

WGU 
ADVANCEMENT

A photograph of three graduates in dark brown caps and gowns with white stoles and tassels. They are standing against a dark blue background. The graduate on the left is a woman with long brown hair, the middle one is a woman with short dark hair, and the one on the right is a man with a beard. All three are looking slightly to the right of the camera.

**FY21
ANNUAL REPORT**

JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021

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Impact

the force or impression of one thing on another:
a significant or meaningful effect.¹

As I reflect on the past year, I'm thinking about impact. In fact, more than ever just about every person I know understands the concept of impact. The impact of a pandemic. The impact of climate. The impact of social unrest. **We have all been impacted.** At WGU Advancement, we focus on impact. We create reports, send letters, and tell stories about it. We are dedicated to it. But over the course of the past year, impact has never been more important. **We all want to make an impact.** We know how important it is that our donors understand the true impact of their gifts, but over this past year we have focused our efforts even more on the impact those gifts can have for individuals and our society.

Giving to WGU is impactful. Whether it is a foundation providing seven figure gifts to support our work on closing equity gaps in online education, or a current student finding \$10 to pool with thousands of others to provide hardship scholarship support to a fellow learner, our donors are finding meaning and purpose in the support they give to WGU. You will see in the pages of this report that through their gifts to WGU, our donors have created real impact.

Each of our 3,563 donors made an impact. Even the fact of their giving was important. We increased the number of donors to WGU by 15%. Our faculty and staff continue to show up for our students. Nearly 15% of WGU employees gave their own funds to support our students last year! On our first Giving Day, 20% of our donors were current students who found the opportunity to support their fellow Night Owls. And our alumni continuously supported the Fellow Night Owl Scholarship fund and the WGU Student Emergency Aid Fund.

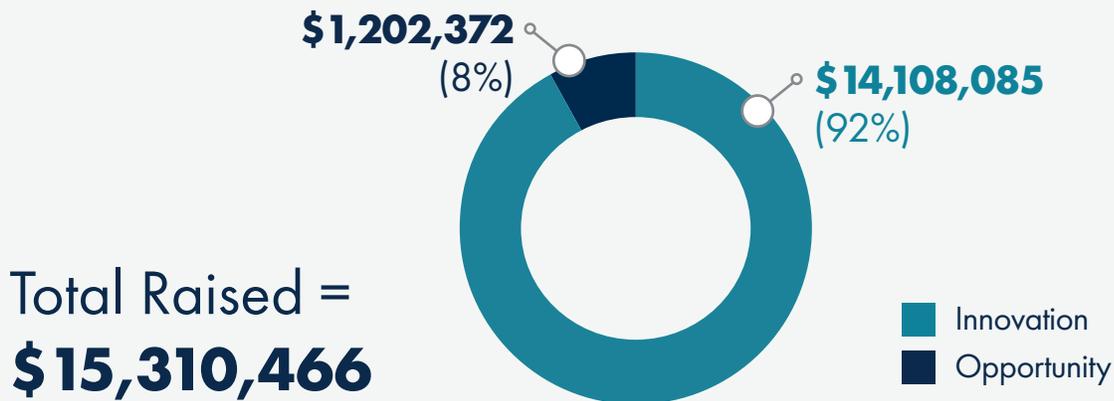
Thank you for your commitment to fund opportunity, innovation, and equity in post-secondary education. Together, we are making an impact. I encourage you to visit our website and continue to open our email bulletins – we will keep you informed throughout the year of the impact your support creates. From all of us at WGU Advancement, thank you for joining us on our quest to build pathways to opportunity for all.



