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Mendenhall Named Entrepreneur of Year, 6/24/11

*Award Recognizes **Online University President's Entrepreneurial Excellence in Technology and Education Category***

SALT LAKE CITY — Robert W. Mendenhall, president of nonprofit Western Governors University, www.wgu.edu, has received the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2011 Utah Region Award in the Technology and Education category. Mendenhall was recognized for leading the development and growth of the online university, which has grown to over 25,000 students nationwide since it opened its virtual doors in 1999.

Established to expand access to quality college degree programs, Western Governors University is designed to meet the needs of adult learners—the average age of WGU students is 36 years old. The university uses a mentor-guided, competency-based learning model that allows students to advance by demonstrating their knowledge rather than logging time in class. This model, which uses technology to teach and allows students to take advantage of their experience and prior education, offers working adults a flexible and affordable way to complete an undergraduate or graduate degree. The average time to complete a bachelor's degree at WGU is just 2 ½ years.

According to Ernst & Young LLP, the award recognizes outstanding entrepreneurs who demonstrate excellence and extraordinary success in such areas as innovation, financial performance, and personal commitment to their businesses and communities. President Mendenhall was selected by an independent panel of judges, and the award was presented at a gala event at the Salt Palace Convention Center in downtown Salt Lake City on Thursday, June 23.

“This award recognizes the commitment and hard work of so many people who have been instrumental in making our university what it is today,” Dr. Mendenhall said. “Their commitment to making high-quality, affordable higher education more accessible is the reason for the university's growth and success.”

As a Utah Region award winner, Dr. Mendenhall is now eligible for consideration for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year 2011 National Award. Award winners in several national categories, as well as the overall Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year National Award winner, will be announced at the annual awards gala in Palm Springs, California, on November 12, 2011. The awards are the culminating event of the Ernst & Young Strategic Growth Forum®, the nation's most prestigious gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies, which will be held November 9 -13, 2011.

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WGU is an accredited online university offering online bachelor's and master's degree programs.

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