

# News Releases

## WGU Wins Two Awards for Excellence in Distance Learning, 5/4/11

**Online university and Teachers College Provost Phillip Schmidt recognized at USDLA 2011 International Conference**

The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) presented two awards for excellence in distance learning to Western Governors University, [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu), at the association's annual conference yesterday. The nonprofit, [online university](#) took home its second 21st Century Award for Best Practices in Distance Learning, and Dr. Phillip Schmidt, Associate Provost, received an award for Outstanding Leadership by an Individual in the Field of Distance Learning. The nation's leading distance learning organization, the USDLA presents its International Awards annually to organizations and individuals engaged in the development and delivery of distance learning programs.

For the second time in three years, WGU has received the 21st Century Award for Best Practices in Distance learning. The university was recognized for being a pioneer in distance learning by creating programs that are innovative, comprehensive, and effective. WGU offers an academic model that is unique, even among providers of distance learning, called competency-based learning. This model, which uses technology to teach and allows students to advance when they demonstrate their knowledge, decreases the average time required to graduate without sacrificing academic rigor.

USDLA's Award for Outstanding Leadership by an Individual in the Field of Distance Learning has been presented to Dr. Phillip Schmidt, Associate Provost, [WGU Teachers College](#). Dr. Schmidt was recognized for his leading role in the development of the university's math and science education programs, which are nationally known for their excellence, and for his efforts to earn accreditation for WGU's teacher education programs. Before joining WGU in 2002, Dr. Schmidt served as Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at Berea College and Dean of the Department of Secondary Education at SUNY New Paltz. The author of several mathematics texts and numerous articles, Dr. Schmidt earned his Ph.D. from Syracuse University.

As a premier organization for the entire distance learning profession, we are honoring Western Governors University and Dr. Schmidt for their leadership in our industry," said Dr. John G. Flores, Executive Director of USDLA. The work being done by WGU and Dr. Schmidt continues to raise the bar and exceed best practices expectations for the industry as a whole, and we are truly honored by their contributions to the distance learning industry."

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