

WGU

ADVANCEMENT

FY20 ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2019 – JUNE 30, 2020



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MISSION-DRIVEN.

When I started at WGU Advancement in September 2019, I embarked on an informational interview tour of WGU. I spoke with individuals from every college and department. The conversations were consistently valuable and uplifting. But the thing that resonated most for me was that when I asked, “Why WGU?” every individual had the same answer: the mission.

WGU creates pathways to opportunity. WGU Advancement furthers that mission and establishes partnerships with others who share our vision for a future in which opportunity and access to education are more readily available to all and innovations in education make that possible.

This past year came with several challenges: a global pandemic, civil unrest, persistent racial inequities and profound economic uncertainty. Against this backdrop, our mission rings true. We have raised funds for student emergency aid, providing non-tuition-related assistance for students facing food, housing, or medical insecurity. We received a planning grant to help WGU prepare for changes in the higher education landscape that COVID-19 will accelerate. We received funding to study our own progress and gaps in equity so that we can better serve students of color and low-income students.

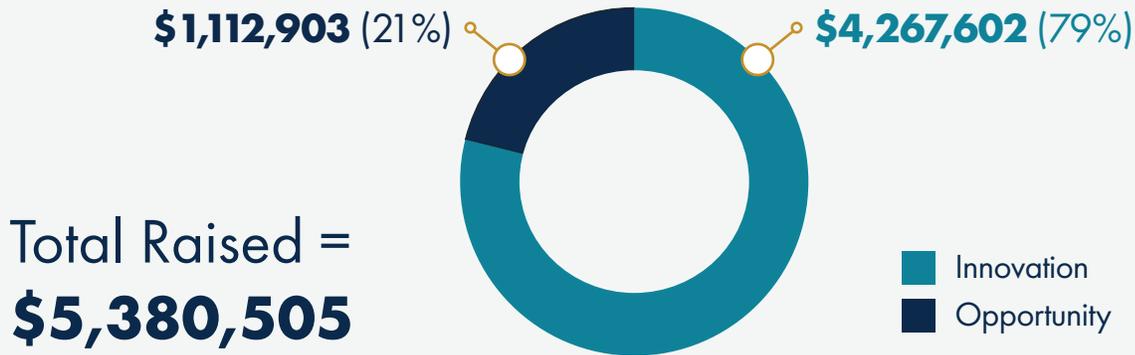
And we are certainly not done yet. We will continue to rise to the challenges we face. We will continue to put students at the center of everything we do. The effects of COVID-19 have made the inequities in our society even more transparent. **Our mission is even more relevant now.** We must continue to innovate in order to make access to education more equitable, and we must do all we can to create opportunity for everyone.

The pages that follow summarize our impressive past year but you can learn even more and keep up with our team by visiting our website: wgu.edu/advancement. Thank you for your partnership in our efforts. We ask you to join us in our continued quest to bridge the gap between talent and opportunity, and to fulfill the promise of education for all.

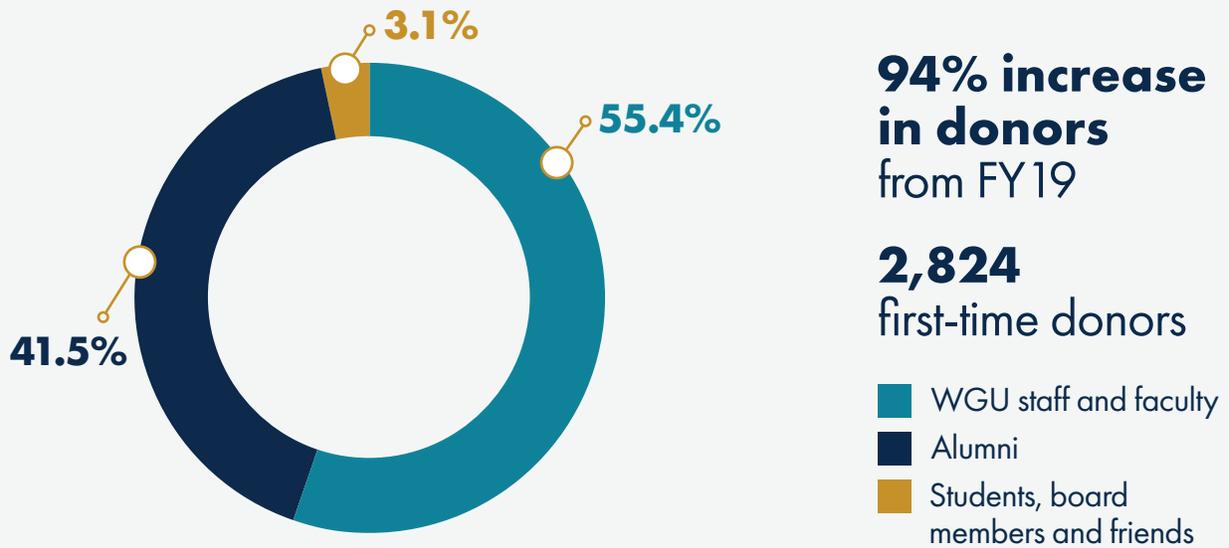
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Annalisa S. Holcombe".

