



About WGU

News Brief - 2/20/07

Contact:

Gwen Castaldi
WGU Director of Public Relations
801-290-3600
gcastaldi@wgu.edu

Western Governors University Awarded \$3 Million Grant by U.S. Department of Labor to Aid Rural Teachers

SALT LAKE CITY -- Western Governors University (www.wgu.edu) has been awarded a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to increase the national pool of qualified rural teachers, particularly in the hard-to-fill disciplines of mathematics and science. The grant money will also be used to develop and disseminate a new model for addressing workforce development of rural teachers that can be implemented on a national scale.

WGU will partner with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in the implementation and evaluation of this rural teacher initiative. The project will include working with states, workforce investment boards, One-Stop Career Centers and local rural school districts to identify and prepare potential rural teacher candidates. The grant will allow WGU to provide financial, academic and clinical support for teacher candidates, including scholarships of up to \$7,500 for qualified students.

WGU's unique mission is to expand access to higher education through its online competency-based degree programs. Because the degrees are offered via the Internet, they are accessible to those living in rural areas who cannot travel long distances to participate in classes at traditional campuses. The competency-based programs focus on measuring what students know and can do, rather than measuring time or credit hours, and allow working adults that have competencies, for example in math and science, to complete their programs more quickly but without compromising the quality of graduates.

The WGU Teachers College is only four years old, but already has over 4,000 students, including over 1,000 students in math and science teacher education, making WGU one of the largest providers of math and science teacher education in the nation. In addition, the Teachers College has already graduated more than 1,100 teachers, and its graduates have become licensed teachers in nearly every state. The WGU Teachers College is the only online teacher education program to be accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

WGU President Bob Mendenhall said, "WGU is extremely grateful to the Department of Labor for its support in expanding opportunities for rural teacher education. This initiative is crucial to filling the high-need teacher shortages in rural school districts, including retaining teachers in those communities. The quality of teachers is the single most important variable in the quality of education that we provide our youth."

"Rural areas throughout the country are in need of talented professionals to prepare young people for careers in growing industries," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training Emily Stover DeRocco. "The distance and online learning competency-based curriculum Western Governors University is testing will offer new and innovative ways for prospective teachers to gain their credentials and find rewarding careers in rural America's classrooms."

More information is available at www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators, <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/eta20070238.htm> and www.aacte.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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