



About WGU

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Scholarships for Rural Teaching Offered by Western Governors University

SALT LAKE CITY -- Western Governors University (<http://www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators>) is working to increase the national pool of highly qualified rural teachers, particularly with the nationwide shortage of math and science teachers. WGU is offering \$ 7,500 scholarships to qualified individuals in rural areas. Prospective recipients are those who reside in rural areas who want to become licensed teachers in math or science, or existing teachers who live in rural areas and want to earn a master's degree in math or science education. The scholarships for teachers are part of a U.S. Department of Labor grant recently awarded to WGU.

The \$ 7,500 rural teacher scholarship will be credited to the recipient's scholarship account in the amount of \$1,500 per six-month term, renewable up to five terms. The grant project includes working with various state workforce services offices 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 the scholarships 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 more than 4,700 students, including 1,050 students in math and science teacher education, making WGU one of the largest providers of math and science teacher education in the nation. The WGU Teachers College is the only online teacher education program to be accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

In addition, the Teachers College has already graduated more than 1,325 teachers, and its graduates have become licensed teachers in nearly every state.

WGU President Dr. Robert Mendenhall says, "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."

Ken Sorber, vice president of strategic relations at WGU, quoted in an article in e-School News in February, says, "One of the biggest issues is that many rural districts don't have convenient access to an accredited teachers college. If you get very remote, and you're talking about areas where it's hours away to go to a college, typically you'll find fewer highly qualified [teachers] in math and science."

As part of the grant, WGU also is working to develop and disseminate a new model for addressing workforce development of rural teachers that can be implemented on a national scale. WGU is partnering with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in the implementation and evaluation of this rural teacher initiative.

More information is available at www.wgu.edu/ruraleducators, or call WGU toll free at 1-866-225-5948.

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, such as Oracle, Thomson Corporation, Marriot Foundation, Convergys and AT&T. 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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