Nevada’s Only Online, Competency-Based University

Nevada’s only nonprofit online university, WGU Nevada was created through a partnership between the state of Nevada and nationally recognized Western Governors University to provide Nevadans with flexible, affordable access to quality higher education. WGU Nevada was established by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval with the support of a $2 million grant from USA Funds.

Approximately 29% of Nevadans have completed a two- or four-year degree, and an additional 27% of the population have completed some college courses but have not finished a degree. WGU Nevada’s focus is on helping these busy adults, who are already in the workforce, complete respected, accredited degrees that will advance their careers by providing an affordable, flexible option.

Designed to meet the needs of working adults, WGU Nevada’s innovative learning model, called competency-based education, measures learning rather than time spent in class. Students study and learn at their own pace, completing courses as soon as they demonstrate mastery of the subject matter. This allows students to move quickly through what they already know so they can focus on what they still need to learn. As a result, many students can accelerate their studies—the average time to a bachelor’s degree at WGU is less than 3 years.

Key benefits to students include:

• **Accessible.** Online degree programs and learning resources are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

• **Accredited.** Degrees are granted under the current accreditation of Western Governors University, which is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

• **Affordable.** Tuition at WGU Nevada is charged at a flat rate of $3,000 per 6-month term for most programs, regardless of the number of courses completed. WGU is self-sustaining on its tuition, which has not increased since 2008, and receives no funding from the state. WGU Nevada students are eligible for federal financial aid, including Pell Grants and subsidized and unsubsidized student loans.

• **Relevant.** Degree programs address workforce shortages and meet employers’ needs.

• **Supported.** Individualized mentoring is provided to each student, from enrollment through graduation.

A subsidiary of nationally recognized Western Governors University, WGU Nevada offers more than 50 bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in the high-demand career fields of business, K-12 teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing.

“Affordable access to accredited education is the key to our future and essential to bringing more jobs to Nevada. WGU Nevada will make it possible for more Nevadans to earn the degrees they need to advance their careers and provide better for their families.”

—Governor Brian Sandoval, State of Nevada
The mission of WGU Nevada is to expand access to affordable higher education for Nevada residents through online, competency-based degree programs that address key workforce needs.

Making College Affordable

WGU Nevada is committed to keeping college affordable, and as a result, WGU students are able to graduate with less debt, or none at all. Average debt at graduation for WGU students earning a bachelor’s degree is about $10,000 less than the national average. In addition, the 3-year loan default rate for WGU students is 6.6%, compared to 13.7% nationally.

WGU Nevada also offers a number of need-based scholarships. In 2014, WGU awarded more than $2.5 million in scholarships to its students.

Providing a Quicker Return on Investment

A degree from WGU pays for itself faster. WGU students experienced an average increase in income of $10,400 in the first one to three years after graduation, significantly higher than the national average. With an average cost of $18,000 for a bachelor’s degree, the return on investment of a WGU degree is about 2 years.

Benefits for Active Military and Veterans

WGU was honored as a “Top Military Friendly School” for 2014 by Military Advanced Education magazine. Degree programs are approved for tuition assistance for active-duty, reserve, and National Guard personnel. In addition, veterans attending WGU Nevada are eligible for education benefits through the GI Bill. Competitive scholarships are also available for active-duty military, reservists, military spouses, and veterans.

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Focus on Student Success

WGU Nevada measures its success through the success of its students. Enrolling students is not the goal—the goal is getting them to graduation.

2014 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

NSSE is a national survey that measures student engagement. In 2014, NSSE polled over 350,000 students from more than 600 institutions. Students rated WGU significantly higher than other institutions in the following key areas:

- Time spent per week on studies—13% higher
- Acquisition of job-related knowledge and skills—13% higher
- Rating of entire educational experience—16% higher
- Quality of interactions with faculty—20% higher
- Quality of academic support—23% higher
- Would attend same institution again—25% higher

“Because of the unique way WGU is structured, I was able to apply actual situations I was already facing to my studies. It felt amazing to not only learn new healthcare and leadership concepts, but to put them into action the very next day.”

–Derrick Glum, MBA Healthcare Management, Reno, NV

WGU’s one-year retention rate in 2014 was 79%, while the average one-year retention rate at U.S. public four-year institutions was 73%.
Graduate Success

As the state’s newest university, WGU Nevada is focused on the higher education needs of the state’s working adults, offering degree programs designed to meet employers’ needs.

