CONTENTS

02 / INTRODUCTION
03  President's Message
04  Thank You, Dr. Crane
05  Board of Trustees
06  What We Believe
07  Key Results

08 / CONNECTING INDIVIDUALS WITH OPPORTUNITY
09  Provost’s Message
10  The 21st-Century Learner
11  Equitable Access
12  Graduation Growth
13  Graduation Rates
14  Affordability and Value
16  Student Experience and Satisfaction
18  Graduate Satisfaction and Success
20  Students and Grads Who Thrive

22 / MEETING COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYER NEEDS
23  Serving Employer Needs
24  Meeting Industry Needs
26  Pathways for Community College Grads
27  Serving Military Students
28  Role Model Murals
29  Bridging the Digital Divide
30  College Highlights

32 / REINVENTING EDUCATION FOR IMPACT AT SCALE
33  Awards, Recognitions, and Grants
34  Enrollment Map
35  Alumni Map
36  The Future of Work and Higher Ed
37  Engines of Innovation
38  WGU Academy
40  A Skills-Denominated Future
42  Year in Review

The first mural in WGU’s Role Model Mural Series, painted by San Antonio street art duo Los Otros and featuring WGU alumna Jacqueline Becerra. See Page 28 for details.
Resilience is not an individual endeavor. Resilience is a team sport. The coronavirus pandemic has physically isolated many of us, but it has also brought into stark relief just how interconnected we are as a worldwide community. We suffer together; we grieve together; we will recover together. That recovery hinges on our individual and collective resilience: our ability to grow in the face of challenge and to adapt in the face of change. At WGU, we believe that education is a critical piece of building resilience, not just for our students, but for their families and for the nation as a whole. Education is not simply about increasing knowledge. It is also about empowering individuals to think critically, to look at problems in new ways, and to believe in their own ability to learn and change.

We believe in resilience. We believe in the power of higher education to transform individuals’ and families’ lives and livelihoods, to revitalize businesses whether local or multinational, and to drive a new economy that is stronger than ever before. Most importantly, we believe that recovery must be equitable—just as talent is universal, we should strive to ensure that the opportunities in a renewed, post-pandemic world are as well.

I continue to be proud of the innovative approach to resilience exemplified by WGU’s students, alumni, faculty, and staff. Our retention rates and student satisfaction were higher at the end of 2020 than they were in the beginning—the ultimate testimony to the support our students received. We continued to set records for monthly graduations during the darkest months of the pandemic. As much of higher education spent the past year reacting to changing realities, WGU’s student-centric, technology-driven, personalized approach to education enabled us to be responsive to the needs of each individual, while continuing to drive a future-focused agenda to reimagine higher education. In many ways, this year was spent as any other: in the service of our mission, to change lives for the better by creating pathways to opportunity.

2021 promises to continue presenting the kinds of challenges and opportunities that, I firmly believe, will drive a stronger, more resilient future for higher education, for our economy, for our communities, and for the individuals and families at the center of it all. I am honored to be part of the work of WGU in defining that bright future, and I thank you for your support, your work, and all that you contribute to this collective effort.
Thank You, Dr. Crane
After Two Decades of Service, Longtime Trustee Retires from WGU Board

When Dr. Terry Crane joined the board in 2000, WGU had fewer than a thousand students and hadn’t yet earned accreditation. In the two decades since, WGU has grown to be the largest degree-granting institution in the country, graduating thousands of students a month. Dr. Crane believes that scale “is how the mission gets to the market,” and she is proud to have contributed to WGU through an impactful growth trajectory. “At WGU, we have never drifted from our mission,” she said. “We have focused on reaching underserved populations, connecting them with in-demand fields, and making education affordable.”

Dr. Crane’s career began in the classroom, as an educator in Texas. But the personal computing revolution broadened her vision: “I had passion for technology; I believed it was going to democratize access to education and that it was going to make knowledge accessible to the masses.” Dr. Crane’s work at the intersection of technology and education has spanned dozens of companies as an executive, board member, and strategic consultant. She has been focused on how to bring products that can change lives to market: “If you’re delivering something that really makes a difference to the success of the teacher, to the success of the student, then you want to get it to everybody.”

