

TEACHING

In Boost to Competency Model, Western Governors Tops Ranking

In what many observers believe to be a first, Western Governors University's competency-based teacher-education programs have landed at the top of rankings in a report released in June by the National Council on Teacher Quality and published with *U.S. News & World Report*.

Competency-based models of education require students to demonstrate mastery of discrete tasks, or competencies, in order to progress in their studies. The courses are often offered online and aimed at adult students with work or family commitments that prevent them from taking traditional courses.

The council's ratings made their debut last year and sparked an uproar among colleges of education, which the council argued were part of an "industry of mediocrity."

Critics lambasted last year's report as flawed and methodologically weak. This year's report evaluated 2,400 teacher-preparation programs at 1,127 institutions. Last year, 98 colleges cooperated with data-collection efforts. This year, 118 did so. Students and faculty members provided most of the data.

Still, the conclusions were mostly unchanged. "The portrait of an 'industry of mediocrity' in last year's first edition of the review remains accurate," the report says.

