

Online college WGU Tennessee exceeds 2,000 enrollment

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(Photo: Submitted/Ed Rode)

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Less than two years after it was founded, the state-endorsed online university **WGU Tennessee** has almost tripled in size, with more than 2,000 students currently enrolled.

WGU Tennessee Chancellor Kimberly K. Estep, who came to the university from Nashville State

Community College, said the rapid growth represents "a vote of confidence" in the school's unique approach to awarding college credit.

The online university uses a competency-based education model, which rewards a student's understanding of core concepts. Students work at their own pace with one-on-one support from faculty, completing courses and earning degrees by demonstrating their mastery of a subject matter, rather than spending a set amount of time in class.

Officials say the approach helps students quickly move through material they already know. It takes the average WGU student two and a half years to earn a bachelor's degree.

WGU Tennessee offers scholarships to non-profit workers

WGU Tennessee was created in the summer of 2013 through a partnership between the state and Western Governors University. Gov. Bill Haslam launched Tennessee's outpost as part of his Drive to 55 initiative, a plan to ensure 55 percent of Tennesseans have a college education by 2025.

"Reaching that goal requires many different efforts across many different areas," said Mike Krause, executive director of Drive to 55. "WGU does a fantastic job of helping adults see how (college) can fit within their daily routines."

In the past two years, WGU Tennessee has formed partnerships with several businesses and organizations, including the American Red Cross and Metro Schools, offering discounted tuition rates to their employees.

Soon after it was established in July 2013, WGU Tennessee had an enrollment of 710 students. By this month, that number had jumped to 2,021.

"We hope and expect to continue playing a pivotal role in the state's college completion agenda," Estep said in a prepared statement.

WGU Tennessee students can get bachelor's and master's degrees in dozens of programs, including business, information technology, teaching and health professions, including nursing.

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Learn more

For more information, visit the WGU Tennessee website at tennessee.wgu.edu or call 855-948-8495.

WGU Tennessee enrollment

Davidson County: 270

Williamson County: 92

Wilson County: 62

Sumner County: 80

Rutherford County: 140

Robertson County: 19

Cheatham County: 20

Dickson County: 20

Statewide total: 2,021

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