After two decades of service, Dr. Crane leaves WGU in a strong position and with plenty of potential ahead. “Once you’ve been to a WGU graduation and seen the powerful impact that we have on people’s lives, it becomes imperative to grow the impact and reach more students,” she said. “But beyond growing, WGU will always be evolving to meet the changing needs of the workforce, and to expand to serve new populations.”

Dr. Crane will continue to be an advocate for the power of technology to change lives through education. Over the next few years, she expects to focus heavily on how technology can broaden access to high-quality STEM education. President Scott Pulsipher honored Dr. Crane’s retirement from the board with a Sage Award. “WGU would never have reached the scale and impact that it has without the blessing of decades of Terry’s vision and leadership,” Pulsipher said. “As her time on the board comes to a close, we are profoundly grateful for her relentless faith in the power of technology to change lives, and to connect students with opportunity.”
Board of Trustees

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Chair of the Board
President and CEO Emeritus of Intermountain Healthcare and Founding Director of the Intermountain Healthcare Leadership Institute.

**JOHN W. BLUFORD III**
President Emeritus of Truman Medical Centers.

**COLE CLARK**
Managing Director of Higher Education at Deloitte.

**JOSEPH B. FULLER**
Nominating and Governance Committee Chair and Board of Trustees Vice-Chair
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**THE HONORABLE JIM GERINGER**
Director of Policy & Public Sector at ESRI and Governor of the State of Wyoming, 1995-2003.

**THE HONORABLE ERIC HOLCOMB**
Governor of the State of Indiana.

**TAMMY JOHNS**
CEO of Strategy & Talent.

**LENNY MENDONCA**
Former Chief Economic and Business Advisor to California Governor Gavin Newsom.

**TALIA MILGROM-ELCOTT**
Founder and Executive Director of 100Kin10.

**THE HONORABLE JARED POLIS**
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**THE HONORABLE JANE SWIFT**
President of LearnLaunch, Senior Advisor of Whiteboard Advisors and Governor of the State of Massachusetts, 2001–2003.

**JESSIE WOOLLEY-WILSON**
CEO and President of DreamBox Learning.
What We Believe

We believe in human potential. We believe in the inherent worth and ability of every individual. Talent is equally distributed; opportunity is not. We were founded to fix that.

We believe in the promise of education. We believe education is the surest path to opportunity. We want to reinvent education so that every learner can have success.

We believe in our students. If we provide them a student-centered, radically affordable, high-quality, workforce-relevant education, they will succeed.

We believe that outcomes matter. Enrollment isn’t enough. We want to drive value for students: in their career progression, engagement, and life satisfaction.

We believe that learners are workers. Our students don’t just want a diploma—they want a pathway to opportunity. We design our programs to maximize student success in the workplace.

We believe we can’t get there without innovation. Sustained success depends upon doing things differently, not just better. We are compelled to innovate and change the way people engage with learning and access opportunity.

We believe that big problems demand big solutions. The number of learners who are being left behind is massive. The only way to solve the problem is to solve it at scale.
Key Results: Measuring What Matters

Higher education can and must measure its success by the value it creates for students—measures of access, attainment, employment outcomes, student satisfaction, economic wellbeing, and social mobility. We also measure our effectiveness by the value we create for employers and our impact on local, state, and regional economies. You will find many of those throughout this report.

This year, WGU introduced three Key Results, new metrics designed to press us to lengthen our stride on behalf of students, to keep us accountable for what matters most, and to drive transparency. These priority measures of success were carefully designed to track our progress toward our overall mission of creating pathways to opportunity.