Annalisa S. Holcombe
President, WGU Advancement

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



3,084 unique donors



Donors from **all 50 states**

2

Average donor **gave twice**



\$115,000 raised
for the WGU Student
Emergency Aid Fund



6,432
gifts received

ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

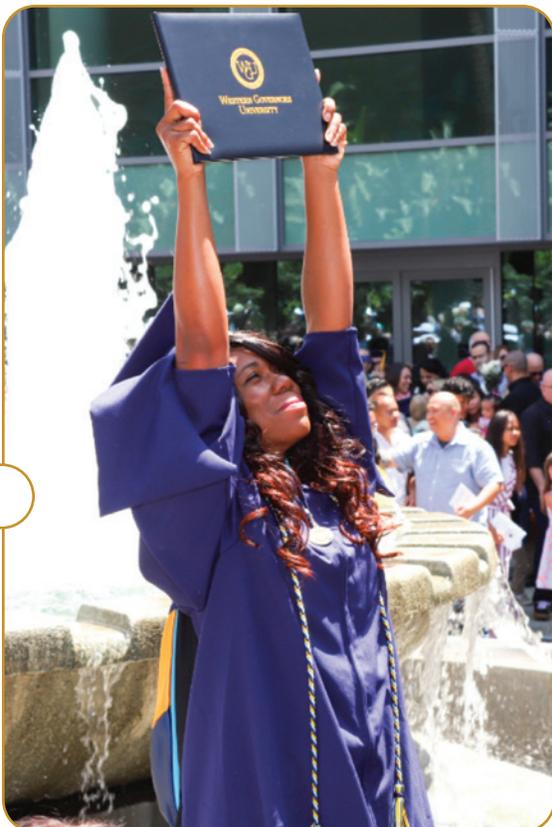
At WGU, we are committed to identifying barriers to higher education and systematically knocking them down, empowering more students to earn their degrees and achieve their dreams. In FY20, our donors generously gave **\$1,122,903** to support student scholarships and funds that ease the financial burdens that too often act as barriers to student success.



The WGU Fellow Night Owl Scholarship was established to provide WGU students and alumni an opportunity to support their peers who need help crossing the finish line to graduation. In FY20, **\$63,000 was raised** from **2,523 donations** for the Fellow Night Owl Scholarship. Most of these funds were raised by WGU alumni who donned a blue and gold philanthropy cord at commencement. Cords are received after a graduate makes a charitable gift to the Fellow Night Owl Scholarship fund. Since launching the program in 2019, **3,634 Night Owls** have worn a philanthropy cord with pride. Most importantly, these donors have provided **38 students** with a Fellow Night Owl Scholarship.



Giving Tuesday is traditionally celebrated as an international day of giving leading into the holiday season. In 2019, WGU Advancement used Giving Tuesday as a way to give thanks and show appreciation for all donors and friends who make a difference for WGU students. More than half a million engagement points were shared and **\$9,841 was raised** for student scholarships.



As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic rippled across the nation in early 2020, WGU recognized many students were financially at-risk. When faced with economic disruptions of heightened magnitude, prioritizing essential expenses such as housing, food, and medical care would always outweigh tuition costs for students, decreasing their likelihood of reaching graduation. While it is still too early to know the full impact the virus will have on our economy, we do know that 70% of our student body comes from historically underserved populations. Students who are already exposed to financial vulnerabilities are more likely to be affected in the long term. As a result, the **WGU Student Emergency Aid Fund** was created to minimize obstacles for students by providing them with non-tuition related support. To help build the fund, the University committed **\$10 million in emergency aid** to assist new and current students experiencing hardships as a result of COVID-19. WGU's commitment—combined with the generous support of alumni, faculty, staff, and friends who contributed \$115,000—has enabled WGU to award **more than 3,600 students** with non-tuition emergency aid support in FY20.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: DR. ALLISON BARBER



Dr. Allison Barber's personal mission has revolved around inspiring others to live their best lives. She has taken this mission and applied it to many phases of her life—from being a schoolteacher to being WGU Indiana's first Chancellor to her present-day role inspiring young female athletes as Presidents of the WNBA's Indiana Fever.

