



WGU Celebrates Commencement in Atlanta

WGU's 22nd semi-annual commencement was held February 11 in Atlanta, Georgia. For the first time in the university's history, WGU held commencement away from its Utah headquarters, making it easier for the many WGU graduates who live in the eastern United States to participate. February's commencement recognized more than 2,600 graduates—WGU's largest graduating class to date. More than 370 graduates attended the ceremony, some traveling from as far away as Dubai and Bethel, Alaska.

John M. Steele, Senior Vice President of Human Resources for Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), delivered the commencement address to an audience of graduates, faculty, families, and friends. He commended the graduates and WGU's competency-based learning, saying, "What we need are people who are truly versatile, able to learn efficiently and effectively, folks who are able to master change at the same pace as their company, and folks who are self-motivated. Those are the kind of people who I think will be most successful in the future. Those are the kind of people you represent as graduates of Western Governors University."

As he congratulated graduates on their choice to attend WGU, he candidly offered his email address encouraging the graduates in attendance to contact him about job

opportunities with HCA. He cheerfully added, "To make sure I don't lose you in the mix of all the emails that come in, put 'WGU Rocks' in the subject line of the email."

Sharing stories of success and accomplishment, four WGU graduates also spoke at the ceremony. Carlisha Moore (profile on page 4) from Dacula, Georgia, who earned a B.S. in Business Management, returned to college a second time as a wife and mother and recently started her own business. An RN with nearly 30 years of experience, Karen Marchand-Singleton from Beaufort, South Carolina, earned her B.S. in Nursing. Keith Sosbee, an IT technician from Lafayette, Georgia, completed his bachelor's degree in Information Technology—Network Design and Management while working full time. And Julie Laub (profile on page 4), a full-time mother, trained as an organic chemist, earned an M.A. in Teaching (Chemistry 5-12) while working full time as an advanced placement Chemistry teacher.

More than 1,500 WGU students live in Georgia, and nearly 100 of the graduates attending commencement were Georgia residents. During the ceremony, the university conferred 1,583 bachelor's degrees and 1,071 graduate degrees in Business, Teacher Education, Information Technology, and Health Professions, including Nursing.



John M. Steele, Sr. VP of HR for Hospital Corporation of America, speaks at the WGU Winter Commencement.

Testimony Before Senate HELP Committee Showcases WGU's Competency-Based Learning Model



On February 2, President Mendenhall testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions at the Committee's hearing on "Innovations in College Affordability."

Dr. Mendenhall was one of four higher education leaders who, along with U.S. Undersecretary of Education Marsha Kanter, recommended ways to improve higher education productivity and combat the rising cost of a college education.

"Even with the improvements in online learning platforms and resources, the majority of online education is simply classroom education delivered through the Internet, instructor-led, and time-based. As a result, most online higher education is no more affordable than traditional education," Dr. Mendenhall told the committee. "In contrast, WGU actually uses technology to provide interactive instruction that allows students to learn at their own pace."

He urged the senators to support legislation that would enable and encourage innovations like competency-based learning in online and technology-driven education. He also asked them to consider a financial aid "Demonstration Project" that would allow for testing new models and innovations that could later be applied on a national scale.

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WGU President Invited to White House to Discuss College Affordability



Above: WGU President Bob Mendenhall meets President Obama at the White House.

In December 2011, WGU President Bob Mendenhall was one of a dozen college presidents invited to the White House to participate in a roundtable discussion about college affordability hosted by President Obama.

The "star presidents," as the Washington Post called Mendenhall and his colleagues, were asked to join the President, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and other senior members of the administration to share ideas for reducing costs and increasing the productivity of postsecondary education in the United States.

The meeting, which took place one week after Secretary Duncan gave a speech urging higher education officials to "think more creatively—and with much greater urgency" about what the country can do about spiraling college costs and student debt, also centered around discussion about innovations in higher education, including technology and online learning.

"If we're going to address the 37 million adults with some college and no degree, we can't just tweak the existing model," President Mendenhall told the group. "In most of higher education, technology is an add-on cost that doesn't change the model at all. We need to fundamentally change the faculty role, and use technology to do the teaching."