Return for Graduates
This Key Result measures the lifetime economic benefit of completing a WGU degree. ¹

Personalized On-Time Completion
As a measure of progress toward successful attainment, 4-year and 6-year graduation rates are outdated and only relevant to first-time full-time students in the legacy model of higher education. This Key Result accounts for each student’s personal circumstances. ²

Equitable Access & Attainment
Students of color as percentage of total enrollment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY2021</th>
<th>FY2025 GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students of color as percentage of total enrollment:</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Undergraduate students of color four-year completion rate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY2021</th>
<th>FY2025 GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate students of color four-year completion rate:</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Calculated as (increase in annual income × remaining years to age 65) ÷ total cost of completion. ²Considering the number of terms to complete remaining credits at an individual student’s pace to define “on time,” this rate is calculated as (number of on-time students) ÷ (number of students in the cohort).
Our ambition is to be the world’s most student-centric university; everything we do begins and ends with our students, our alumni, and their families.

The success and wellbeing of individuals is at our core. It’s why we exist. It’s why we are committed to changing higher education.

This is what it looks like to create pathways of opportunity for everyone: one by one.
Higher education’s role as the foundation of a free, just, and equitable society is more essential now than ever. In order to continue to play this crucial role, higher education must laser-focus on the needs of learners today and into the future.

Today’s learner demographic has changed dramatically. So have the requirements of today’s employers. No longer does the notion of college as a coming-of-age experience at the beginning of a career match the needs of our economy—or of the talented and resilient individuals everywhere who increasingly seek learning and training opportunities as a path to their next (as well as their first) opportunity.

If postsecondary education is to realize its promise of creating pathways to opportunity for all, it must commit to a fundamental redesign. We must build with learners at the center—and that means all learners. Since our founding, WGU has been dedicated to innovating with a student-centered mindset. Never has that commitment been more important than in 2021. In the years to come, our global recovery truly hinges on our ability to thrive in a world that none of us could have imagined a year ago. WGU’s work to change lives—by doubling down on high-demand skills and competencies as the crucial currency of education, by prioritizing personalized and timely student support from a robust community of care, and by reimagining higher education—has become more essential than ever.

MARNI BAKER STEIN
Provost and Chief Academic Officer, WGU

Student-Centered by Design

Every decision at WGU is based on student success. It’s the core of our culture, and it’s also built into our business model and organizational structure. Whether academic or administrative, student-facing or behind-the-scenes, every role at WGU is optimized to serve students and every job includes the requirement of being obsessed with student success.
Expanding Access for the 21st-Century Learner

Work, family obligations, military deployments, lack of college readiness, mental and emotional barriers—these are just a few of the things that keep today’s would-be students from pursuing credentials that could benefit their careers, their lives, and the lives of their families. And that is the reason WGU was created—to help students overcome these barriers.

Expanding Access Among All Populations: 2020 Enrolled Students

Female 65%
Male 35%
Median Age 37
Age Range 14–95
Students who work while enrolled 82%
Full-Time 70%
Part-Time 12%
Married Students 50%

Total Full-Time Students 129,169

Serving More Students: Enrollment

5-Year Compound Growth Rate: 15.1%

Data as of December 31, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>43,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>58,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>63,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>76,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>91,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>110,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>119,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>129,169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Equitable Access: Making College Work—for Everyone

Providing equitable access to populations historically not well-served by higher education is the first step toward closing the opportunity gap and ensuring our collective resilience. These populations include students from communities of color, low-income families, rural locations, and/or families in which previous generations did not attend college. According to self-reporting at the time of enrollment, 69% of WGU’s students come from at least one of these populations.

- **69%** One or more underserved populations
- **39%** First-generation college students
- **27%** Students of color
- **22%** Low-income earners
- **16%** Rural residents

“I kept the promise I made to my parents and myself at 16 … and that promise was to graduate from college. When it looked like that might not be a possibility, I came across WGU—a university that would cost me a fraction of what it costs at other colleges and allow me to keep my job, care for a sick spouse, homeschool my child, be a track and cross-country mom, and graduate in half the time. Talk about a wild ride!”

MIRANDA JOSEPH  
B.A. Interdisciplinary Studies (K–8)
Increasing Attainment: 47,021 New Graduates in 2020

Access without attainment does not deliver on the promise of higher education. Measuring our impact includes helping more and more graduates achieve life-changing credentials—while celebrating each individual success.