Today, Allison and her family continue to inspire and remain highly engaged with WGU. In 2019, they established a scholarship committed to helping future teachers in Indiana. The Nell Warda Memorial Teaching Scholarship was established in honor of Allison's great aunt, a dedicated administrative professional with the Gary, Indiana, school system for more than 39 years. By creating a memorial scholarship, Allison and her family are comforted knowing Nell's legacy as a caring individual with a passion for education lives on through the WGU students who receive her scholarship award. Since WGU launched the Nell Warda Memorial Teaching Scholarship, more than 20 future teachers in Indiana have received awards.

In March of 2020, donors and recipients of the scholarship gathered in Indianapolis to celebrate Nell's legacy and influence on teachers in Indiana. Stephanie Glowacki received the scholarship and was able to share her appreciation for Allison and other donors in person. "Going to school is not only impacting my career," said Stephanie, "it is impacting my children and the children that I teach. You are helping more than just one person. You are helping more than just me."

Allison believes there are many students, like Stephanie, who initiate intergenerational change in their families and communities thanks to their degrees from WGU. "Investing in the life of a student with a donation is like a pebble in the pond," Allison expressed. "What you may not ever get to see is the ripple that creates."

"I was really excited when I found out that I was selected for the Nell Warda Scholarship. I couldn't believe it. It has helped me out tremendously. I don't need any loans, and that's always helpful. It has helped me stay out of debt."

— **STEPHANIE GLOWACKI**
B.A. Interdisciplinary Studies

ACCELERATING INNOVATION

Traditional higher ed wasn't built for the realities facing many of today's students. Thanks to support from our donors and partners, WGU is able to innovate with students in mind, giving them the flexibility and freedom they need to succeed and providing them with skills that meet the needs of the modern workforce. In FY20, **\$4,267,602** was invested in endeavors at WGU that accelerate innovation and prepare students for a more resilient future.

A generous gift from the **Merkin Family Foundation** has enabled WGU to develop and launch the **B.S. Health Services Coordination (BSHSC) program** and a series of certificates to prepare students for careers in healthcare case management and care coordination. Since the program's launch in 2019, more than **300 students have enrolled**, and the program continues to exceed expectations. Thanks to the flexibility of WGU's competency-based education model, the program will celebrate its first three graduates in the summer of 2020. One of the first BSHSC graduates is Sarah H. from Idaho. She worked as a clinical research coordinator for 16 years, but realized she needed a bachelor's degree to progress in her career. Following her graduation, she plans to work overseeing site-level research studies and clinical trials, aiding in the approval process of new prescription medication. Thanks to the Merkin Family Foundation's support of the new BSHSC program, Sarah is able to pursue this new facet of her career.



Another generous contribution was received from the **Lilly Endowment** in response to the launch of their higher education initiative, Charting the Future for Indiana's Colleges and Universities. With this initial **\$100,000 gift**, WGU implemented the exploration and testing of skills-based technologies to provide high-quality postsecondary education to future generations of students in Indiana.

In April, the **Charles Koch Foundation** awarded WGU Labs with a **\$750,000 grant** to support the creation of the **College Innovation Network (CIN)**, an organized network of like-minded postsecondary education providers committed to the common goal of implementing and testing technological innovations needed to better support students.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

When a group of U.S. governors got together in 1997 and embarked on a journey that led to the establishment of Western Governors University, a first-of-its-kind online university, they knew finding likeminded and entrepreneurial investors would be crucial to the university's success. A partnership with the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** was formed early in the institution's history as they quickly recognized WGU's mission to expand access to learning opportunities through competency-based education would disrupt the notion of traditional postsecondary education by supporting students who needed alternative pathways for degree completion.

