

News Releases

News: WGU Indiana Hosts First Commencement

Governor Daniels addresses WGU Indiana graduates, students, and faculty

Indianapolis — [WGU Indiana](#) will recognize graduates from across the state today at the first commencement ceremony for Indiana's newest university. Governor Mitch Daniels will speak at the graduation ceremony, which will take place in the statehouse rotunda at 3:30 p.m. Online, non-profit WGU Indiana was established in June through a partnership between the state of Indiana and Western Governors University to expand access to higher education for working adults in the state. WGU Indiana offers a unique, competency-based model that provides flexibility and affordability. The new university offers more than 50 accredited bachelor's and master's degrees in business, teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing. Since its launch, enrollment has grown to nearly 700 students.

"The Lumina Foundation for Education reports there are 730,000 Indiana residents who have a partial college education," said WGU Indiana Chancellor Allison Barber. "If they want to complete their degrees to help start, advance, or change their careers, WGU Indiana can provide the means for them to do so."

Graduate Dawn Hanson, who will speak during the commencement, is very typical of the kind of students who can benefit from the degree programs offered by WGU Indiana. She completed a B.S. in Nursing after completing an associate's degree from Ivy Tech Community College four years ago and becoming an RN. However, she wanted to obtain her bachelor's degree to allow her to advance in her nursing career.

A mother of two children from Greenfield who works as a Resource Center RN in the pediatric and neonatal unit at Clarian hospitals, Dawn found it difficult to find a school that would fit her busy schedule and accept her prior college credit. WGU Indiana was her solution. She could attend school online at home when it fit her life and her schedule.

Brian Whitman completed his M.B.A in Healthcare Management. The Bloomington resident is the vice president of marketing, community relations, and business development for Bloomington Hospital. Whitman said he enrolled in WGU Indiana after finding the school through an online search. He added that the university was an affordable and flexible way for him to balance his family, work, and school responsibilities.

Suzanna Smith of North Salem graduated with a B.S. in Accounting. The stay-at-home mother of two enjoyed her WGU Indiana experience so much that she is now enrolled in the university's M.B.A. program and is studying to become a certified public accountant.

"Adults' success in college is a key to Indiana's future," said Chancellor Barber. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 18.1 percent of the state's work force draws unemployment, have dropped out of the labor force, or are working part-time but desire full-time jobs. For these victims of the national recession to be able to participate in the new economy forming from the ashes of the economic downturn, they must re-educate themselves for the future.

"Jobs are coming," Barber said. "How quickly they will come is unknown, but many won't be the same kinds of jobs that existed before the recession. For example, instead of traditional manufacturing jobs, Indiana is likely to see more energy, technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing employment opportunities. These jobs require more than a high school education."

Only 33 percent of Indiana's working-age residents, Hoosiers who are ages 25-64, have at least a two-year college degree, according to the Lumina Foundation.

Barber said, "WGU Indiana will help increase percentage of college graduates in Indiana so the state and its residents can prosper in the years to come."



Above: WGU Indiana's graduates gather for a photo with, from left, WGU President Mendenhall, Gov. Daniels, and Chancellor Barber. At left: Chancellor Barber. At right: Gov. Daniels.



Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels (Runs: 7:22 min.)

Graduate Dawn Hanson, BS Nursing (Runs: 5:53 min.)

Commencement (Runs: 24:12 min.)

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