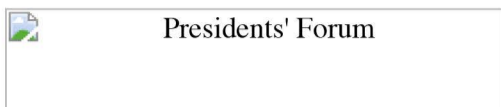




## About WGU

### News Brief - 10/22/07



#### Adult-Serving Institutions Set New Benchmark for Accountability in Higher Education

*Ten Colleges and Universities Unveil 'Transparency By Design' to Better Meet the Needs of America's Adult Students*  
Western Governors University Participates in Consortium

SALT LAKE CITY -- A consortium of adult-serving educational institutions today launched a groundbreaking initiative to lead universities and colleges toward greater accountability and transparency.

At a press conference at The National Press Club, the *Presidents' Forum* unveiled a major new accountability initiative called *Transparency By Design*. The initiative provides a comprehensive action plan to elevate the quality of higher education available to adults. A key focus of the plan is providing program-specific outcomes data that allows students to make informed decisions about their education investment.

"Adult professionals, who are a mainstay of the American economy, depend on quality higher education to keep pace with developments in their fields and to advance in their careers," said Michael Offerman, president of Capella University, who led the working group of the Forum that shaped the initiative. "To meet the education needs of adult students, we as an industry must provide them with trustworthy and transparent ways to choose among many available options and to gauge the potential of each one to further their careers and achieve their dreams."

*Transparency by Design* institutions, which currently number 10 colleges and universities, plan to issue annual *Transparency By Design Reports* in the first quarter of each year, starting in 2009. These reports will include comprehensive data for each course of study, including student demographics, completion rates, costs, student engagement, and knowledge and skills learned. Most important, *Transparency By Design Reports* will include outcomes at the program specialization level, allowing prospective students to assess how well a program will prepare them for their professional pursuits.

Initial participants include Capella University, Charter Oak State College, Excelsior College, Fielding Graduate University, Franklin University, Kaplan University, Regis University, Rio Salado College, Western Governors University ([www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu)), and Union Institute & University.

"As a competency-based university, WGU is committed to defining, measuring, and reporting learning outcomes," said Western Governors University President Dr. Robert Mendenhall. "We welcome the Transparency by Design Initiative as a major effort to establish public accountability for the performance of institutions of higher education, and we look forward to reporting the institutional and student outcomes at WGU." Dr. Mendenhall served on the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, from 2005 to 2006.

"In developing *Transparency By Design*, a critical mass of America's most prominent adult education institutions have joined forces to develop an ambitious and proactive accountability strategy for other parts of the industry to follow," added Offerman.

The need for greater accountability in higher education was formally recognized in September 2006, when Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings issued the recommendations of her Commission on the Future of Higher Education. Charles Miller, chairman of the commission, said that *Transparency By Design's* focus on results of individual programs is a positive step.

"It will be a major advance if you can get more and more institutions over time to bring accountability down to programs, because that may be how you would smoke out some of the worst problems in how we utilize money," he said.

To access a webcast of the *Transparency By Design* launch event, please visit:  
[www.visualwebcaster.com/TransparencyByDesign-102207](http://www.visualwebcaster.com/TransparencyByDesign-102207)

#### About the *Presidents' Forum*

The *Presidents' Forum* was established in 2002 by Excelsior College to provide adult-serving institutions the opportunity to exchange knowledge and perceptions of current models and tools, to discuss issues of common concern, and to foster change to benefit adult learners through the formation of new partnerships and learning networks. A strong focus of the group is educational quality and providing access to data that allows students to make informed decisions about their education investment. The *Forum* calls for regionally accredited, adult-serving institutions to post annual reports on items of importance to prospective students. For more information, visit <http://presidentsforum.excelsior.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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