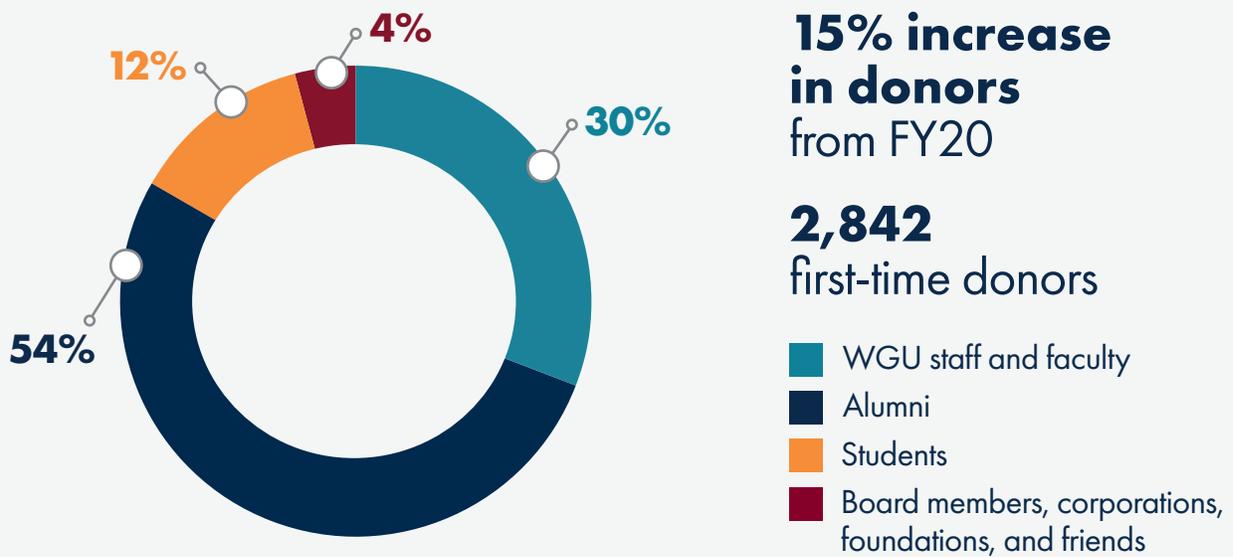
Annalisa S. Holcombe
President, WGU Advancement

¹ Impact. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/impact>

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



3,563 unique donors



Donors from **all 50 states**



Average number of gifts per donor: **1.5**



\$86,000 raised on WGU Giving Day



12,063 gifts received

ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

The mission of WGU is to change lives for the better by creating pathways to opportunity for all learners. Last year our donors joined us in supporting WGU's mission by contributing **\$1,202,372** to support student scholarships and other funds that bridge the gap between talent and opportunity.

ALUMNI PAY IT FORWARD

In 2020, 47,021 new graduates celebrated degree completion at WGU and increased WGU's total alumni network to 214,194 graduates nationwide. In FY21, nearly **55%** of our donors identified themselves as WGU alumni and demonstrated the powerful influence of the Night Owl network. In fact, for the first time at WGU, several alumni generously established independent scholarship funds that will benefit many future graduates for years to come.

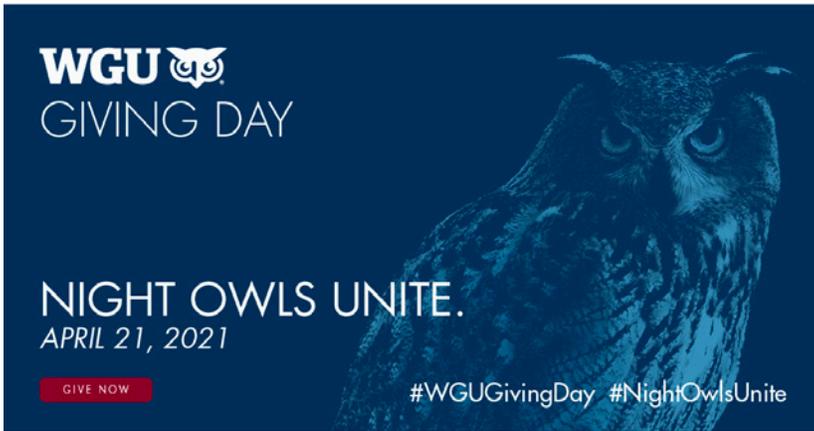
Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of new alumni were still able to celebrate their achievements thanks to WGU's virtual commencement ceremonies. And for the third year, the WGU philanthropy cord program continued to provide alumni the opportunity to pay it forward

and show their support with pride by displaying a blue and gold cord with their caps and gowns. In 2020, more than **2,000 donations** were made and **\$52,000 was raised** for the Fellow Night Owl Scholarship thanks to the program. Since 2019, more than 100 students have received a Fellow Night Owl Scholarship award, mainly because of the generosity from WGU alumni who participate in the philanthropy cord program. When asked how it felt to be the beneficiary of a scholarship funded exclusively by peers, Angela McDaniel expressed, "It's a blessing and I hope that someday my contributions will be able to help another student the way that the contributions from other students have helped me to continue to be a student and reach my dream."



"My aunt, Sheila, instilled the value of education and selfless service in me and everyone around her. Because of her inspiration, I am proud to have made it to a point in life where I can pay it forward by sharing her story and celebrating her life through an act of giving."

— **ANDRE ALFRED**
B.S. IT MANAGEMENT



NIGHT OWLS UNITE

In 2020, Giving Tuesday was observed on December 1. The international day of giving that leads into the holiday season was an ideal opportunity for the WGU community to support WGU students after an especially difficult year. On Giving Tuesday, **\$18,000** was raised for the WGU Student Emergency Aid Fund from 218 donations. Since the Fund launched in early 2020, more than 5,200 students have received assistance for non-tuition related financial support such as food and housing insecurities.