A 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index, which compared 4,000 WGU graduate responses against national data, found that WGU grads are more engaged at work and reported better overall well-being than the national average. According to the study:

- WGU alumni are at least twice as likely as graduates of other institutions to be thriving in all five elements of well-being—purpose, social, financial, community, and physical.
- WGU graduates are more likely to be engaged employees—15 percent higher than the national average.
- WGU alumni are almost twice as likely to be emotionally attached to their university than alumni from other types of universities—proof that personal connections are possible in distance learning.

Employer Satisfaction

2014 Survey of Employers by Harris Poll

99% said that WGU graduates meet or exceed expectations; 92% said WGU graduates exceed expectations.

93% rated the “soft skills” of WGU graduates as equal to or better than graduates from other institutions.

94% rated WGU graduates’ job performance as good as or better than the job performance of other graduates; 53% rated it better.

96% said that their WGU graduates were prepared for their jobs; 89% said that they were very well or extremely prepared.

“Trying to cherry-pick college courses at brick-and-mortars didn’t really work so well. Then I found WGU online and it wound up being too perfect, especially since it was competency-based. I would not have my degree and would still be in school today if I had not chosen WGU.”

—Jennifer Knight, B.A. Special Education, Las Vegas, NV

nevada.wgu.edu
At WGU, students work at their own pace with the flexibility to adjust to life’s inevitable ups and downs. And while many traditional colleges still struggle to support non-traditional students, WGU has paired each student with an extraordinary mentor who offers support to help them succeed. —Ted Mitchell, U.S. Under Secretary of Education

A Better Learning Experience

Competency-Based Education

WGU Nevada’s unique approach to teaching and learning is specifically designed for adult learners. This approach, called competency-based learning, is based on the understanding that each student comes to college knowing different things and with the ability to learn at different rates. WGU Nevada’s competency-based academic model allows students to earn their degrees by demonstrating what they know and can do rather than spending time in class to accumulate credit hours.

WGU works with employers to define what students in each degree program need to know and be able to do (the competencies) in order to graduate. Once the competencies have been defined, learning resources, which include the best distance-delivered content available, are mapped to the competencies of each degree program. Then, assessments, which include objective exams, portfolios, papers, projects, and other performance tasks, are aligned to those competencies. Students demonstrate that they have mastered the required competencies by passing the assessments in their degree programs with the equivalent of a “B” grade or better. When they have passed all of the assessments, they are awarded a degree.

Faculty Mentors

Rather than serving as traditional instructors, WGU Nevada faculty members serve as mentors. Unlike faculty at most online universities, WGU Faculty Mentors are full-time employees with benefits. This allows them to focus on helping students succeed.

Each student is assigned a Student Mentor, who provides one-on-one coaching, guidance, and support from enrollment through graduation. Student Mentors “meet” with students via telephone regularly to help guide them through their coursework and support their learning. Course Mentors, who have earned a Ph.D. in their field, are subject matter experts who offer guidance through every course and support students as they engage in specific sections of the WGU curriculum. This distinctive element of the WGU Nevada model is key—it provides the human touch and connection that is often lacking in distance education.

96% of employers said that their WGU graduates were prepared for their jobs.
WGU Nevada Programs

WGU Nevada offers bachelor’s, post-baccalaureate, and master’s degrees in high-demand career fields. The university has four colleges:

College of Business

Offering degrees in business management—including healthcare and IT specialties—as well as human resource management, marketing, and accounting, WGU Nevada’s business programs are focused on producing graduates that will be highly competitive in the business world. Courses are developed with employer input, incorporating real-world competencies into curriculum.

College of Information Technology

WGU Nevada’s College of IT offers students world-class technology programs and curriculum in network administration, software development, and security. Degree programs incorporate the latest industry-recognized certifications (including CIW, CCNA, MCSA, OCP, and CompTIA)—at no added cost.

Teachers College

WGU Nevada offers NCATE-accredited bachelor’s, post-baccalaureate, and master’s degrees for aspiring teachers as well as current teachers who wish to advance their education. WGU is the largest producer of math and science teachers in the country. In addition, in its 2014 review of teacher education programs, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) ranked WGU’s secondary teacher education program #1, and its elementary teacher education program #16. WGU was one of only 10 institutions—and the only online university—to be included on the top lists for both elementary and secondary education.

College of Health Professions

WGU Nevada’s College of Health Professions offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing, health informatics, and healthcare management. All nursing programs are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 530, Washington DC 20036, 202-887-6791). The B.S. in Health Informatics is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM).

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) rated WGU’s secondary education program first in the nation.

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WGU NEVADA
PROMISE
We help our students achieve their dreams for a degree and career success by providing a personal, flexible, and affordable education based on real-world competencies.