

By LYNN O'SHAUGHNESSY / MONEYWATCH / August 30, 2011, 4:55 PM

Want a High-Paying Job? Here's a Gem of a University That Can Help

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If you're hoping to qualify for a **high-paying job**, how do you afford the time and



costs of going back to school to get a necessary bachelor's or a master's degree?

I get this question all the time from readers, who probably email me because they've read my annual posts on the **best-paying college degrees** and/or the **worst-paying college degrees**.

Americans with **college degrees** clearly make more money than those with less schooling, but the time and money to earn a degree can be a deal breaker to many who desire an extra diploma or retraining.

A Revolutionary University

For those of you in that dilemma, I want to urge you to check out an intriguing (mostly) online institution that is low-cost and will also give you credit for lifetime experiences. The name of the school is **Western Governors University**, a nonprofit institution started by governors in western states who were frustrated by the quality, bureaucracy and price of their own public universities.

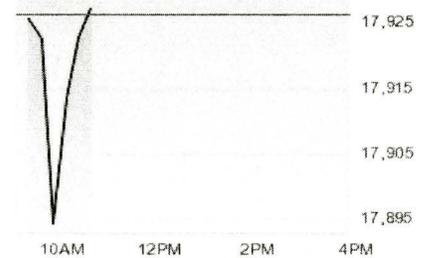
Western Governors University is clearly a more attractive alternative than for-profit colleges for Americans who are past the traditional college age. In its

Market Data

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Symbol	Last	Change	% Change
DOW	17,926.50	+0.07	+0.00%
NASDAQ	4,945.67	-0.21	-0.00%
S&P 500	2,081.87	-0.91	-0.04%

annual college edition, *Washington Monthly* calls the school revolutionary and it's easy to see why. **WGU** can offer degrees for about a third of the price of for-profit schools in about half the time.

WGU bases its degree offerings on what graduates in a particular field need to know after canvassing employers, industry experts and others. It will cost you \$3,000 for a semester at WGU -- far cheaper than for-profit schools - no matter how many online credits you accumulate. How long you take to get through a class will depend on you. Remarkably the school allows you to go as fast through the material as you can based on what you already know.

Here is how the Washington Monthly explains it:

Those fixed standards enable a world of variation. At Western Governors, students aren't asked to sit in a class any longer than it takes for them to demonstrate that they have mastered the material. In fact, they aren't asked to sit in a "class" at all. At the beginning of a course, students are given a test called a "pre-assessment." Then they have a conversation with their mentor—a kind of personal coach assigned to each student for the duration of their degree program—to discuss which concepts in the course they already grasp, which they still need to master, and how to go about closing the gap. The students are then offered a broad set of "learning resources"—a drab phrase, sure, but no more so than "crowded lecture hall"—that may include videos, textbooks, online simulations, conversations with a WGU course mentor (an expert in the subject matter who is on call to answer questions), or even tutors in the student's hometown.

Pragmatic College Majors

The school offers a pragmatic lineup of degrees in the high-demand areas of business, education, information technology and nursing and other health professions. Much of the learning takes place online, but some work will require being in the field such as nursing and teaching.

If you are looking for a way to retrain and qualify for one of those **highest paying careers**, definitely check out Western Governors University. It could be your answer.

*Lynn O'Shaughnessy is author of **The College Solution**, an Amazon bestseller, and the **Shrinking the Cost of College** workbook. She also writes her own college blog at **The College Solution**.*

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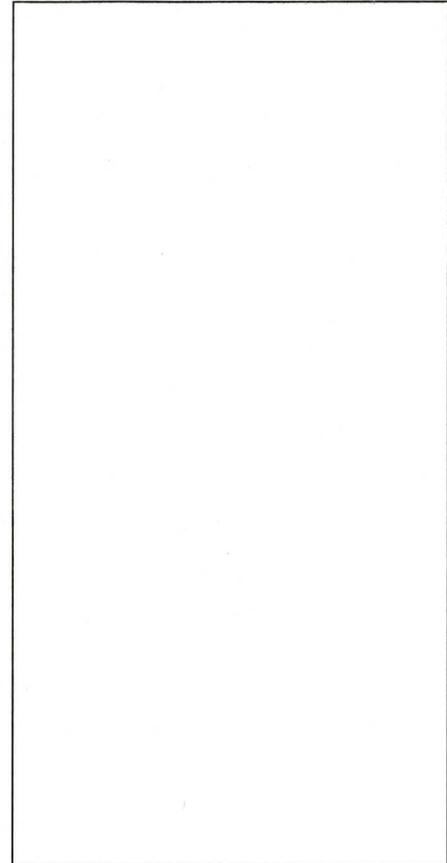
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