On April 21, 2021, WGU Advancement hosted WGU's very first Giving Day celebration with the theme "Night Owls Unite." In total, more than **\$86,000** was raised for several important scholarships and the WGU Student Emergency Aid Fund. We received **1,097 gifts** from **934 donors**, 57% of which were WGU employees and 20% were current WGU students. Hundreds of proud Night Owl names spread across our digital donor wall and #WGUCGivingDay #NightOwlsUnite messages inundated social media feeds which resulted in nearly two million engagement touch points with our WGU Giving Day audience. The Night Owl community's overwhelming generosity exceeded all expectations and set a high bar for future WGU Giving Days.



"A scholarship let me achieve my goals. When COVID hit, there were so many things we couldn't do. Everybody had financial hardships, but I was able to make it through and graduate because of my scholarship. I'm so grateful and so thankful I was given this opportunity. Thank you."

— LAUREN T.

Scholarship Recipient

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: HANSEN FOUNDATION AND MILLER BULLEN HANSEN FOUNDATION

In early 2016, members from the **Hansen Foundation** and **Miller Bullen Hansen Foundation** generously established the Hansen Scholars program at WGU. Since then, the Hansen Scholars program has become one of the largest completion scholarship programs in the nation and has helped nearly 1,400 WGU students experiencing unexpected hardship complete their degrees.

Since the program's inception, the Hansen and Miller Bullen Hansen Foundations have contributed more than \$11 million to WGU's scholarship funds. In FY21 alone, the foundations contributed \$420,000 to the Hansen Scholars program. The scholarship awards allow students to worry less about covering their full tuition and focus more on their studies so they can graduate.



ANA KAREN R. M. HANSEN SCHOLAR

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened to stand in the way of Ana Karen continuing with her education, but she persisted and was able to get back on track toward her bachelor's degree in elementary education. It has been an enormously challenging road to get to where she is today. As a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient, she grappled with citizenship status complexities, which forced her to put her education on hold. When the pandemic hit, her partner was let go from his restaurant work, leaving the family to rely completely on her income as a teacher's aide at a charter school. Life continued to test her fortitude. Thirty-six weeks into her second pregnancy, her family tested positive for the coronavirus. Thankfully, they are all fine now, and Ana Karen gave birth to a healthy baby girl. But after returning to work from maternity leave, she faced a monumental decision: continue her degree program or catch up on overdue bills. A scholarship from the Hansen Foundation freed her from having to make that choice. "I am beyond thankful I did not have to give up my classes," she said. "Now I can continue to work hard to accomplish my goal of becoming a kindergarten teacher."



VANESSA B.
HANSEN SCHOLAR

Vanessa is a single parent of two children with disabilities. Her college-aged son has Asperger's Syndrome and struggles with everyday activities. Her daughter, whom she adopted out of foster care, was born addicted to drugs and alcohol. "To say my hands are full is an understatement," says Vanessa, who, despite these enormous challenges, is earning her master's of arts in teaching in mathematics for middle grades. With only one semester remaining in her program, she chose to help her son with his degree as opposed to paying for her own. Vanessa also lost several family members last year and was diagnosed with COVID-19 at the same time her family members were "fighting for their lives." In the face of multiple challenges, Vanessa's drive to succeed and ability to focus on her studies is incredibly admirable. "With everything that I have encountered, I am so thankful to be awarded this scholarship," she says. "This has truly been a blessing because it has given me the opportunity to complete my degree without the worries of having my classes dropped for non-payment or loans that I could not afford at the time. I will forever be grateful. Thanks from the bottom of my heart."

ACCELERATING INNOVATION

Beyond its degree programs, WGU is also committed to supporting learners in a variety of other ways that address the urgent issues faced in higher education and today's workforce. In FY21, **\$14,108,085** was generously invested by donors and partners to support innovation and expand access for the 21st-century learner.

CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

In late 2020, WGU received a **\$4.8 million grant** from the **Kern Family Foundation** to support the Character Education for a Better Society project over a five-year timeframe. The grant helps integrate character education into two graduate degree programs within WGU's Teachers College and creates the Character Education Professional Learning Program (CEPL). The project focuses on bringing character education programming to K-12 classrooms and will support educators and communities across the country.



CHARTING THE FUTURE FOR INDIANA'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In the fall of 2020, **the Lilly Endowment** contributed a **\$1 million grant** to accompany their initial investment from FY20 for their higher education initiative, Charting the Future for Indiana's Colleges and Universities.

