



## ANNUAL REPORT 2011

WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY

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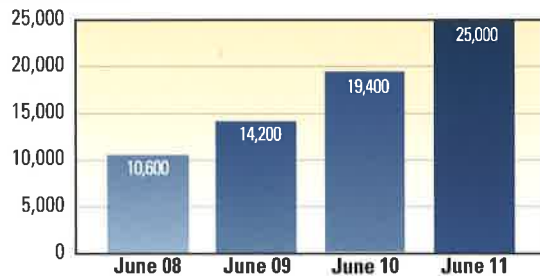
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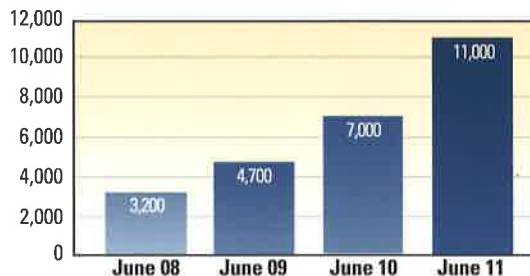
# A Year of Growth

## Enrollment



Compound 5-year annual growth rate in enrollment is 35%.

## Graduates



Compound 5-year annual growth rate in number of graduates is 60%.

## Expansion of WGU State Universities

### WGU Indiana

- Created June 10, 2010, by Governor Mitch Daniels as Indiana's eighth state university
- First year enrollment growth of 400%
- 116 employees in Indiana
- Enrollment has grown from 1% of WGU students to 10% of new WGU enrollments
- WGU Indiana students reside in 91 of 92 of Indiana's counties



Governor Daniels with official WGU Indiana Dodge Journey.



WGU Washington billboard in Ephrata, WA.

### WGU Washington

- Established by WA State Legislature in April 2011
- Signed statewide agreement with community colleges in May 2011
- Launched with "one billboard" ad campaign
- WGU Washington students reside in 38 of Washington's 39 counties
- Early enrollment figures are up by more than 200%

### WGU Texas

- Created August 3, 2011, by Governor Rick Perry
- Formal launch at State Capitol on September 21, 2011

*"Working Texans who cannot pursue their higher education goals on college campuses certainly should reap the benefits of WGU Texas' online, competency-based model ... it will help address our state's key workforce needs while offering affordable education opportunities to Texans."*

—Texas State Senator Judith Zaffirini



WGU students and graduates celebrate the launch of WGU Texas.



# Western Governors University

Established in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors, WGU is the only accredited, nonprofit university in the U.S. offering online, competency-based degree programs.

WGU is unique in higher education in two important ways, resulting in increased productivity, a higher level of student support, and shorter times to graduation. First, WGU uses a competency-based learning model that allows students to earn their degrees by demonstrating what they know and can do rather than spending time in class to accumulate credit hours.

Required competencies for each degree program are defined in collaboration with external program councils, ensuring that students graduate with the knowledge and skills employers need. Designed for adult learners, competency-based education enables students to move quickly through material they already know so they can focus on what they still need to learn. This model dramatically shortens the time to graduation—the

average time to complete a bachelor's degree is 30 months.

The second unique attribute of WGU is the use of technology-based learning. While most online universities simply use technology to distribute classroom education—classes led by a professor with a fixed schedule and syllabus—WGU actually uses technology to deliver instruction and content. This changes the role of the faculty from that of a “sage on the stage” to a “guide on the side.” WGU faculty, all full-time, serve as mentors, providing individualized support and guidance to students.

The university offers more than 50 bachelor's, master's, and post-baccalaureate degree programs in the key workforce areas of Business, Information Technology, K-12 Teacher Education (including initial teacher licensure), and Health Professions, including Nursing.

Enrollment by College as of June 30, 2011

Business	7,269	29%
Teachers College	10,026	40%
Health Professions (including Nursing)	3,008	12%
Information Technology	4,763	19%
TOTAL	25,066	

Undergraduate/Graduate Distribution of Students

Undergraduate	19,301	77%
Graduate	5,765	23%
TOTAL	25,066	

## Student Demographics

- The average age is 36 (age range from 17 to 79).
- 64% of students are employed full time; 14% work part time.
- 74% of WGU students are underserved:
  - Ethnic minority: 21%
  - Low income: 37%
  - Rural: 22%
  - First-generation college student: 42%

## Financial Aid

- 79% of WGU students receive some type of financial aid.
- 45% of WGU students receive Pell grants.
- WGU's student loan default rate is 4.9%.



