

## Summer Commencement Features Congressman Jim Matheson as Keynote Speaker

U.S. Representative Jim Matheson (D-Utah) delivered the commencement speech at the summer graduation ceremony for WGU on Saturday, July 19th, 2008 at Abravanel Hall in Salt Lake City. Degrees were awarded to 642 graduates from 48 states. WGU awarded 401 undergraduate degrees and 241 graduate degrees.



U.S. Representative  
Jim Matheson

“By enrolling in the education programs offered to you by Western Governors University, you’ve made a life-altering and life-enriching decision that education matters,” Matheson remarked. “Your presence here today signifies that you have taken to heart what many others before you have embraced; recognizing an opportunity to better your life and the lives of the ones you love by pursuing education.”

More than 100 graduates from 29 states traveled to Utah to attend the ceremony, plus one person from the Galapagos Islands and one from Lincolnshire, England. WGU also broadcasted the ceremony live over the Internet via streaming video for graduates and family who were unable to attend in person.

WGU graduations can be very emotional events. Many students are thrilled to meet their fellow students and faculty face-to-face for the first time. Four selected graduates spoke about their WGU experiences, sharing their moving stories about the challenges they worked through to pursue their degree.

One speaker, Kimberly Lillywhite, shared with fellow

graduates how she maintained her positive attitude after being diagnosed with spine cancer and was determined to complete her program despite regular chemotherapy treatments and medical illnesses. “I have been able to get past the road blocks and become the best wife, mother and WGU college graduate,” Kimberly said during her speech.

Another speaker, Lisa Santiago, found alternative ways to communicate with remote faculty because she is hearing impaired and her primary language is American Sign Language (ASL). Lisa enrolled in WGU’s Teachers College to finish her degree online and achieve her dream of becoming a teacher for other deaf students. “I knew I wanted to be a teacher for deaf students so I could serve as a successful role model,” she said. Assisted by an interpreter, she delivered her speech in ASL to her fellow graduates. (Read Lisa’s profile on page 2)

For one Utah family, graduation was a rare, once-in-a-lifetime experience. One daughter graduated alongside her father as both received master’s degrees. In the audience were her sister and brother-in-law who are also enrolled at WGU and, if all goes as planned, will graduate next year.



## Over 300 Scholarships Awarded during Fiscal Year, a 250% Increase

The scholarship program at Western Governors University expanded dramatically during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008. During the year, WGU awarded 314 scholarships worth up to \$1,463,000 to new students who started their WGU programs, which represents a 250% increase over the 90 scholarships awarded to new students the previous year. Hundreds of other scholarship applications are in the review stage.

During the year WGU awarded scholarships under 11 different programs, each of which serves a special audience. Two programs were especially active. One hundred forty (140) new students were awarded \$7,500 WGU Scholarships for Rural Mathematics & Science Teachers, which are made possible through a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. WGU has also been strong supporters of spouses of active-duty military, and during the year awarded 103 Spouses to Teachers Supplemental Scholarships worth \$1,500 each. (See accompanying article on page 3)

Other scholarship programs have been made possible through the generous support of National Advisory Board corporate members and other leading companies. These have included AT&T, Zions Bank, Qwest, HCA, Rio Tinto (formerly Kennecott), American Express, CHP Healthcare, Morgan Stanley, PacifiCorp, ARUP, and Questar.

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## Gregory Rondot Student Spotlight



Gregory Rondot

WGU Information Technology student Gregory Rondot clearly is an exceptional test taker. At the North America Computer Audit, Control and Security (CACCS) Conference in April of 2008, Gregory was recognized after tying for the highest score in the world on the June 2007 CISM examination.

“This award means recognition by my peers internationally and should help me obtain additional consulting work within the industry,” said Gregory. “My most rewarding engagements are those where I can develop practical solutions to vexing problems that cost firms time, money and frustrate staff members.”

Gregory owns an IT training and consulting firm, which provides service to small- and medium-sized businesses. Greg has 15 internationally recognized certifications in IT security, networking, management and HIPPA compliance, yet many potential clients only recognize a university degree as adequate demonstration of competence in the field.

As a busy business owner and father, he needed flexibility. He chose WGU to pursue his B.S. in Information Technology with a security emphasis because he could benefit from his extensive knowledge in the field.