Cumulative Graduates

5-Year Compound Growth Rate: 30.5%

[Diagram showing cumulative graduates from 2000 to 2020]

Equitable Outcomes

Driving Attainment Among All Populations: 2020 Graduates

[Diagram with statistics on equity among populations:
- 64% One or more underserved populations
- 39% First-generation college students
- 17% Rural residents
- 12% Low-income at time of enrollment
- 23% Graduates of color
- 70% Female
- 30% Male

Data as of December 31, 2020]
Undergraduate Programs: Graduation Rates

WGU’s 6-year undergraduate graduation rate of 50% is well above the national average of 40% for comparable nonprofit, open-admission institutions.¹ The university’s goal is to reach a 4-year rate of 50% by 2025.

Graduate Programs: 3-Year Graduation Rate

Ensuring Affordability—and Value

The average tuition and fees for one year of an undergraduate program at WGU in 2020 was nearly half the $12,705 paid at comparable institutions nationwide. Flat-rate tuition charged per term rather than per course or per credit empowers students to accelerate their education.

$6,740
Average annual undergraduate tuition and fees

2 YEARS, 3 MONTHS
Average time to bachelor’s degree

$15,165
Average total cost to earn a bachelor’s degree

~1.5-YEAR PAYBACK
on tuition investment (undergraduate)

Reducing Student Debt and Encouraging Responsible Borrowing

Mean Debt at Graduation per Undergraduate Who Borrowed

$35,000

$28,750

$22,500

$16,250

$10,000


$30,100

$28,350

$28,630

$29,200

$28,950

$19,050

$16,862

$16,132

$15,374

$14,941

$14,254


Lower Cost Reduces the Need to Borrow
Percentage of Graduating Undergrads Who Borrowed for School

57%
WGU 2019

69%
NATL. 2019

55%
WGU 2020

Less Debt + Better Outcomes = Lower Default
3-Year Loan Default Rate, Fiscal Year 2017 Cohort

9.7%
NATL. 2020

4.1%
WGU 2020

Source: U.S. Department of Education Federal Student Aid Office (September 2020)
Making College Worth It—for Everyone

Equity in higher education means ensuring that individuals from all communities can reap the benefits of postsecondary education—with tuition they can afford, debt they can manage, and post-graduation outcomes that let them pay down their loans and realize a strong return on investment.

According to EducationData.org, the average Black American with a bachelor’s degree currently owes an average of $25,000 more in student loan debt than the average white college grad does. Saddled with this extra burden after earning their degrees, graduates of color have a harder time paying down those debts. The Education Trust reports that 12-year default rates vary dramatically by race: 5.2% for white grads, 13.3% for Hispanic and Latinx grads, and 28.0% for Black grads.

At WGU, our debt disparity among historically underserved populations is substantially better than the national average—in fact, our first-generation college graduates, on average, actually owe less at graduation than our graduates whose parents attended college do. We are committed to continuing to innovate to drive equity.

Mean Debt at Graduation, WGU FY2020 Graduating Class (Undergraduate)

- WGU: $14,254
- First-Generation College Students: $14,164
- All Graduates of Color: $14,489
- Black Graduates: $14,988
- Hispanic/Latinx Graduates: $14,374

Offering Assistance Through Scholarships

$19.8 MILLION in need-based scholarships awarded in 2020
14,743 scholarships awarded in 2020
30% of applicants were awarded a scholarship

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1 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), four-year public or private institutions that serve primarily adult students. 2 Internal data for undergraduates who earned a bachelor’s degree in 2020, pulled January 2021. 3 Based on $12,300 average increase in annual salary two years after graduation, compared with pre-enrollment salary: see Page 19. 4 EducationData.org, last accessed on February 11, 2021, https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-by-race. 5 The Education Trust, March 5, 2020, https://edtrust.org/resource/graduation-rates-dont-tell-the-full-story-racial-gaps-in-college-success-are-larger-than-we-think/. The 12-year default rates are for graduates who 1) started and completed at a public or private, nonprofit four-year institution, 2) initially enrolled full time seeking to earn a bachelor’s degree, and 3) received federal loans in 2003/04.
A Better Way to Learn: The WGU Experience

