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Press Release

Source: Western Governors University

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

Thursday January 18, 2:13 pm ET

SALT LAKE CITY, Jan. 18 /PRNewswire/ -- 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 ten 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

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Currently, over 75% 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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