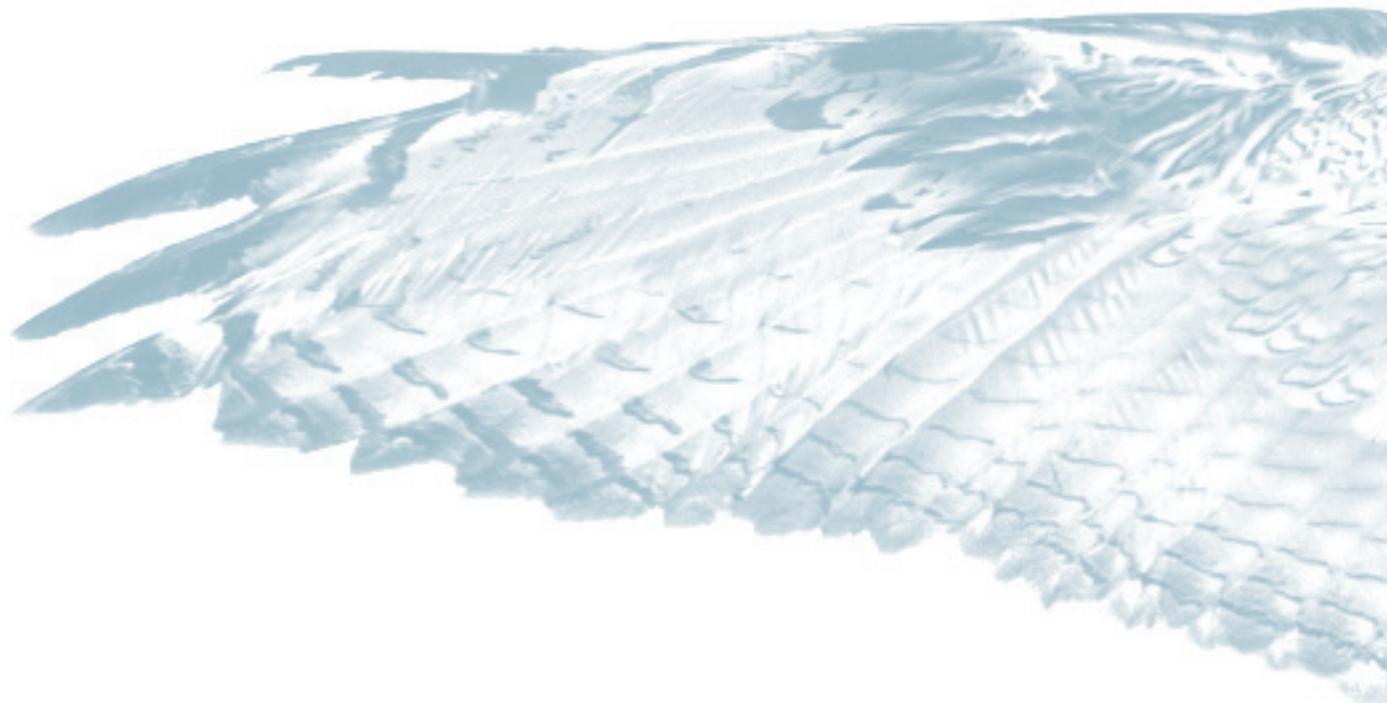
Two decades later, WGU's dedication to innovation and equity in higher education continues to align with the Gates Foundation's commitment to ensuring all students have the opportunity to receive a high-quality education. In May 2020, WGU Labs received a planning grant worth **\$328,000** to support research on access and outcomes for WGU's students of color, low-income students, and other student populations historically underserved by higher education. The project, known as the Equity Initiative at WGU, will uncover the systems and processes that lead to inequities for underserved student populations by examining the WGU student experience from application through graduation.

The inequalities many students face in today's higher ed environment have been magnified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In another effort to support underserved students, especially those impacted by COVID-19, WGU has committed to implementing projects and initiatives that remove barriers to quality, access, and outcomes across the education-to-opportunity lifecycle. With support from a **\$600,000 planning grant** from the Gates Foundation, WGU can expand outreach and deliver support to financially distressed institutions and their students, build additional services for displaced students, and create mechanisms to support credit transfer.

Thanks to the partnership, WGU is well equipped to help underrepresented student populations across the nation so they have the support they need to meet their career and employment goals. Above all, the future of hundreds of thousands of students will be positively impacted by the pioneering educational services provided by WGU following one of the most taxing periods in modern-day history.



BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*



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