

## News Releases

# WGU to Recognize More than 7,300 Graduates at Semi-Annual Commencement in Orlando

## News Brief - 2/5/16

*Online, competency-based university has awarded more than 57,000 degrees since its founding*

ORLANDO — Tomorrow, Western Governors University (WGU), [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu), will honor more than 7,300 graduates at its 30th semi-annual commencement. And although they earned their degrees online, more than 760 bachelor's and master's degree graduates from 45 states and the District of Columbia, along with nearly 6,000 family members, friends, faculty, and staff, will attend commencement in person. The ceremony will take place on Saturday, February 6, at the Disney Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando at 9:45 a.m. Eastern Time.

Claire Bilby, Senior Vice President, Event Operations and Premium Services at Walt Disney World Resort, will deliver the commencement address. In her more than 25 years at Disney, Bilby has held a number of leadership positions, overseeing teams from Florida and California to Asia, Australia, and Europe. Joining her on stage will be four of the graduates who will share their stories at the ceremony: Marc Miranda, MBA from Clifton Park, New York; Sarah Aronack, M.S. Nursing—Leadership and Management from New Brockton, Alabama; Adrienne Saulsberry, B.A. Science (5-12, Chemistry) from Hephzibah, Georgia; and Brett Ford, B.S. Information Technology from Charlotte, North Carolina.

During Saturday's ceremony, WGU will confer 4,557 undergraduate and 2,759 graduate degrees in four disciplines: business, K–12 teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing. For graduates, faculty, and staff who are unable to physically attend the ceremony, the entire program will be broadcast live via [streaming video](#).

Designed to meet the needs of busy working adults, WGU's competency-based model makes it possible for students to set their own study schedules and move quickly through material they already know so they can focus on what they still need to learn. While WGU's online degree programs are rigorous and challenging, adult learners are still able to earn their degrees without sacrificing work, family, and financial obligations. As a result, many students are able to accelerate their studies, finishing faster and saving money—the average time to complete a bachelor's degree is about 2 ½ years.

These new graduates join more than 57,000 alumni who have advanced their careers by earning a degree at WGU. According to a 2015 Harris Poll, 94 percent of recent WGU graduates are employed full time, compared with the national average of 89 percent. In addition, WGU graduates report a quicker return on their college investment—with an average increase in annual income of nearly \$11,000 in the first one to three years after graduation.

For more information about WGU's 30th semi-annual commencement or to watch the event live, go to [www.wgu.edu/wgu/commencement\\_winter2016](http://www.wgu.edu/wgu/commencement_winter2016).

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