“WGU is uniquely positioned to help active, employed adult students earn a degree based on skills learned in their personal and professional lives,” said Gregory. “In my first term I completed 47 units which would equal three to four standard semesters of college work at a traditional school. No other program would have permitted me to move this quickly through my degree program.”

## Lisa Santiago Graduate Spotlight



Lisa Santiago

Lisa’s journey to Salt Lake City from New York City was exhausting but one she’ll never forget. She had been invited to speak at WGU’s graduation ceremony in her primary language, American Sign Language. Lisa is deaf.

Although she attended a special school for the deaf through sixth grade, her subsequent experience with mainstream public schools, including other universities, was frustrating and unsatisfactory. That is, until she came to WGU.

Lisa enrolled in WGU’s Teachers College in September, 2005 to finish her degree online and achieve her dream of becoming a teacher for other deaf students. “I knew I wanted to be a teacher for deaf students so I could serve as a successful role model,” Lisa said.

Lisa was thrilled to meet her WGU mentor at graduation for the first time to thank her in person for all the extra help she gave. “My mentor was so kind, understanding and patient with me when I was struggling with concepts and assignments,” Lisa said. “She would give up her time to explain the things in more detail that I didn’t understand right away.”

Lisa has worked as a teacher’s aide in a school for over ten years. Now, having earned her Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies degree, Lisa has her own classroom at St. Joseph’s School for the Deaf in Bronx, New York.

*“Even though I am deaf, I am very proud of myself because I have proven that I am capable of earning a very challenging degree just like people who can hear.”*

– Lisa Santiago, Graduate

## WGU Introduces New Degrees in Science Education, Special Education and Health Informatics

There are thousands of teacher job openings every year, and school districts struggle to find qualified science teachers, especially in chemistry and physics. To help meet the demand, the WGU Teachers College now offers 10 accredited online science education degree programs designed for current or aspiring educators who wish to teach chemistry, physics, biology, earth science (geosciences) or general science.

The WGU Teachers College also introduced a Bachelor of Arts in Special Education and a Master of Science in Special Education. These programs will prepare individuals to teach students with mild to moderate disabilities.

New to the College of Health Professions is a B.S. in Health Informatics, which combines healthcare with information technology to provide the knowledge and skills needed to be a valuable designer and developer of health information systems. The program’s core components provide a rigorous knowledge base in IT fundamentals, IT management, and healthcare.

*“With the unexpected complications that I faced, I don’t know that there is any other program in the world where I could have accommodated my special circumstances except WGU.” – Anne Wolf, Graduate*



## WGU Supports Military Spouses: Providing an Education Without Boundaries

WGU has been a strong supporter of spouses of active-duty military, and many spouses find WGU’s flexible degree programs a perfect fit with their sometimes tumultuous lives. With WGU’s programs, spouses don’t need to delay earning their degree because of the extra family responsibilities they take on when a spouse is deployed, and, because there isn’t a residency requirement, they can complete their degree from remote locations.

Many spouses have an interest in the WGU Teachers College, and during the past year, WGU has awarded 103 Spouses to Teachers Supplemental Scholarships worth \$1,500 each. WGU also created a broader WGU Spouses to Graduates Scholarship worth \$1,500 that can be used for all the other non-teaching degrees.

In large part because of WGU’s support of spouses, WGU has twice been named among the Top Twenty Military Friendly Colleges and Universities by *Military Advanced Education* magazine.



## WGU Serves a Diverse Student Body

### The Demographics of WGU Students

For WGU’s founding governors, expanding access to quality higher education was fundamental to the mission of the university. The broad diversity of WGU’s student body today reflects that commitment. As of the end of the fiscal year in June, 76 percent of WGU’s student body fit one or more of the populations typically underserved in higher education: ethnic minority (19%), low income (40%), rural (22%), or first generation college attendee (41%).

Because WGU’s mission is to help primarily working adults complete degree programs that will contribute to their career success, students enter WGU at multiple points in their lives. Not surprisingly, the age range of students is consequently quite broad. The average age of all WGU students is 36, with about 39% of the student body ages 30-39. However, 30% of the student body is under age 30 and another 31% is 40 or older. There are even 50 students who are 60+. The age diversity cuts across all four of WGU’s colleges.

The ethnic mix of WGU’s student body includes those who identify themselves as African American (9%), Hispanic (5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (1%). Enrolling more ethnic Americans remains a high priority for WGU.

