

N.C. becomes newest affiliate of online Western Governors University

RALEIGH — The Western Governors University is heading east.

WGU, an online college for nontraditional students, officially opened a North Carolina affiliate Oct. 5. The school already serves 1,100 students here but will expand publicity and access, said Catherine Truitt, the program's new chancellor.

Truitt, who was senior education policy adviser for former Gov. Pat McCrory, announced the school's opening alongside Lt. Gov. Dan Forest at a press conference.

WGU offices will be housed in Research Triangle Park.

WGU was founded in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors and began accepting students in 1999. Its mission is to offer low-cost, high-quality education nationwide. Headquartered in Salt Lake City, the nonprofit university serves 83,000 students in all 50 states. Other offices are spread across Arizona, Indiana, Washington, Nevada, Texas, Missouri, and Tennessee. WGU may add another affiliate in Ohio.

Truitt had been assistant vice president for academic and university programs at the UNC system's General Administration before assuming her new role.

UNC helped WGU secure accreditation in North

Carolina, she said.

The online school won't be competition for UNC. It actually complements the university system, she said.

WGU, which has no connection to "brick and mortar" universities, caters mostly to students between the ages of 30 and 40, including many military veterans.

"We have a lot of working adults who are stuck where they are, and a traditional university is just not

an option for them," Truitt said. "Which is why I say we're not a competitor."

The university employs 2,436 full-time and 782 part-time faculty members across the country. Many work from home.

Students enrolled at WGU already have some college experience. The university is divided into four colleges: business, IT, education, and health/nursing.

WGU partners with hospitals, school districts, and community colleges to provide clinical training for students. Tuition is \$3,000 a semester and covers the cost of books, Truitt said. Bachelor's and master's degrees are available.



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WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY. Catherine Truitt, shown here during an Oct. 5 press conference.