Dr. Mark Milliron Appointed Chancellor of WGU Texas



In November, Dr. Mark Milliron became the first chancellor of WGU Texas, WGU's newest state-based university. Prior to joining WGU Texas, Dr. Milliron served as Deputy Director for Postsecondary Improvement at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The founder and former CEO of Catalytic Learning International, Dr. Milliron also served as an Endowed Fellow, Senior Lecturer, and Director of the National Institute of Staff and Organizational Development at the University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Milliron has dedicated much of his career to success in higher education, serving as Vice President for Education and Medical Practice at SAS, the world's largest

private software company, and as President and CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College. He was a member of the Western Governors University Board of Trustees from 2004 to 2010.

"I look forward to working with the state's higher education, business, and community leaders to make our citizens aware of the new opportunity for completing a bachelor's or master's degree that WGU Texas provides," said Dr. Milliron. "Even more, I am committed to building a vibrant, engaged community of WGU Texas students and alumni supporting each other."

McKinsey & Company Director Joins Board of Trustees



Lenny Mendonca, Director and Senior Partner in the Washington, D.C. and San Francisco offices for global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company, has been elected to the Western Governors University Board of Trustees.

Mendonca is currently the leader of McKinsey's U.S. state and local public sector. He previously led the company's knowledge development and headed the McKinsey Global Institute and the firm's communications, including McKinsey Quarterly. He served for a decade on the McKinsey Shareholder Council (its board of directors). His client work is centered on helping corporate, government, and nonprofit clients solve difficult management challenges.

Mendonca is the Chairman Emeritus of the Bay Area Council and the Economic Institute of the Bay Area. He also serves on several boards, committees, and councils throughout the Bay Area, including the New America Foundation, Common Cause, the Bay Area Science and Innovation Consortium, the California Business for Educational Excellence Foundation, and is founder and chairman of Fuse Corps.

"Lenny's knowledge of higher education will make him a valuable addition to the university's board of trustees," said President Mendenhall. "We are honored to have him on our board and welcome his support during this time of incredible growth for the university."

Learn more. Become more. Online.

WGU Indiana Recognized by the State for Quality and Flexibility

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE) has recognized WGU Indiana for its academic quality in a new strategic plan, "Reaching Higher, Achieving More: A Success Agenda for Higher Education in Indiana." The state's governing body for public colleges and universities, the CHE, cited WGU Indiana as the university where flexibility meets quality. "WGU Indiana's flexibility helps students juggle the demands of work, family, and school. Its competency-based model allows students to progress more quickly and graduate when they demonstrate a mastery of competencies required for a particular degree."

The plan was compiled to help create more pathways to degree completion, to safeguard college affordability, and to ensure academic quality at all levels of Indiana's postsecondary education system.

"Completing college has become the new passport to prosperity and opportunity for Hoosiers today," Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers said. "We seek to establish one of the best and most student-

centered higher education systems in the nation, so Indiana graduates are prepared for the future."

Although WGU Indiana has more than 2,100 students across the state, Indiana is home to more than 840,000 residents who have started college but not graduated. Specific goals set by the Commission include increasing higher education attainment of Hoosier adults to 60 percent of Indiana's population by 2025.

"We applaud the Commission for its insightful agenda brought forth through the 'Reaching Higher, Achieving More' plan," said WGU Indiana Chancellor Allison Barber. "The agenda's sense of urgency, coupled with focused and attainable objectives, sets the stage for what all of us in higher education should be working to accomplish."



Above: Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers and WGU Indiana Chancellor Allison Barber.

WGU Washington Doubles Enrollment in First Six Months

Since its launch last July, WGU Washington has doubled its enrollment to more than 2,000 students. Established by the State Legislature in April 2011, WGU Washington is one of three state-based universities.

As part of the university's launch, WGU Washington and the state's 34 community and technical colleges signed a partnership agreement designed to make it seamless for community and technical college graduates to transfer to WGU Washington to complete a bachelor's degree. Currently, more than 1,400 of the students enrolled in WGU Washington completed coursework at one of the state's community and technical colleges.

