# THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

**OPINION**    MAY 22, 2015 12:00 AM

# Our Voice: WGU Washington sets successful college model

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Four years ago Washington state lawmakers established an innovative, online college degree program that is quickly proving to be among the most successful and efficient models ever launched.
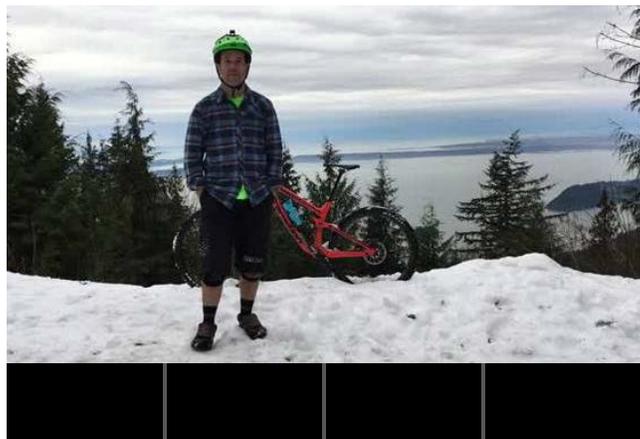
Four years ago Washington state lawmakers established an innovative, online college degree program that is quickly proving to be among the most successful and efficient models ever launched.

The state Legislature created WGU Washington through a partnership with the nationally accredited Western Governors University in an attempt to help place-bound, busy adults find a way to fit college into their lives.

It is doing so well that program leaders were asked to expand their model for community colleges around the state. The Washington

**VIDEOS**



Mountain biking conditions in the Chuckanut Mountains

3:07

Mountain biking conditions in the Chuckanut Mountains

1:26

U.S. Rep. John Lewis makes inspiring speech on Martin Luther King

State Board of Community and Technical Colleges now will offer an online business associate's degree thanks to help from WGU Washington.

Too often, new ideas tried in the education arena fail even though they sound great on paper. WGU Washington showed promise from the beginning and is now a solid achievement.

While online learning is not new, WGU Washington appears to have mastered the approach, racking up an impressive list of statistics.

Since its inception, it has awarded 3,500 bachelor's and master's degrees and has nearly 7,500 full-time students, including about 400 from Benton and Franklin counties. It also has become the third largest transfer university choice for community college students in the state.

And best of all, it is self-sustaining. It requires no ongoing taxpayer support.

While most university programs have had to raise tuition, the parent WGU program has kept tuition the same since 2008. At $5,780 per year for most degree programs, that is a bargain. And there are no textbooks to buy because everything is online.

Students can start classes at any time and go at their own pace. However, they are not left on their own. Every student has a mentor who contacts them regularly, often by phone, to make sure they are on track.

WGU Washington offers more than 50 degree

Day

**1:40** Bellingham MLK Day speakers "Moving on in these days of challenge"

**VIEW MORE VIDEO**

**MORE OPINION**

Disregard all those farewells: Obama isn't really leaving

Let's look north during Trump's tenure to act on shared economic, environmental goals

Rik Dalvit: A Slow Charge

The time has come to say goodbye to Obama. 'Godspeed, brother. You did us proud.'

As a doctor, I see how a lack of health insurance worsens illness and suffering

**EDITOR'S CHOICE VIDEOS**

programs in business, K-12 teacher education, information technology and healthcare, including nursing.

Jean Floten, the school's chancellor, said university officials continually look at what careers are in demand and try to make a curriculum that meets those needs, so class offerings and degree programs are evolving all the time.

The average WGU Washington student is 37, but ages range from 19 to 72. About 68 percent of the program's students are from under served populations, including low-income, rural and first generation students.

University officials say there are nearly one million adults in the state with some college but no degree. By 2018, more than 60 percent of job openings will require some kind of college credential.

WGU Washington seems to be a great answer for a lot of people who could not get a college degree any other way.

**MORE OPINION**

**SUGGESTED FOR YOU**

**COMMENTS**

THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Digital Subscriptions

Subscriber Services

e-Edition

SITE INFORMATION

Customer Service

About Us

Contact Us

Historical Archive

SOCIAL, MOBILE & MORE

Mobile & Apps

Facebook

Twitter

You Tube

RSS

ADVERTISING

Information

Place a Classified

Place an Obituary

Place a Celebration

Local Deals

Shopping

Copyright          Privacy Policy          Terms of Service