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Mentor Support at Core of WGU's Learning Model, 1/10/13



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News Brief - 1/10/13

Personalized Mentor Support at Core of WGU's Innovative Learning Model

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At competency-based online university, faculty members serve as full-time mentors whose sole responsibility is facilitating student learning and success

SALT LAKE CITY — As the country recognizes the value of mentorship during National Mentoring Month this January, online Western Governors University (WGU), www.wgu.edu, celebrates the contributions of the more than 750 mentors who work all year to ensure the success of our students.

WGU is a [competency-based university](#), where bachelor's and master's degrees are earned by nontraditional students—often busy, working adults—studying independently to master defined competencies at their pace in the learning style that works best for them. The faster a student can learn the required material and prove that knowledge, the faster he or she accelerates through the degree program. In this nontraditional setting, the availability of one-on-one academic and personal support on an as-needed basis is critical, so the role of faculty has been redefined, with mentorship at its core.

Of WGU's 1,300 faculty members, 760 are mentors. Two distinct mentor roles—Student Mentors and Course Mentors—exist at WGU to focus solely on supporting students' academic success. Other faculty functions, such as curriculum development, grading and assessment, and degree program management, are assigned to other members of WGU's faculty, each specializing in a specific function. This allows mentors to devote their full attention to students.

Student Mentors: For each student, the primary faculty support is a personally assigned Student Mentor. The role of the Student Mentor is to provide advice, coaching, and support from the moment an individual becomes a student to the time he or she graduates. Student mentors hold advanced degrees in business, education, information technology, or health professions. They support students in the following ways:

- Provide information on programs, policies, and procedures.
- Assess students' strengths and development areas to help them develop a plan of study.
- Provide feedback on assessments and recommend learning resources.
- Help students to sustain motivation and maintain on-time progress to their degrees.
- Recommend appropriate student services.

This support involves regularly scheduled academic progress conversations weekly and active involvement in other aspects of the student's academic career. The Student Mentor has on overall knowledge of degree program requirements and guides the student through the program, offering coaching, direction, and practical advice.

Course Mentors: Course Mentors are subject-matter experts who support students as they engage specific sections of the WGU curriculum. Their experience and training is specific to the courses they support, and most have completed terminal degrees in their fields. They can address any issue that might arise related to a course, a learning resource, or an assessment. Specifically, Course Mentors:

- Bring WGU courses of study to life with students via one-to-many or one-to-one forums.
- Provide instructional help (proactively and reactively) and facilitate learning communities.
- Provide content expertise for students who are struggling with course material.

The type and intensity of instructional support varies based upon the needs of each student in a particular course, from help with specific questions that arise to more fully engaged tutorial support.

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NBC News Reports on WGU



"The dreams of 19 governors have become [WGU Grad Angie Gonzalez's] dream fulfilled."

—Tom Costello
NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams

[Watch the video](#) >

Featured News

Find out why Fast Company calls WGU one of the world's 50 most-innovative companies, CNN says we're "a school without boundaries," and major news outlets from NPR to Bloomberg BusinessWeek are touting WGU's "potential to transform the higher education industry."

[Read about WGU in the news](#) >

Why We Are Different

WGU has an innovative learning model for helping working adults earn bachelor's and master's degrees. Learn more about how it can help you.

[Watch the video](#) >

Take the Quiz

Is WGU a Good Fit For You?

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