"With each year, the necessity of a bachelor's or master's degree to succeed in Washington's job market increases," said WGU Washington Chancellor Jean Floten. "Today, there are some 950,000 Washingtonians—about a quarter of our workforce—who started but never finished their college degrees. WGU Washington is honored to have been entrusted by the state with providing opportunities for these working Washingtonians. The 2,000-student milestone is one that makes us very proud—but it's just a drop in the bucket of the work we have ahead of us."

Chancellor Floten and WGU Washington staff members have been building awareness for the new university by hosting and sponsoring events statewide. Key events from WGU Washington's first six months include sponsoring

"WGU Washington Day" at the Puyallup Fair, sponsorships at sporting events, a tour of the billboard across Washington, and an online billboard video contest for students. WGU Washington representatives have met with education officials, employers, and legislators, and have participated in nursing and teacher conferences. Chancellor Floten regularly hosts social and networking events for students and alumni, who are located in 38 of the state's 39 counties.



Below: Students pose in front of the WGU Washington billboard.



GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT: Carlisha Moore, B.S. in Business Management

As someone who has always set high standards and expectations for herself, Carlisha Moore entered college with several scholarships at the age of 16. Two years into her college career, due to unforeseen financial difficulties, she had to quit school. "I was positive that I would never receive my bachelor's degree. I looked into different trades, and tried to find ways to sell myself for jobs with a few college credits and a high school diploma, but I knew a college degree was what I was missing in my life," said Carlisha.

Within four years of quitting college, Carlisha became a wife and a mother and began working full time. "I was ashamed that I hadn't finished college and needed a school that understood that I am educated, I have put in work, and I just needed to finish what I started."

Carlisha spent nearly three months searching for an accredited and affordable online program that would allow

her to keep working and spend time with her family. She enrolled in WGU's Business Management program and soon realized that the education she was receiving was more than she could have hoped for. "I learned more at WGU in the past year and a half than I have in my entire college career. I was able to accelerate through the subjects I was familiar with and work at a slower pace on the things that I struggled with. My mentor told me to just take my program one step at a time. That worked for me," says Carlisha. "Now that I have my degree, I feel a sense of peace. It's been a long time coming, and I feel so accomplished!"

In her speech at WGU's 2012 Winter Commencement, Carlisha said that above all else, she can now be an example to her two small daughters. "They can see that through all adversity and struggles I stand here today speaking in front of thousands of people as a college graduate. Western Governors University allowed me to see reality in my dreams ... I graduated and am happy to be living in my 'now,' because it's a 'now' that I can be proud of!"



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GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT: Julie Laub, M.A. in Teaching (Chemistry 5-12)

Julie Laub has always loved chemistry. When she was 12 years old, her father took her to work with him—he worked at a power plant—so she could get ideas for her science fair project. He let her help him with the small tests and sampling that chemists often use. Julie was hooked immediately. After graduating from college with a bachelor's degree in chemistry, she worked in a lab as a chemist for several years before leaving to raise a family.

Fifteen years later, again with encouragement from her father, Julie decided to pursue a second career as a chemistry teacher. She considered a number of colleges, but found that most of them were not flexible enough for her busy life—Julie has five children! "I narrowed it down to an online school. I had read comments about how strong the education was at WGU, so the flexibility and affordability only sealed the deal for me," said Julie.

After completing her first term, Julie began work at a nearby high school where a position for a chemistry teacher had just become available. "My supervising teacher recommended that the district interview me. I went through

a flurried process—three interviews in one week. By the end I was offered and then accepted a full-time teaching position," said Julie. "The quality of education from WGU has been outstanding. Being in the classroom, I feel very well equipped. From the lesson plans to strategy, WGU has made me what my principal calls a 'master teacher.'"

Julie now teaches International Baccalaureate first- and second-year Chemistry, Advanced Placement (AP) Chemistry, and Honors Chemistry for the Davis School District in northern Utah.

