



News Release: Nursing Degree Program Earns Utah Approval, 6/23/10

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News Brief - 6/23/10

Western Governors University's New Nursing Degree Program Earns Utah Board of Nursing Approval

WGU Partnering with Seven Rural Hospitals to Offer Innovative B.S. in Nursing Leading to RN Licensure

Salt Lake City — Western Governors University's College of Health Professions has gained approval from the Utah Board of Nursing to begin enrolling Utah students in its innovative B.S. in Nursing (Prelicensure) program.

Utah-based Western Governors University launched this unique nursing education program last year. The CCNE-approved program, which has also been approved by the California and Texas state nursing boards, combines WGU's online, competency-based academic approach with intensive clinical simulations and clinical practice supervised by onsite clinical coaches and clinical instructors serving as WGU adjunct faculty.

Utah partner hospitals include Castleview Hospital, Price, Utah; Beaver Valley Hospital, Beaver, Utah; San Juan Hospital, Monticello, Utah; Uintah Basin Medical Center, Roosevelt, Utah; Mountain West Medical Center, Tooele, Utah; Milford Hospital, Milford, Utah; Central Valley Medical Center, Nephi, Utah. The program is open to qualified applicants living and working in these communities who have prepared themselves academically for nursing school.

"Our state is facing a growing shortage of registered nurses in our rural communities, and we're challenged with finding a way to provide quality nursing education to students in these locations," said Jan Jones-Schenk, WGU Director of Nursing. "WGU's program, which works with the hospitals in these communities, allows students to complete their studies and their clinical requirements without leaving their homes and families. And, more importantly, the program provides each student with one-on-one coaching and clinical instruction in addition to individualized mentoring by qualified nursing faculty and learning lab experiences using simulation, so we know that this nursing education will directly help to improve the quality of healthcare in these communities."

"WGU is a national university with nearly 20,000 students, 1,500 of them here in Utah, so we're very happy to be bringing this important program to our home state," said WGU President Dr. Robert Mendenhall. "Both our state and the country face a critical shortage of qualified nurses in the next decade, and this program, which we've developed with our partners, offers a way to make a quality nursing education more accessible."

The B.S. in Nursing (Prelicensure) program was developed with the support and partnership of the U.S. Department of Labor, the California Workforce and Labor Development Agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Utah Department of Workforce Services and major healthcare partners, including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, HCA, Kaiser Permanente, Catholic Healthcare West and Tenet Healthcare. The program operates under the guidance of a National Advisory Committee comprised of leaders in nursing and nursing education:

- Kathy Apple – CEO, National Council of State Boards of Nursing Colleagues
Brenda Cleary – Director, AARP Center to Champion Nursing
Maggie McClure – American Academy of Nursing
Bev Malone – CEO, National League for Nursing
Polly Bednash – CEO, American Association of Colleges of Nursing
Patricia Benner – Professor and Co-PI, The Carnegie Foundation on Teaching in Nursing and author of "Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation"
Linda Burnes-Bolton – Chief Nursing Officer, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center (Partner representative)
Marilyn Chow – Vice President, National Patient Care Services, Kaiser Permanente (Partner representative)

Enrollment in WGU's nursing programs has grown to over 1,000 students nationwide in the last three years. In addition to the B.S in Nursing (Prelicensure) program, WGU's College of Health Professions offers the RN to BSN (online), MSN degrees in Nursing Education or Nursing Leadership and Management, B.S. in Health Informatics and M.B.A. in Healthcare Management programs.

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