*“Today, more than any other time in our lifetimes, increasing the number of highly educated people in our country is absolutely essential. Western Governors University is playing an important role in teaching tomorrow’s leaders how to compete in a global marketplace.”*

—The Honorable  
John W. Hickenlooper,  
Governor of Colorado

*WGU is self-sustaining on tuition of \$5,800 per 12-month year for most programs. Tuition has only increased by \$200 in the past six years.*

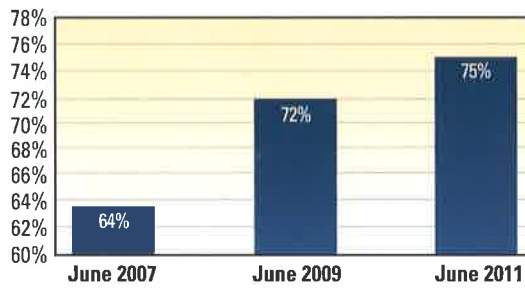


*"Innovative institutions like WGU are vital. They represent the next step in the evolution of higher education. Schools like WGU are results-oriented, student-centered, and responsive to the needs of individuals, employers, and society. These institutions are helping to redefine what college is. They are paving the way for a much needed new approach ... and this new approach is working."*

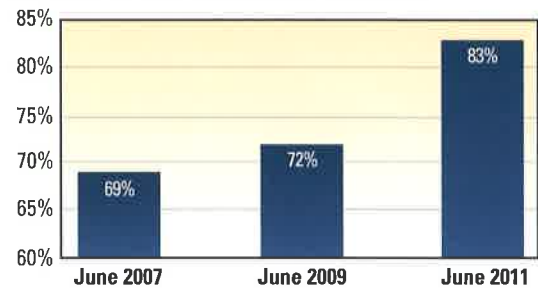
—Jamie P. Merisotis,  
President,  
Lumina Foundation  
for Education

## Focus on Student Success

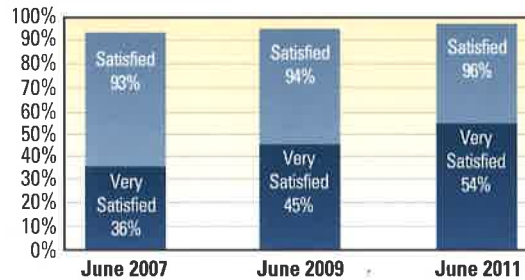
One-Year Retention



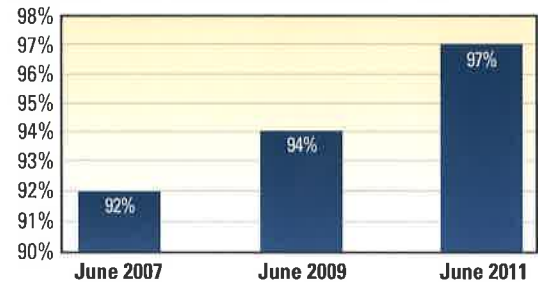
Students in Good Academic Standing



Student Satisfaction



Students Who Would Recommend WGU



*The number of WGU graduates increased by 74% in FY 2010.*

## Student Comments

"WGU has allowed me the opportunity to spread my wings with the knowledge I am gaining. I am so proud to be at WGU ... everyone needs to know how valuable WGU really is for students like me and the changes it has made in our lives."

"It seems backward that you can go to a brick and mortar school (as I did repeatedly) and feel so abandoned at the door, then go to WGU online (where you see no one) and feel like an individual with needs—someone there knows you, cares about you, and is there for you! Would that all students could feel that!"

