results to experiences and results observable at other benchmark institutions. The ultimate goal of this research will be to make refinements in the WGU model to better achieve the mission with underserved populations. The grant will also allow WGU researchers to determine the impact of education on underserved graduates' employment and economic situations.

The project will be carried out over the next two years, through December 31, 2008, with results expected to be reported in early 2009.

About Lumina Foundation

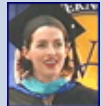
Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based, private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through grants for research, innovation, communication and evaluation, as well as policy education and leadership development, Lumina Foundation addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, particularly underserved student groups, including adult learners. The foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. For more details on the Foundation, visit its Web site at www.luminafoundation.org.

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 more than 20 leading corporations and foundations. 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.

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"Competency-based..."

"I like the idea of a competency-based program. In some areas I already had expertise and skills so I could take an independent study class and build the portfolio and take the exams. In other areas I needed more instruction."

—Gretchen Burr, WGU graduate, high school teacher

"I am an expert..."

"Western Governors has raised the bar for online courses. Instead of graduating from their courses and saying, "I have passed all of the requirements," they want their students to say, "I graduated from WGU and I am an expert in the field of..."

—Jeffrey Cravy, WGU graduate student

"Competency-based..."

"Google has pioneered the idea of access to information. The reason Google thinks WGU is such a good idea is because WGU has pioneered the concept of competency-based education whenever you want it."

—Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google Inc.

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