One challenge for many Americans is having their skills, competencies, and experiences recognized in the labor market, which is currently largely dependent on an outdated process involving resumes and credit hours. To fill this gap, WGU will use its Charting the Future funding to implement technology that helps build a learner owned record called an "Achievement Wallet." WGU will collaborate with industry partners to pilot the program in Indiana that will demonstrate an easier way to connect adult learners with education and jobs in healthcare professions. The objective is to deliver wrap-around community care services to students and proven talent to potential employers.



"I'm very happy to be a small part of someone finishing school. I know what it meant to me and as long as I can, I will never turn my back on WGU by helping where I can. School and WGU changed my life for the better and allowed me to feel good about myself in a deep and fulfilling way."

— **ROBERT BRYANT**
B.S. ACCOUNTING

ADVANCING SKILLS-BASED EDUCATION AND HIRING

Since launching in September 2020, the Open Skills Network (OSN) has grown to become a group of more than 530 employers, educational organizations, and technology providers. The group's mission is to ensure workers have the skills and talent necessary to thrive, while also making their talents more easily communicated to the labor market—regardless of whether their learning was academic or work-based.

As a founding member and dedicated partner with WGU, **Walmart** provided a **\$250,000 grant** to launch the OSN in 2020 and increased their contribution with an additional **\$850,000 grant** in 2021 to support the OSN's expanded efforts.

CREATING AND LAUNCHING THE COLLEGE INNOVATION NETWORK

The College Innovation Network (CIN) was launched in the spring of 2020 by WGU Labs thanks to support from the **Charles Koch Foundation**. Since the CIN's launch, the Charles Koch Foundation has contributed **\$1 million** to reinforce the Network's goal of connecting leaders from colleges and universities with educational technology (EdTech) innovators to advance students' academic, career, and life outcomes.

CLOSING EDUCATIONAL GAPS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

The Postsecondary Success team at the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** identified WGU as a national scale institution that reaches new levels of student enrollment and influence through digital solutions and quick creation of new models for deployment to students. Because of their confidence in WGU and our mission to create pathways to opportunity for all learners, in FY21 the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation presented a **\$4.9 million** grant to support WGU's R&D for Growth and Equity initiative over the next five years.

Thanks to the foundation's support, WGU will be able carry out projects aimed at closing existing equity gaps in postsecondary education so students in underserved populations, specifically Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, can be better served at the university. WGU will not only be able to overcome internal gaps but will also be able to share learnings with other institutions so the entire postsecondary system can become more equitable.

"We give to WGU because we believe in WGU's mission. We share the concerns that WGU has expressed as it relates to the importance of education."

— **SANDRA SLAGER**

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, MINDEDGE





DONOR IMPACT: WGU'S B.S. IN HEALTH SERVICES COORDINATION



“Graduating has made all of my dreams come true and it’s because of WGU’s program and the support of people like you. I’m very proud of my degree and it hangs on my wall. It’s a huge accomplishment for me.”

— KOURTNEY M.
BSHSC

Thanks to the generous support of a multi-year grant from the Merkin Family Foundation, in October of 2019 WGU began enrolling students in the Bachelor of Science in Health Services Coordination (BSHSC) program. The Merkin Family Foundation is led by Richard Merkin, MD, Founder and CEO of Heritage Provider Network, (HPN), one of the nation’s leading physician-led managed care organizations.

Graduates of the BSHSC program are prepared to coordinate with health care providers, patients, caregivers, and medical services to improve the effectiveness, safety, and efficiency of an increasingly complex health care system. The new program in WGU’s College of Health Professions has thrived with nearly 800 students enrolled and 16 graduates to date.

Jayne H. from California had been a teacher for more than 20 years when she enrolled in WGU’s BSHSC program in 2020. While she completed her studies, she was able to share the skills she was learning from the program with her medical assisting students at the same time. “I’m sixty years old and still teaching,” said Jayne. “My career goal right now, besides retirement, is sharing all this information with my students. When they go into their medical and RN programs, they understand a lot of things that are going on in the world of medicine and what’s trending. I thank this program for that.” Jayne completed her degree in about eight months and is grateful to WGU and the Merkin Family Foundation for making the BSHSC program available online for students like her.



"School has always been a priority for me, but there are times when it's easy to put it on the back burner, especially when life throws you curveballs. An unplanned pregnancy in the middle of a global pandemic was anything but easy, but I learned that as long as you're diligent, you can reach goals despite what life throws at you."

— CAMILLE C.
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

WGU  | ADVANCEMENT

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