"I will be completing my Demonstration Teaching this coming fall and feel very prepared for the task. Every person I have worked with during my tenure here has been helpful and supportive—people in the financial aid department, course mentors, tech folks, and my amazing personal cheerleader/mentor. I can't imagine this adven-

ture without her. She has been an invaluable link in this whole process. I am so grateful I was sent in the direction of WGU. It has enriched my life beyond measure."

"Having an assigned mentor is one of the great things about WGU. Through thick and thin, my mentor was there at least once a week to provide guidance and encouragement. Even when classes and tasks seemed insurmountable to me, he was always there to help me over the hump and get me through it."

"Being a past president of the alumni association for my undergraduate university, I know the value, in both tangible and intangible terms, of ensuring that students are challenged, engaged and supported. [My mentor] does all of these things, is a credit to WGU, and represents the university with a high degree of professionalism and obvious care for the success of those he mentors."





## The Facts About Western Governors University

In recent testimony delivered to the Oregon Education Investment Board, the establishment of a partnership between the state of Oregon and Western Governors University (WGU) was opposed, citing information about the university gathered from online and media sources. This document is provided to address the concerns raised and furnish accurate information about the university's mission, learning model, and faculty.

### **About WGU**

Western Governors University (WGU) is a nonprofit university that was founded by 19 U.S. governors, including Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, to expand postsecondary education access and success. The university was not created to replace traditional schools—it was designed to meet the educational needs of working adults (the average student age is 36) who are not able to attend traditional colleges and universities. If established, the partnership between the state and WGU will simply provide Oregon residents with more knowledge about another quality college option.

WGU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the same body that credentials the Oregon public universities like the University of Oregon and Portland State. The university offers rigorous, comprehensive bachelor's and master's degree programs in four high-demand career fields: business, teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing.

Today, more than 500 Oregonians are enrolled at WGU, and approximately 250 WGU graduates live and work in the state.

### **Competency-Based Learning**

WGU uses a unique academic model we call competency-based learning that allows students to earn their degrees by demonstrating that they have mastered course materials rather than by logging time in class. Technology is used to deliver course material and instruction—students move at their own pace through learning resources (textbooks, interactive simulations, webinars, and other courseware). They advance by successfully completing assessments that measure their mastery of course subject matter. These assessments can be proctored exams, written papers and assignments, or performance assessments. This model allows students with prior education and experience to move quickly through material they have already mastered so they can focus on the material they still need to learn. As a result, many students can accelerate their progress toward a degree, and the average time to complete a bachelor's degree is 30 months.

### **WGU Faculty**

WGU's competency-based learning model changes the role of the faculty from that of a "sage on the stage"—an instructor leading a class of students, all moving at the same pace, regardless of knowledge, learning style, and ability—to that of a "guide on the side"—a mentor who works one-on-one with each student, providing guidance, coaching, tutoring, and support. WGU faculty, called mentors, do not teach courses, do research, develop curriculum. Their only role is to focus on their students, providing them with the individualized support and instruction they need to be successful.

Grading is done by WGU's team of evaluators, who hold advanced degrees and have no contact with students. This structure allows for a more objective assessment of student performance as well as supporting a more nurturing relationship between students and their mentors. Evaluators write

extensive comments on each assignment, explaining why the student passed or failed to prove mastery of the requisite skill. No letter grades are given, but in order to pass, students must earn a score that is equivalent to a “B” grade or better.

### Student Mentors

Upon enrollment, each WGU student is assigned a mentor—the university refers to these faculty members as student mentors—who will work with the student until he or she graduates. Students meet with their mentors regularly by phone (at least every other week), and are in touch frequently via email. Student mentors help students plan their coursework, studies, and assessments, and offer coaching and encouragement, keeping students on track and eliminating barriers to student success. They help students stay connected and engaged, spending many hours in one-on-one conversations with each of their students.

The majority of WGU student mentors have completed master’s degrees and have work experience that is relevant to their students’ area of study.

### Course Mentors

Course mentors are subject matter experts who support students as they work through specific coursework at WGU. They work closely with students, leading online discussions and conference calls, answering questions, and offering additional instruction or tutoring in course material when needed.

More than 95% of WGU course mentors have completed a PhD, EdD, or other form of doctorate or professional degree.

