



About WGU

News Brief - 10/30/08

Online Education is Making the Grade with Employers

A New White Paper on Employer Acceptance of Online Degrees

Online degrees are no longer causing red flags on resumes for employers. In fact, many attributes of the online learner are what employers seek. They want lifelong learners, self-motivated workers, and critical thinkers—all of which apply to online learners.

In a new, free white paper titled "[Online Degrees Make the Grade: Employer Acceptance Now Common](#)", researcher George Lorenzo, publisher of Educational Pathways, reveals that online education now receives wide support among businesses. "As corporations continue to see an increase in job candidates who have earned their degrees online," writes Lorenzo, "the word has spread among executives, human resource professionals and hiring managers that online higher education graduates are focused employees with strong work ethics."

Online learning has become widely accepted. Online courses and degrees are widely available through both traditional and online universities. Both students and employers are less apprehensive; hence, the quality of online education is seldom an issue. "If you ask employers about their sense of the quality of online education—is it of equal quality to traditional—the response you typically get is a growing adherence to it being of equal quality," says Richard Garrett, a senior research analyst for Eduventures, an education research and consulting firm.

Flexibility is a key attribute of online education valued by employers and workers. According to Lorenzo, "Employers realize that the flexibility and convenience of online teaching and learning modalities are a great fit for busy adult learners seeking to improve their workforce skills and advance their careers."

Students at Western Governors University (www.wgu.edu), which commissioned the study, are featured in the accompanying case study.

Bob Roark was in his late 30s, married with two daughters, and was working as a technical solutions manager. "My position required a bachelor's degree, but they hired me because of my capabilities and experience as long as I finished my degree," he says. He looked at many institutions, both traditional and online, and chose WGU because of its flexibility, convenience, reasonable cost and accreditation. Completing his coursework for his bachelor's gave him the confidence to continue his education to the next level and he began his MBA at WGU. While studying for his master's, he interviewed for another manager position. "WGU came up in the interview and the interviewer told me at that point he would rather hire me as a director than a manager," Roark says. Several weeks later he was offered the director position and received a 32 percent salary increase.

"Bob had a more educated view of business in general than his peers," said Bob's former boss. "The online curriculum I think helps to force individuals to become quick studies and to become well read." According to employers, the main considerations are the quality of the education a particular job candidate receives and how prepared he or she is for real-world challenges. To view the complete white paper free of charge, visit www.wgu.edu/makethegrade.

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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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