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WGU students who obtain a CAE designation receive official recognition from the U.S. Government for their cybersecurity programs. This accreditation ensures that students receive high-quality training to become experts in various cybersecurity fields. Schools with this designation undergo rigorous assessments to guarantee that students are well-prepared to address modern cyber threats. Western Governors University (WGU) is a private online university based in Millcreek, Utah. It uses the competency-based learning model for working professionals providing advanced education. Degrees awarded by WGU are accredited by NWCCU. WGU's Growth and Controversy In December 2000, Genevieve Kirch became WGU's first graduate, earning her Master of Arts in Learning and Technology. The university gained momentum in 2001 when the US Department of Education awarded \$10 million to establish the Teachers College, launching its Information Technology programs. By 2003, WGU became the first school accredited in four regions by the Interregional Accrediting Committee. In 2006, the College of Health Professions was founded, and the university's online teacher-preparation program received NCATE accreditation. WGU expanded further with the establishment of state-based subsidiaries, including Indiana, Texas, Washington, Tennessee, Missouri, and Nevada. These affiliates share WGU's academic model, faculty, services, and curricula. As of 2020, WGU had 129,169 enrolled students and over 214,000 graduates. The median age of students is 37. However, an audit by the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General found that WGU did not comply with institutional eligibility requirements, affecting more than \$712 million in federal financial aid. ### The OIG report's findings on Western Governors University (WGU) were widely criticized by experts, who argued that the Inspector General misinterpreted and misapplied statutory guidance, leading to an arbitrary definition of faculty roles that is not aligned with modern online education. The news editor for Inside Higher Ed noted that the audit's outcome was not a surprise, as it relied on outdated law from 1992. Experts also expressed skepticism about the Trump administration's willingness to follow through on the Inspector General's recommendations. However, in January 2019, the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid office disagreed with the Inspector General and determined that WGU was eligible for federal student aid. This decision took into account WGU's efforts to comply with governing law and regulations, despite a lack of clear guidance from the Department at the time. The Office of Inspector General ultimately agreed with FSA's final audit determination. WGU is governed by its board of trustees, state governors, and private corporations, including Google, Microsoft, and AT&T. The university has no physical campus and does not participate in intercollegiate sports. As of 2025, WGU offers 96 bachelor's, master's, and post-baccalaureate degree programs across four colleges, including a School of Business, Education, Technology, and Health. WGU's Faculty Interactions At Western Governors University, students primarily interact with three types of faculty: program mentors, course instructors, and evaluators. #### Program Mentors Program mentors are assigned to each student after enrollment. These experts in the field create personalized term plans, provide information on programs, policies, and procedures, and assess students' strengths and development needs to establish a study plan. The program mentor works with the student for each semester until graduation. #### Course Instructors Course instructors teach specific subjects and are advanced degree holders, such as doctors or post-graduate specialists in their field. They work with students through forums, providing instruction both proactively and reactively based on individual needs. Instructors also offer content expertise to students struggling with course material. #### Evaluators Evaluators review student assessments to determine competency and are experts in their area of evaluation, holding doctoral degrees or significant post-graduate work. They provide clear and comprehensive feedback, focusing on evaluating student performance without bias or personal influence. WGU offers various online degree programs through its colleges, including School of Business, School of Technology, School of Education, and Leavitt School of Health. As of 2020, WGU had over 108,000 students. In rankings, WGU was listed as "Unranked" in the Regional University - West category by U.S. News & World Report, but tied for 12th among western regional universities in the Most Innovative Schools category. WGU is recognized for its competency-based programs that measure acquired skills and learning rather than time spent on a course. Students progress through courses as soon as they demonstrate mastery of the material, allowing them to work at their own pace. The university's competencies are designed to align with a 3.0 GPA scale, making it one of the first accredited schools to adopt this approach. The institution has received accolades for its innovative approaches, including being ranked top school for veterans by Military Friendly Schools and partnering with Carnegie Mellon University on an artificial intelligence project funded by the National Science Foundation. WGU's learning resources include textbooks, web-based tutorials, simulations, and online classes. The university provides all course materials through licensing agreements with commercial providers like Pearson and McGraw-Hill. Assessments are performance-based and objective, typically involving written assignments checked for academic integrity using Unicheck. WGU assesses students based on competency in submitted work compared to a rubric that outlines standards. Students can only pass by achieving a "competent" score on each point. Objective assessments involve university-created exams with multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions taken online under proctoring. Some require professional certifications at commercial testing centers like Pearson VUE. There are no open-book or un-proctored exams. To qualify for WGU's general graduate admission, applicants must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and complete an interview with the enrollment office. Each college has its own specific admission requirements, including associate degrees, significant previous college credits, or relevant work experience in their chosen field. The school does not require SAT or ACT scores for undergraduate admission. WGU's student body consists of 65% female and 35% male students, with a median age of 37. They come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups being Non-Hispanic White (70.6%), followed by African American (11.8%), Hispanic American (6.3%), and Asian American (4.3%). The U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard reported a graduation rate at WGU of 54% as of 2022, with the university's own internally-tracked graduation rate for undergraduate students being 50%. WGU has over 2,000 faculty members, with most working full-time except for part-time assessment evaluators. The university's student-to-faculty ratio stands at an impressive 41:1, as stated by the U.S. Department of Education's College Navigator.[67][68] To ensure academic integrity, some courses require remote exams proctored online, utilizing various methods to verify test-taker identity and prevent cheating.[69][70] Assignments may be completed using Taskstream software and Turnitin service for plagiarism checks.[71][72] The WGU Career and Professional Development Center offers student resources, individual support, and a job board, assisting students and alumni in career development, employment opportunities, and graduate school applications.[73][74] Sage the Night Owl has been the university's official mascot since 2011. As of 2025, undergraduate tuition was \$8,300 per six-month term, while graduate programs cost \$8,856 per term, with a flat rate regardless of course load or credits completed.[76] WGU awarded 14,743 scholarships valued at nearly \$20 million in 2020.[15] The university has maintained stable tuition for its Nursing program, experiencing a decline in real terms over the period 2008-2022. WGU's expansion into new states began with its first satellite school, established on June 11, 2010, under the executive order of Mitch Daniels. The university's growth has been marked by significant partnerships, including agreements with Indiana state grants and scholarships. WGU Indiana offers an articulation agreement to students graduating from Ivy Tech, allowing them to transfer credits and receive financial benefits. Since its inception, WGU has expanded to other states, including Washington, Texas, Missouri, and Tennessee. Each new school is established through a combination of public and private funding sources. WGU's growth has been facilitated by executive orders and legislative support from various governors. The university's advisory boards play a crucial role in shaping its educational programs. With the addition of new schools, WGU continues to expand access to higher education across the United States. Western Governors University Nevada WGU Nevada was established by proclamation and a memorandum of understanding with WGU in June 16, 2015. The university received \$2 million from United Student Aid Funds, allowing it to launch without state funding. At the time, WGU had over 900 students and more than 850 alumni in Nevada. Established as Western Governors University WGU's Teachers College earns CAEP accreditation in 2012, and its Business Programs are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs. The University also gains CCNE accreditation for 10 years. WGU is ranked #1 by Military Friendly and wins a grant to build an AI-powered professional development tool with Carnegie Mellon. In 2020, US News ranks WGU among the top colleges. Western Governors University is a private online university that was established in 1997 by the Western Governors' Education Compact. The university offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in fields such as business, information technology, and education. WGU's unique model combines competency-based education with individualized learning plans, allowing students to work at their own pace. Office of the Missouri Governor.