

## **USDLA Recognizes Western Governors University With Two Major Distance Learning Awards**

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ST LOUIS, MO--(MARKET WIRE)--Apr 23, 2008 -- The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) has presented 2008 International Distance Learning Awards in two categories to Western Governors University (<http://www.wgu.edu/>) and its executive director of the WGU Teachers College, Dr. Janet Schnitz. The awards were presented April 22nd in conjunction with the 2008 National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. Since 1987, USDLA has been the world's premier distance learning association. The USDLA International Awards program honored outstanding individuals and organizations for excellence in the field distance learning, education and training.

Western Governors University received the 21st Century Award for Best Practices in Distance Learning, in recognition for WGU's achievements as the nation's first competency-based online university and its success in expanding access to higher education for adults seeking bachelor's and master's degrees. Founded in 1996 by 19 U.S. governors, WGU now offers more than 40 programs to more than 10,000 students nationwide.

Dr. Janet Schnitz, Executive Director of the WGU Teachers College, received the award for Outstanding Leadership by an Individual in the Field of Distance Learning. Since 2004, Dr. Schnitz has led the rapid growth and development of the WGU Teachers College, which currently enrolls more than 5,500 students in 22 programs. The college currently enrolls 5,000 students in programs that lead to initial teacher licensure, helping develop highly qualified K-12 teachers in such high-needs areas as mathematics, science, and special education. In 2006, the WGU Teachers College became the first and only online teacher education program to receive accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

"As a premier organization for the entire distance learning profession, we are honoring Western Governors University and Dr. Janet Schnitz as leaders in the industry," said Dr. John G. Flores, CEO of USDLA. "Western Governors University has raised the bar of excellence and we are truly honored by WGU's contributions to the distance learning industry."

"We are very honored to have received these two awards from the USDLA," said WGU President Dr. Robert Mendenhall. "WGU has been committed to our mission to provide access to higher education through distance learning and our competency-based learning model. We've succeeded in large part because of the dedication of individuals such as Dr. Schnitz. Her unparalleled leadership has guided our Teachers College to many 'firsts,' such as our NCATE accreditation, and it has become one of the premier teachers colleges in the nation."

These prestigious International Awards are presented annually to organizations and individuals engaged in the development and delivery of distance learning programs. The USDLA Awards were created to acknowledge major accomplishments in distance learning and to highlight those distance learning instructors, programs, and professionals who have achieved and demonstrated extraordinary results through the use of online, videoconferencing, satellite and blended learning delivery technologies. In addition, winners will be recognized in an edition of USDLA's Distance Learning Today quarterly supplement, which appears in USA TODAY's top-tier markets for distance learning and is read by 3.5 million professionals. The section will also be featured on the USDLA website, which averages 2.6 million hits per month.

Reggie Smith III, USDLA board member and chair of the awards committee, noted that, "We look forward to seeing how WGU will inspire the 2009 award entries as they are recognized in Distance Learning Today and via their participation in National Distance Learning Week (<http://www.ndlw.org/>), November 10-14, 2008."

### 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, which include corporations and foundations such as AT&T, BearingPoint, Dell, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Hewlett-Packard, HCA, Microsoft, Oracle, Qwest, SunGard Higher Education, Sun Microsystems, and Zions Bank. WGU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in business, information technology, teacher education, and health professions, with students in all 50 states. More information is available at <http://www.wgu.edu/>.

## About United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)

The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) is a non-profit association formed in 1987 and is located in Boston, Massachusetts. USDLA promotes the development and application of distance learning for education and training and serves the needs of the distance learning community by providing advocacy, information, networking, and opportunity. Distance learning and training constituencies served include preK-12 education, higher and continuing education, and home schooling as well as business, corporate, military, government and telehealth markets. The USDLA trademarked logo is the recognized worldwide symbol of dedicated professionals committed to the distance learning industry. <http://www.usdla.org/>

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Source: Western Governors University