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
This annual survey captures two critical features of college quality: the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities, and how institutions deploy their resources and organize curriculum and other learning opportunities to engage students, which improves student learning and outcomes.
This year’s survey polled 484,242 students from 601 institutions (531 in the U.S., 65 in Canada, and five in other countries). Students gave WGU very high marks, well above the national average, in the following areas:

If you could start again, would you go to the same institution?
(Definitely yes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>39%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?
(Excellent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>35%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate the quality of your interactions with the faculty at this institution.
(7 on a 7-point scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>24%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much does your institution emphasize providing support to help students succeed academically?
(Very much)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>32%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your job-related knowledge and skills?
(Very much)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To what extent have your courses challenged you to do your best work?
(Very much)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>23%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Better Way to Learn: The WGU Experience

Student Success and Satisfaction

WGU students are satisfied with their overall experience, and they are achieving high levels of Satisfactory Academic Progress, which is a federally tracked metric indicating students are completing necessary coursework to maintain eligibility for financial aid. This level of success is leading to higher retention rates than the national average and very high referral rates.

92% overall student satisfaction
94% achieving Satisfactory Academic Progress
80% one-year student retention
62% of new students say someone recommended WGU to them


At age 13, Salomon Torrescano’s life was turned upside down when he was placed in the foster care system. Two years later, he was battling drug addiction and felt he had nowhere to turn. But with the guidance of two beloved counselors, Salomon dedicated himself to getting his life back on track. The personalized support and flexibility of WGU made success possible. “As a working student, WGU’s flexible model allowed me to succeed. My Program Mentor, my Course Instructors, pretty much everyone at WGU has supported me,” Salomon said. “Throughout my journey, the importance of support has been instrumental and given me the confidence to change my life.”

SALOMON TORRESCANO
B.S. Business – Healthcare Management
MBA Healthcare Management

In 2018, Emily LeFrancq was diagnosed with a gene mutation that gave her an 80% chance of having cancer, leading to many surgeries—including removal of her stomach and both breasts. But rather than losing hope, Emily was determined to thrive. So while working full time and suffering the loss of her father, she persevered as a graduate student in WGU’s College of Health Professions. “There’s no way I could go to a school where I would have to be in a classroom and make a schedule,” Emily said. “And I just love being able to say, with everything I have going on, that I’m able to work full time.”

EMILY LEFRANCQ
M.S. Nursing – Leadership & Management (current student)
More Than a Degree: Graduate Satisfaction

Gallup Alumni Survey

WGU participates in the Gallup Alumni Survey to gain insight into the relationship between the college experience and post-graduation outcomes. This year’s surveys polled 2,565 WGU alumni\(^1\) and compared them to a random sample of 3,271 respondents nationwide who earned a degree between 2015 and 2019.\(^2\) Respondents who said they “strongly agree” with the following:

- **Worth the cost**
  - National: 37%
  - WGU: 77%

- **Perfect school for people like me**
  - National: 38%
  - WGU: 70%

- **Had a mentor who encouraged me**
  - National: 32%
  - WGU: 65%

Harris Poll

The WGU-Harris Poll is conducted online annually. Among other things, it measures graduates’ satisfaction with their education experience. In 2020, the survey included 1,340 WGU graduates and 1,400 national, non-WGU graduates from the four degree fields WGU offers.

- **Satisfied with overall experience**
  - National: 75%
  - WGU: 85%

- **Extremely satisfied**
  - National: 35%
  - WGU: 53%

- **Satisfied with academic help**
  - National: 84%
  - WGU: 87%

- **Have recommended university to others**
  - National: 82%
  - WGU: 96%

- **Would choose university again**
  - National: 91%
  - WGU: 95%

Ready to Work: Graduate Success

WGU’s students enroll for their careers, and the measure of their success is how they thrive in the workplace—and in their lives. An empowered, resilient workforce is made up of individuals who have the tools to reach their full potential because they have the education and training they need to turn their innate talents into opportunity.