### Program Faculty

Program faculty at WGU are academic experts who define the essential competencies for each subject area by working with external councils of industry experts, developing course of study, and identifying the best learning resources. They work closely with mentors to help facilitate student success. The majority of program faculty members have completed advance degrees.

WGU faculty members are key to ensuring that students complete their degrees, and the effectiveness of their work is reflected in the National Student of Student Engagement. This annual survey polls students at traditional and online universities to gauge student involvement and gather student opinions of the support provided by their schools. In the most recent study, students rated WGU higher than other institutions in the study in several key areas

- Entire Educational Experience
- Supportive Campus Environment
- Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising

### **WGU Students and Student Success**

WGU serves nontraditional students. As mentioned above, the average student age is 36, and more than two thirds of WGU students have jobs and families. Most undergraduate WGU students enroll with some college experience—they started college, and for a number of reasons, were not able to finish.

A comment made by Dr. Mendenhall was referenced in testimony to the Oregon Education Investment Board: “Most WGU students would have a hard time getting accepted into a four-year state school;” was taken out of context. For undergraduate programs, WGU does accept students who might not be able to meet the admission requirements of a four-year state school for a number of reasons: test scores, lack of success in prior college efforts, availability to attend classes (due to work and family

responsibilities). However, WGU strives to admit students with a high probability of succeeding. More about WGU's admissions policy can be found at <http://www.wgu.edu/admissions/requirements>.

The graduation rate cited at the hearing was published by the Department of Education. This rate only tracks first-time, full-time college students, which means that for WGU, this rate applies to about 18% of students who enrolled at WGU six years ago. The graduation rate calculated internally for all WGU students during that time period is approximately 37%. In addition, WGU's programs have changed significantly over the past six years, so we expect the number to improve over time.

Using independent polling firms, WGU annually surveys students, graduates, and their employers to measure their satisfaction with WGU. Some key results include:

- In the most recent student satisfaction survey, 96% of students reported that they were satisfied with WGU; 55% indicated that they were very satisfied.
- 96% of graduates surveyed would recommend WGU to others; 65% got a raise, promotion, or new job responsibility as a result of their WGU degree.
- 98% of employers rated WGU grads equal to or better than graduates of other universities.

In Oregon, WGU students and graduates hold responsible positions in companies such as Nike, Hewlett Packard, GE Healthcare, Lockheed Martin, and Portland Community College.

### **Tuition and Affordability**

For most WGU programs, tuition for a 12-month year is just under \$6,000. This includes e-texts and access to all learning resources. Tuition has increased by only \$200 in the past six years. Because WGU students can work at their own pace, they may complete as many courses in any term as they are able. This also allows many students to accelerate, saving both time and money.

It is also critical to note that WGU is self-sustaining on its tuition, receiving no ongoing funding from state or federal governments. Nearly 80% of WGU students receive some type of financial aid. At 4.9%, the student loan default rate is very low for that of a university serving nontraditional students.

### **Degree Programs**

WGU offers only bachelor's and master's degree programs four high-demand career fields: Business, Teacher Education, Information Technology, and Health Professions, including Nursing.

Community colleges do offer many online courses, and WGU works closely with community college systems to enable students to transfer seamlessly to WGU to complete their bachelor's degrees.

### **Employment**

Because our faculty members work with students via telephone and through the Internet, the majority of them work remotely, and the university currently has 12 faculty members living in Oregon. A partnership with WGU could result in the hiring of additional Oregonians.

### **Designed to Provide Additional Opportunity**

WGU's state branded universities (now in Indiana, Washington, and Texas) were established and endorsed to add to the states' higher education family of opportunities, not to replace or eliminate existing colleges, universities or staff. If Oregon decides to expand a partnership with WGU, it will simply offer Oregonians another affordable, high-quality option for completing a bachelor's or master's degree.

## WGU Performance in 2011 National Study of Student Engagement

The National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE) polls students at traditional and online universities nationwide to gauge student involvement and gather student opinions of the support provided by their schools.