The founding governors might be surprised by the wide geographic dispersion of WGU students. WGU today serves students in all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and 3 U.S. territories, plus over 150 U.S. military and family members overseas. Many of the high-population states, such as Texas, California, and Florida, are well represented. A few states, most notably Georgia and Utah, have disproportionately high enrollment.



*“As a father of four girls, a husband, an Information Systems supervisor and a part-time entrepreneur, I did not have time to spare nor attend a brick and mortar institution; my dream was made possible by WGU.”*

– Roger Osborne, Graduate

### Key Demographic Facts About Western Governors University Student Body (As of June 2008)

<b>Age (Avg)</b>	36 years		
<b>Student Status</b>	Graduate students 29%	Undergraduates 71%	
<b>Gender</b>	Females 62%	Males 38%	
<b>Employment</b>	Work full-time 66%	Work part-time 17%	Not employed 17%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White, non-Hispanic 67%	Ethnic minority/other 19%	Unknown 14%
<b>Urban/Rural</b>	Urban/suburban 78%	Rural 22%	
<b>College Exper.</b>	First-Generation college attendee 41%		
<b>Income (Avg)</b>	Household <\$35K 37%	Hshld \$35K-65K 36%	Hshld \$65K+ 26%



*“In my teaching career, I am going to take with me the positive influences that the people from WGU have had on me and am confident I can help students stand a little taller. I will try to instill in each of them a love of lifelong learning.”* – Kimberly Lillywhite, Graduate

## New Trustee Joins WGU Board



Emily Stover DeRocco

Emily Stover DeRocco, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor, currently president of The Manufacturing Institute and senior vice president of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), has been elected to serve on the board of trustees of Western Governors University.

At the NAM, Ms. DeRocco oversees implementation of a strategic agenda on education, workforce development, research and innovation, and the design and operation of a new national center dedicated to fostering a new generation of manufacturing workers for the 21st century.

“We are honored to have Ms. DeRocco join WGU’s board,” said WGU President Robert Mendenhall. “She brings an exceptional breadth of knowledge about current and future workforce issues. Her expertise will help WGU prepare our graduates for careers that are in-demand in the 21st century.”

As Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training, Ms. DeRocco was responsible for managing a \$11.1 billion budget that funds the country’s workforce investment system. In addition to high-level federal positions at the Department of the Interior and Department of Energy during the Reagan Administration, she also spent over ten years as the executive director of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies.

## Supporting Alumni in Diverse Ways

WGU’s online education experience continues beyond graduation. WGU has created a unique alumni community that provides a place where graduates may share with their peers their professional experiences, practices, news, and success strategies, while asking advice, counseling with each other, sharing job opportunities, and connecting in other meaningful ways. Alumni mentors for each college are available to provide additional support.

Alumni can access resume and job search support plus interact with fellow alumni through the WGU alumni website. The alumni website includes communities for graduates of each WGU college, which include career-related information, resources, blogs, and ways to connect to the alumni mentors and fellow graduates.

Some alumni volunteer to participate in the “Ask-a-Grad” program, where potential students can ask graduates about their WGU experience and how their degrees helped

them advance in their careers. An alumni newsletter is sent quarterly via email.

Although the alumni community is relatively new, WGU has 2,086 registered alumni members; 26% have graduated from the College of Business, 15% from the College of Information Technology and 59% from the Teachers College.



## WGU Partners with AARP Foundation on New Scholarship Program

The AARP Foundation has joined with WGU to offer scholarships to individuals facing financial hardship and special needs to help them develop marketable career skills to better support their families. The AARP Foundation–WGU Educational Assistance Scholarships, each worth up to \$5,000, will be awarded to as many as 114 individuals who are at least 40 years old and seeking bachelor’s degrees in certain career-focused program areas.

Applicants must apply through and be recommended by one of the six participating AARP Foundation field offices in Colorado Springs, CO; Flint, MI; Melbourne, FL; Pittsburg,

PA; Waterloo/Cedar Rapids, IA; or Seattle, WA. Scholarships will be awarded based upon a candidate’s financial need, family situation, academic record, readiness for online study, and current competency.

“We are very pleased to pilot this program with the AARP Foundation,” said Ken Sorber, WGU Vice President of Strategic Relations. “Their financial and logistic support shows their belief in WGU’s mission and their commitment to helping individuals improve their lives.”

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