Harris Poll

In addition to measuring graduate satisfaction, the annual WGU-Harris Poll tracks post-graduation employment outcomes. In 2020, the survey included 1,340 WGU graduates and 1,400 national, non-WGU graduates from the four degree fields WGU offers. (Note that respondents were not asked whether they started current employment after earning their degrees or were already employed as students.)

Majority of competencies related to work

- National: 75%
- WGU: 79%

Total employed

- National: 92%
- WGU: 94%

Employed in degree field

- National: 89%
- WGU: 89%

Employed full time

- National: 81%
- WGU: 84%

A Better Return on Student Investment

Average increase in annual salary compared with pre-enrollment salary.

Within two years of graduation:

- WGU: $12,300
- NATL: $6,200

Within four years of graduation:

- WGU: $21,800
- NATL: $11,500

Source: Harris Poll
Nurturing Resilience: Students and Grads Who Thrive

thrive /ˈthrɪv/ (verb) to grow vigorously, flourish; to progress toward or realize a goal despite or because of circumstances

In a year that has presented physical, emotional, social, financial, and career hardships, the ability of institutions to enable individuals and families to thrive has been put to the test. The promise of higher education is for more than a degree, more than a job—it is to empower individuals to build better, thriving lives for themselves and their families.

Because WGU believes its success is measured by its graduates’ success, we participate in the Gallup Alumni Survey.¹ The survey quantifies college graduates’ academic and post-graduation outcomes. This annual survey—conducted during the fall and winter months of the pandemic—found WGU alumni faring significantly better than the national average during this difficult time, especially in terms of having purposeful careers, financial health, and social wellbeing.

Compared to bachelor’s degree holders nationally, WGU alumni during the pandemic are:

- 5X less likely to say they have been permanently let go from their job
- 3X less likely to say they have been laid off from their job
- 3X less likely to say they have had their hours reduced
- 2X less likely to say they have experienced a loss of income

Ensuring Students Thrive—Even in Times of Crisis

Student Emergency Aid Fund
One of WGU’s responses to the many crises of 2020 was the Student Emergency Aid Fund. The university committed $10 million to help students with non-tuition, emergency financial needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and donors contributed $115,000—55% of them WGU employees, showing a strong internal cultural commitment to student support. Through an innovative partnership between WGU Labs and Edquity, students had a user-friendly, efficient platform through which to request emergency financial support.

Helping Grads to Thrive Today—and Tomorrow

Life Evaluation
The Gallup Alumni Survey also asks two questions aimed at gauging respondents’ overall evaluation of their lives: On a scale of 0 to 10, how would you rate your life today? How do you think you will rate your life in 5 years? These responses, combined and indexed, produce the Life Evaluation Index.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Evaluation Index (% thriving)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGU GRADUATES OF COLOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGU FIRST-GENERATION GRADS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ginger had an exceptionally busy 2020. A member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, she spent the pandemic working as a nurse in a tribal public health program on her reservation in Cherokee, North Carolina, while also enrolled at WGU. She played a huge role in providing the education and support needed to keep her tribe safe.

GINGER PARKER-SOUTHARD
M.S. Nursing – Leadership and Management

After graduating, Cherie was hired by the University of Maryland Medical System. UMMS had been awarded a grant to deploy “drop teams” in nursing facilities to assess infection control for preventing COVID-19 spread. “What made me stand out as an applicant is my experience with how data is gathered and aggregated, which is important for reporting progress with regard to the grant,” Cherie said. “This skill set is something I gained only through my education at WGU.”

CHERIE WATKINS
M.S. Nursing – Nursing Informatics
MEETING COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYER NEEDS

We’re all in this together.

In many ways, the story of 2020 was the story of community—of employers finding ways to keep their workers both productive and healthy; of communities and states pulling together to set guidelines and expectations to keep each other safe; of friends and extended families finding ways to love and support each other—from a distance.

Resilience is about getting knocked down and then getting right back up. And a resilient community—one in which getting back up means standing strong, together—becomes more than the sum of its parts.