### Rating of Entire Educational Experience

(Excellent = 4, Good = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1)

Component	WGU	Private Nonprofit Universities	All Institutions in the Study
First Year	3.62	3.25	3.28
Senior	3.58	3.23	3.27

### Level of Academic Challenge

(mean of scaled scores)

Component	WGU	Private Nonprofit Universities	All Institutions in the Study
First Year	53.0	53.9	54.5
Senior	59.7	57.9	58.0

### Supportive Campus Environment

(mean of scaled scores)

Component	WGU	Private Nonprofit Universities	All Institutions in the Study
First Year	71.2	63.4	63.8
Senior	67.6	60.0	60.1

### Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising

(Excellent = 4, Good = 3, Fair = 2, Poor = 1)

Component	WGU	Private Nonprofit Universities	All Institutions in the Study
First Year	3.64	3.11	3.13
Senior	3.64	2.96	2.98

### Would you attend the same institution again?

(Definitely Yes = 4, Probably Yes = 3, Probably No = 2, Definitely No = 1)

Component	WGU	Private Nonprofit Universities	All Institutions in the Study
First Year	3.79	3.25	3.29
Senior	3.66	3.20	3.24



*"The affordability and flexibility offered by WGU provides another alternative for students already in the workforce who may have long dreamed of a college education, but perhaps the opportunity was lost."*

—The Honorable  
Rick Perry,  
Governor of Texas

*"If officials frame their responsibility in terms of the people in their states, then [colleges like] Western Governors must be viewed as powerful allies in the fight to provide more effective higher education and training."*

— "Disrupting College"  
Clayton M. Christensen, Michael B. Horn, Louis Caldera, Louis Soares



# Graduate Success



## Graduate Satisfaction

(2011 Survey of 3,979 Graduates Conducted by Lighthouse Research and WGU)

94% would choose WGU if making the choice again.

96% would recommend WGU to others.

73% found the competencies they gained at WGU directly related to their work.

65% got a raise, promotion, or new job responsibility as a result of their WGU degree.

## Graduate Comments

"I am grateful everyday for the education I received at WGU. It was difficult at times, but every task and assignment I completed at WGU was relevant to exactly what I'm doing now. It feels good to be referred to as an 'expert' in a field!"

"WGU's mission is a lot larger than just 'improving quality and expanding access to post-secondary educational opportunities.'" Because our country's strength is ultimately based on the education level of our people, WGU is serving a much greater purpose. A while back, I overheard my 14-year-old daughter tell one of her friends that after she graduated from college, she wanted to go on and get a master's degree like her mom. This was the best gift that WGU had given me."

"If not for my experience at WGU, I might never have considered additional education through an online format, especially at the graduate level. I gained a measure of confidence in my ability to balance work, home, and school that I hope to improve upon over the next three years or so. WGU "infected" me with a desire to reach for more education and to hopefully improve myself in my profession."

"I just got the call. I got the Elementary Art position at the local elementary school!!!! It is truly a dream come true!! I could have never accomplished this without my mentor and WGU!!"

"WGU offers an amazing program that has been flexible to fit my family's needs."

"The academic program at WGU was challenging and rewarding ... I will recommend the university and its programs to all of my colleagues and friends who are considering an advanced degree."

"The thing about WGU that I have never found in the past is that I feel like I have a whole team of cheerleaders behind me ... Not only am I accountable to myself and my goals, but somehow (real or not) having that feeling of being accountable to you and to my mentor, gives me that little extra push ... It makes the difference between pushing myself to finish the last ten pages of that chapter in my textbook or putting it down."

"At the time that I graduated, I was fairly sure that my future with the local K-12 school district was secure. Then the economic crisis and a change in administration altered the plans. Although I still had a job, it was not in the position I had been preparing myself for. I decided to find out exactly what my degree paired with my experience could get me, and here I am—at the end of my first week as the Director of Human Resources for Mohave Community College. The move has been terribly exciting and immensely fulfilling. Thanks to WGU for offering the type of program that allowed me to become a college graduate, while working full time and taking care of my family. I am now reaping the benefits."

"The academic program at WGU was challenging and rewarding ... I will recommend the university and its programs to all of my colleagues and friends who are considering an advanced degree."

