

# News Releases

## WGU to Recognize More than 8,000 Graduates at Semi-Annual Commencement in Salt Lake City News Brief - 7/15/16

*Online, competency-based university has awarded more than 65,000 degrees since its founding*

SALT LAKE CITY — Sarah Biermann, of Lansdale, Pennsylvania, fought an uphill battle trying to provide for her young family without a college degree. Faced with caring for her infant daughter, Sarah was out of diapers, formula, had just 36 cents in her bank account, and vowed never to be in that situation again. The once struggling mother has now found career success as a nurse and will receive her master’s degree and be among the more than 8,000 graduates recognized at Western Governors University’s (WGU) 31st Semi-Annual Commencement.

Tomorrow, WGU will honor 8,047 graduates during its commencement at the Jon M. Huntsman Center in Salt Lake City at 9:45 a.m. Mountain Time. And although they earned their degrees online, more than 860 bachelor’s and master’s degree graduates from 38 states, along with more than 6,000 family members, friends, faculty, and staff, will attend commencement in person. Graduates, faculty, and staff who are unable to attend the ceremony in Salt Lake City can watch the entire program live via [streaming video](#).

Dell Loy Hansen, founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Wasatch Group, will deliver the commencement address. Hansen has been a key supporter of WGU since the university’s early days, and his contributions to need-based scholarships have enabled hundreds of underserved students to complete their degree. In addition, four of the graduates will share their stories at the ceremony: Sarah Biermann, M.S. Nursing – Education from Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Ronald Buie, B.S. Health Informatics from Slidell, Louisiana; Donna Law, B.S. Business Management from Cedar City, Utah; and Amanda Lisonbee, B.A. Special Education from Kimberly, Idaho.

During Saturday’s ceremony, WGU will confer 4,944 undergraduate and 3,103 graduate degrees in four disciplines: business, K–12 teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing. Nearly 40 percent of those graduating represent the first generation in their family to complete a college degree. These new graduates join more than 65,000 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 31st semi-annual commencement or to watch the event live, go to [www.wgu.edu/wgu/commencement\\_summer2016](http://www.wgu.edu/wgu/commencement_summer2016).

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WGU is an accredited online university offering online bachelor’s and master’s degree programs.

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