The strength of our shared experiences is what makes us strong. And it’s what will help us get back up the next time we fall.
MEETING COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYER NEEDS

Serving Employer Needs

Employer Satisfaction
Based on a 2020 survey of 300 employers of WGU graduates by Harris Poll:

- **96%** said they would hire another WGU graduate
- **95%** said WGU graduates were prepared for their jobs
- **94%** rated the job performance of WGU graduates as excellent or very good
- **90%** rate WGU grads as excellent or very good at performing technical skills related to field
- **98%** said WGU graduates meet or exceed expectations (92% said exceed)
- **95%** rate the “soft skills” of WGU grads as equal to or better than grads from other institutions

Major Companies That Have Employed WGU Grads
As self-reported by alums when joining the WGU Alumni Network, these organizations represent just a few of the thousands of employers that have had WGU grads in their ranks:

- Aetna • Amazon • American Express • American Red Cross • Anthem • Apex Systems, Inc. • Apple
- Aramark • AT&T • Bank of America • Banner Health • Best Buy • Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield • Boeing • Booz Allen Hamilton • Cedars-Sinai • Cigna • Cisco Systems
- Clark County School District • Coca-Cola • Community Health Network • Davis School District • Dell
- Delta Air Lines • Dominion Energy • Dropbox • eBay • Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University • Ericsson
- Eskenazi Health • Expedia Group • Facebook • FedEx • General Dynamics Information Technology
- Georgia Pacific • Google • Granite School District • Head Start • HealthPartners • Hewlett Packard
- Hospital Corporation of America • HealthEquity • Humana • IBM • IM Flash • Intermountain Healthcare
- Internal Revenue Service • Johns Hopkins • JPMorgan Chase • Kaiser Permanente • Kent School District
- Legacy Health • Liberty Mutual Insurance • Lincoln Financial Group • Lockheed Martin
- Marine Corps Recruiting • Mayo Clinic • Memorial Hermann • Microsoft • MultiCare Health System • NASA
- Northrop Grumman • O.C. Tanner • Oracle • PAREXEL • Parkview Health • PeaceHealth • PepsiCo
- PricewaterhouseCoopers • Progressive Insurance • Providence Health & Services • Sprint • Starbucks
- State Farm Insurance • SunTrust Bank • Sylvan Learning Center • T-Mobile • Target • TEKSystems
- The Hartford • The Paragon Research Corporation • The Walt Disney Company • Toyota • United Airlines
- United Health Group • United States Air Force • United States Army • United States Department of Agriculture
- United States Navy • US Bank • USAA • Valley Health System • Verizon Wireless
- Veterans Health Administration • Vivint • Walmart • Wells Fargo • Wilson Electronics • Zions Bank
Meeting the Needs of Industry

WGU develops transformative relationships with world-class corporations, community colleges, membership-based associations, and alliances to expand access to higher education for their employees, graduates, and memberships and to support their workforce development objectives.

WGU Maintains Valued Relationships With:

- Nationwide Insurance
- Overstock
- Prime Healthcare
- Kaiser Permanente
- Anthem
- Shriners Hospitals
- Cleveland Clinic
- Tesoro Companies
- Cisco
- 7-Eleven
- Walmart
- Honda
- T-Mobile
- Costco
- JPMorgan Chase
- HCA Healthcare
- Coca-Cola
- Alaska Air Group
- JetBlue Airways
- Kroger
- Greeley-Evans School District
- Sampson County School District
- Sevier County School System
- Colorado School District 49
- Osceola County School District
- Amazon
- IBM
- Workday
- Dignity Health
- Cook Medical

“Our focus is to create a transformational learning experience for our colleagues that will ignite their development and maximize their performance. Supporting the ongoing development of our colleagues and leaders through innovative learning solutions aligns to Huntington’s purpose of looking out for people. The partnership Huntington has formed with WGU is a leading example of innovative educational programming that strengthens our workforce and helps our colleagues learn and grow.”