*WGU graduates are realizing their goals for career and professional achievement. Approximately 76% report that they are employed in their degree field.*



# Employer Acceptance

*WGU students graduate with degrees that prepare them to succeed in their careers.*

## Employer Satisfaction

(2011 Survey of Employers by Harris Interactive)

- 98% agreed that WGU graduates meet or exceed their expectations.
- 100% would not hesitate to hire another WGU graduate.
- 97% rate the performance of WGU grads as excellent.
- 98% rate WGU grads as equal to or better than graduates of other universities; 42% rate them better.
- 98% consider WGU graduates strongly prepared for their jobs.



*WGU graduates hold responsible positions with major employers.*

## College of Business Graduates

98% of employers rate the “soft skills” of WGU grads as equal to or better than grads from other colleges and universities.

Marketing Program Manager	<i>Agilent Technologies</i>
Program Manager	<i>AT&amp;T</i>
Risk Manager	<i>Bank of America</i>
Project Manager	<i>Boeing Company</i>
Project Control Analyst	<i>ConocoPhillips</i>
Manager	<i>Ernst &amp; Young</i>
HR Specialist	<i>Fluor Corporation</i>
Project Manager	<i>General Dynamics</i>
Supply Chain Manager	<i>Hewlett-Packard</i>
Technical Solution Architect	<i>IBM</i>
Systems Analyst	<i>Lockheed Martin</i>
Senior Support Engineer	<i>Microsoft</i>
Program Management	<i>Nike</i>
Director	<i>Oracle</i>
Process Specialist	<i>PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP</i>
Principal Engineer	<i>Raytheon</i>

## College of Health Professions Graduates

100% of Health Professions employers attribute improvement in WGU grads’ “evidence-based practice” to WGU.

Informatics Specialist	<i>Sanford Health</i>
Nurse Case Manager	<i>U.S. Army</i>
Clinical Manager	<i>Cincinnati Children’s Hospital</i>
C4 Manager	<i>Cedars-Sinai Medical Center</i>
Director	<i>Mental Health America</i>
Director of Women’s & Children’s Services	<i>Parkland Medical Center</i>
Professor of Nursing	<i>College of Southern Idaho</i>
Nurse Manager	<i>HCA</i>
Nursing Department Chairperson	<i>Iowa Wesleyan College</i>
Director of Education	<i>Medical Center of Plano, Texas</i>
Director of Human Resources	<i>Adventist Health</i>
Vice President of Operations	<i>Covenant Hospice</i>
Vice President of Clinical Services	<i>National Surgical Hospitals, Inc.</i>
Clinical Nurse Educator	<i>Northside Hospital</i>
Clinical Research Department Manager	<i>Willamette Valley Cancer Institution</i>

## Teachers College Graduates

93% of employers say that Teachers College graduates possess the most important teacher skills: ability to relate to peers and students, ability to work as a team, and dedication.

Graduates of WGU’s Teachers College can be found in almost every major public school district in the U.S. A number of WGU graduates have been recognized for their work through awards and grants:

