



About WGU

News Brief - 10/18/07

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WGU Says "No Tuition Increase" for Second Year in a Row

Western Governors University, the non-profit online university, bucks national trend with lower tuition and no increase

SALT LAKE CITY -- Going against the national tide again, Western Governors University (www.wgu.edu) has decided it will not increase tuition for the second year in a row. By contrast, most colleges and universities are typically raising tuition 5 to 10 percent and have done so the past several years, often at twice the rate of inflation.

In this era of escalating college costs, WGU is already a low-cost online higher education provider. The current tuition rate is \$2,790 per six-month term, with some graduate programs slightly higher at \$3,250 per six-month term. WGU's tuition remains attractive compared to the national average of \$22,218 per year for private colleges and \$5,836 per year for public four-year colleges. (College Board, Fall 2006 data; Fall 2007 is not yet available). Tuition at the for-profit online universities is also high, with the typical cost in the range of \$300-500 per credit hour. Thus, the total cost of a 120-hour undergraduate degree at for-profit universities can reach \$40,000 to \$60,000.

WGU is a non-profit, private online institution. WGU was created by 19 U.S. governors over 10 years ago to expand access to higher education, but it does not receive state funding.

Using a different model, WGU has increased productivity and has held costs down. The model allows for more focus on the student learning experience, not on other extraneous concerns. The university uses high-quality, existing learning resources, and provides mentors who counsel and guide students. There is a university-wide commitment to student retention and graduation rates. WGU also does not maintain a costly brick-and-mortar campus, athletic programs, or dorms.

Keeping tuition low helps expand access to college

WGU Vice President Patrick Partridge says, "One of the great promises of online education is its potential to expand access to higher education for more individuals, especially working adults. However, to expand access it's also critical to keep tuition affordable. WGU focuses on improved productivity through its student-centered competency-based academic model. WGU is in a financially sound position because of this commitment. Eventually we will have to raise tuition to adjust for inflation, but we're very proud that our students have benefited for two years without a tuition increase."

Western Governors University is unusual as a non-profit, private online university in a field crowded with for-profit schools. "Online education has been dominated by for-profit institutions," notes Partridge. "They have shareholders who want a return on their investment. WGU doesn't have that same pressure, which is another reason our tuition rates are lower without compromising quality."

WGU has grown into one of the larger online universities and now serves over 9,000 students in four degree areas: Education, Business, Information Technology, and Health Professions. Bachelor's, master's, and post-baccalaureate programs are offered. The average age of a WGU student is 37 years old. Approximately 70 percent of the student body is a member of at least one of four underserved populations: rural, ethnic minority, first-generation college, or low income. WGU serves students in all 50 states.

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. More information is available at www.wgu.edu.

- Accreditation
- Financial Aid
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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..."

—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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