



## About WGU

### News Brief - 9/9/08

#### Her Picture Spoke a Thousand Words and Won a Scholarship

*California Resident Wins Western Governors University's Video Scholarship Contest*

SALT LAKE CITY -- Carissa Martos submitted a video that gave viewers an intimate look at the struggles her family has worked through hoping that she would earn their vote to become the winner of Western Governors University's video scholarship contest. Defeating 36 entries and earning hundreds of votes, Carissa's video, "If I told you this without pictures, you'd call me a liar", won her a \$7,500 scholarship.

Western Governors University ([www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu)), a non-profit online university, asked contestants to submit a video explaining why they deserve to earn a scholarship and how earning a degree from Western Governors University could change their life or the life of someone they know. Videos were judged on quality of the video, number of votes the video received, and the number of views it received.

When Carissa's son was five days old he was diagnosed with a life-threatening skull deformity. At seven weeks old, he had to undergo a surgery to rebuild his skull. Doctors estimate that he will need at least one more surgery to complete the process. With the mounting medical bills and loans from her undergraduate degree, this scholarship was a way for Carissa to continue her education and achieve her dream of becoming a teacher without the financial burden.

Since filming the video, the Martos family experienced another tragedy. Carissa's three-year-old daughter and brother plummeted 25 feet from their apartment's second story landing when it gave way from decaying wood. Trying to protect his niece, her brother cushioned the fall causing him to shatter his spine. He will never be able to walk again.

Carissa is currently attending the WGU Teachers College to become a social science teacher. The scholarship is valued up to \$7,500, payable at \$1,500 every six-month term enrolled for up to five terms. She will also receive a \$500 cash prize.

Aaron Shamy placed second in the contest with his video "As I said before, I never repeat myself" and will receive a \$3,000 scholarship and \$500 cash prize. This scholarship will take him one step closer to being the first in his family to earn a degree.

Benjamin Power came in third with his version of "Help!" and will have the option to choose between a scholarship or cash prize. Two "runner up" videos were also selected. You can view the top five videos by visiting [www.wgu.edu/contest](http://www.wgu.edu/contest).

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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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