



Sam Smith Receives Degree, 7/21/09

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News Brief - 7/21/09

Western Governors University Awards Honorary Degree To WSU President Emeritus Sam Smith

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Founding Member of WGU's Board of Trustees Addresses Largest-Ever Graduating Class

Salt Lake City, Utah — Dr. Samuel H. Smith, president emeritus of Washington State University and a founding member of the board of Western Governors University, www.wgu.edu, was awarded an honorary doctoral degree at WGU's summer commencement on July 11 in Salt lake City, Utah. The keynote speaker for the online university's 17th semi-annual graduation ceremony, Dr. Smith addressed more than 1,300 graduates, family, and friends who attended in person or participated online via streaming video.

In his address, Dr. Smith recounted the conception of WGU, when 19 western U.S. governors put aside partisan politics to create an affordable, accessible means to earn a college degree for individuals who were not able to come together in one place. "Although we started WGU just a few years ago in the mid-90s, we've seen rapid changes in technology and our ability to connect since we began, and those advancements have been key to the growth and success of WGU," said Dr. Smith. "We know that each generation experiences a more rapid rate of change than the last, and because of the way they earned their degrees, today's WGU graduates are emerging with a demonstrated ability to embrace change and use technology effectively."

Dr. Smith was the eighth president of Washington State University. During his 15-year tenure, he led the effort to establish WSU's three regional campuses—WSU Spokane, WSU in Tri-Cities, and WSU Vancouver, as well as fostering development of the university's Distance Degree Programs. Under his leadership, WSU grew in size and stature, and its teaching, research, and public service activities received worldwide recognition. Before his presidency at WSU, Dr. Smith spent 16 years at Pennsylvania State University as a faculty member, department head, and dean in the College of Agriculture.

In addition to serving on the Western Governors University Board of Trustees, Dr. Smith has chaired the executive committee of the NCAA and the board of directors of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. He earned bachelor's and doctoral degrees from the University of California at Berkeley.

In the past year, WGU has awarded more than 1,500 bachelor's, post-baccalaureate, and master's degrees. The graduating class for this six-month period is the largest to date, with 514 undergraduate and 377 graduate degrees awarded. For graduates who were not able to attend in person, WGU broadcast the ceremony live over the Internet via streaming video. To view WGU's Summer Commencement, go to http://www.wgu.edu/wgu/graduation_july09.

Commonly Searched Terms Online college degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, undergraduate, graduate degrees