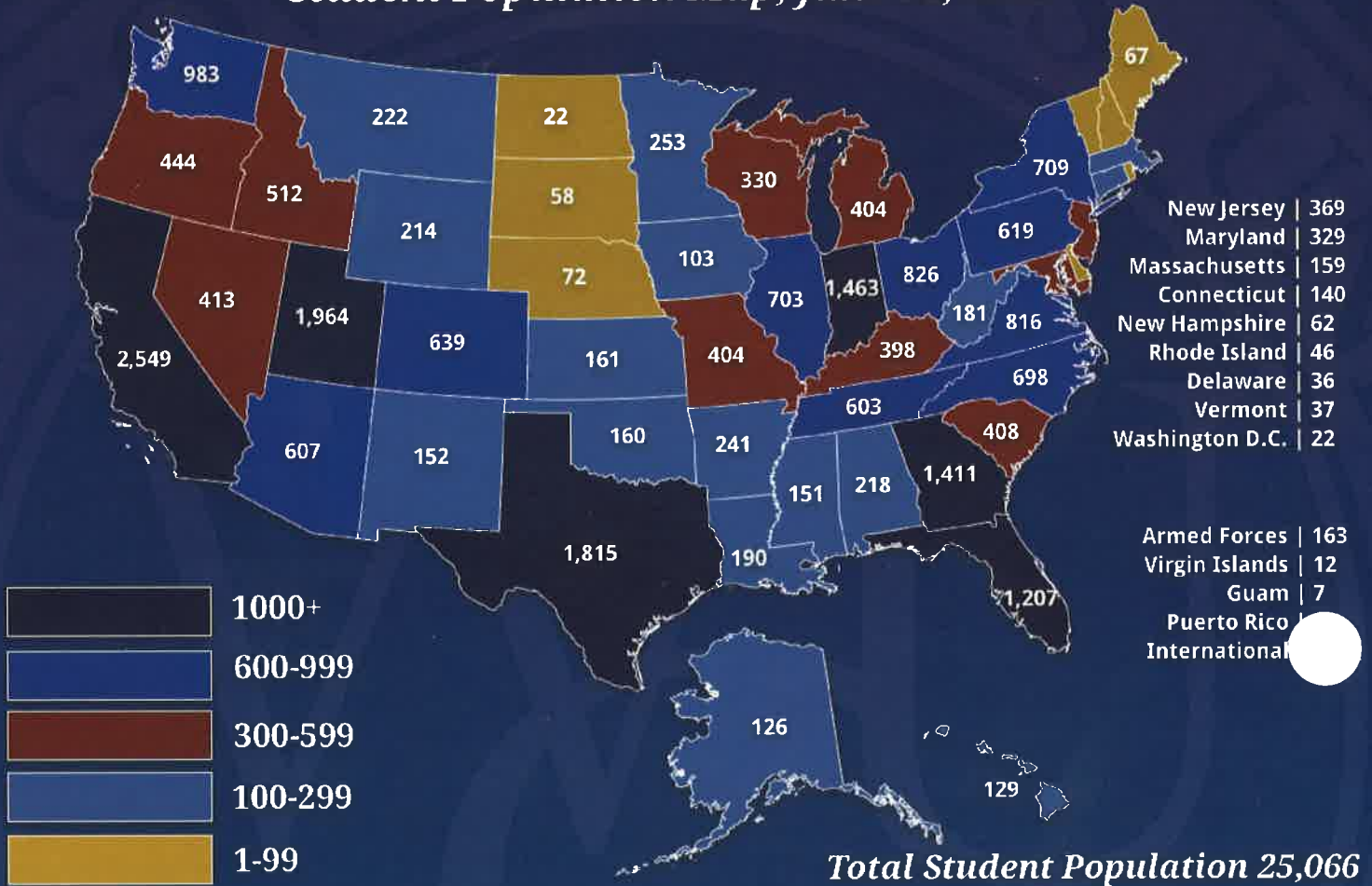
- Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award
- ESL Teacher of the Year, Aldine School District, Texas
- Association of Public Charter Schools Educator of the Year
- Fulbright Scholarship Recipient
- Montana Teacher of the Year
- Texas Medical Association’s Ernest and Sarah Butler Award for Excellence in Science Teaching
- Wilhemina C. Robertson Excellence in Science or Mathematics Teaching Award

## College of Information Technology Graduates

IT employers say that WGU grads have the most important IT skill: the ability to understand and communicate complex issues.

Senior Infrastructural Architect	<i>Hewlett Packard</i>
Senior Network Engineer	<i>AT&amp;T</i>
IT Manager	<i>Health &amp; Human Services, CDC</i>
Security Architect	<i>IBM</i>
Systems Manager	<i>Department of Justice</i>
Senior Network Engineer	<i>Disney</i>
Senior Consultant (ITAP)	<i>Microsoft</i>
Systems Analyst	<i>Xerox</i>
Director of Information	
Systems Security	<i>Department of Energy</i>
Senior IT Consultant	<i>Dell</i>

## Student Population Map, June 30, 2011



# WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY

ONLINE. ACCELERATED. AFFORDABLE. ACCREDITED.

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