DONALD DENNIS
Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer
The Huntington National Bank
Making a Difference Where It Matters Most

Graduates in 2020 Earned Degrees in Economically and Socially Crucial Fields:

**CYBERSECURITY**
1,747
798 bachelor’s degrees, 949 master’s degrees

**BUSINESS**
14,272
7,267 bachelor’s degrees, 7,005 MBAs and other master’s degrees

**SPECIAL EDUCATION**
1,088
713 newly licensed teachers, 375 advanced degrees for current teachers

**STEM EDUCATION**
1,407
576 newly licensed teachers, 831 advanced degrees for current teachers

**ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**
7,421
1,911 newly licensed teachers, 5,510 endorsements in educational leadership, English language learning, instructional design, curriculum and instruction, etc.

**NURSING**
16,600
12,065 B.S. Nursing degrees (including as part of RN-to-MSN bridge program), 4,535 M.S. Nursing degrees

**OTHER HEALTHCARE**
2,748
1,907 leadership, management, or care coordination, 841 informatics/information management

“Now more than ever, expanding educational opportunities is critical to developing our workforce and strengthening the economy. WGU plays an important role in this.”

**THE HONORABLE MIKE PARSON**
Governor of Missouri (R)

“WGU helps students advance in their careers, earn higher wages, and help strengthen our workforce.”

**THE HONORABLE JAY INSLEE**
Governor of Washington (D)
Creating Pathways for Community College Grads

Community colleges play a crucial role in the postsecondary education of millions of American students. More than 98% of our students come to WGU with prior college experience, many of them at community colleges. WGU recognizes the benefits of a community college education and the open door it provides at the local level; we want to ensure that students have clear pathways to finish their degree. Our purpose in teaming up with community colleges is to provide a streamlined, affordable, flexible transfer option to their students for continuing their education with a baccalaureate degree. Ultimately this will help local communities build a workforce ready for work.

Community colleges that collaborate with WGU help their students prepare for diverse post-graduation needs. Our relationships include individual community colleges as well as statewide college systems nationwide, and they focus on strong transfer articulation agreements.

18,701 total new students from community colleges
73% of transfer students are from at least one historically underserved population
485 active agreements with postsecondary institutions
49 new community college agreements in 10 states
12 statewide articulation agreements

Building Better Pathways for All Populations

The community college-to-WGU pipeline is a significant component of WGU’s commitment to equitable access to postsecondary education and the opportunities it enables. As noted, 73% of the students who transferred to WGU from a community college in 2020—some 13,649 individuals—come from at least one historically underserved population. That’s compared with 69% of the WGU student body as a whole.

Community College Transfer Students

- **42%** First-generation college students
- **26%** Students of color
- **22%** Low-income students
- **21%** Rural students
A Top Military-Friendly School

Serving Those Who Have Served

Military-affiliated students make up 13% of WGU’s student body. Flexibility, portability, personalized support, and workplace relevance are just a few of the reasons WGU remains a top choice for members of America’s armed forces and their loved ones.

Total Military-Affiliated Students: 16,447

A Great Choice for Students with Military Benefits

WGU’s low cost and students’ ability to accelerate often mean military education benefits cover most or all of the costs to earn a degree. WGU also offers a number of scholarships specifically for military students and their dependents. All degree programs offered at Western Governors University are approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for all education benefits offered under the GI Bill® and for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Tuition Assistance.

- 6th most students nationwide using GI Bill benefits: 7,754 students (FY2019)1
- 17th most students nationwide using DoD Tuition Assistance: 2,384 (FY2020)2
- 27% year-over-year growth in number of students using Tuition Assistance, the fastest-growing among the top 25 largest schools3

U.S. Navy Lt. Erin L. Hayden graduated from WGU in 2019 with a B.S. Human Resource Management. He then continued his academic journey in the M.S. Management and Leadership program and graduated on April 30, 2020—completing his graduate degree program while stationed aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) in Guam, as they worked through the COVID-19 outbreak. Lt. Hayden experienced intermittent internet access aboard the ship and was required to quarantine in an isolated cabin for a total of 23 days near the end of his program, due to the spread of the virus on the ship. He vowed to his Program Mentor that he would not be leaving that isolated room without having completed his degree.

ERIN L. HAYDEN
B.S. Human Resource Management

1U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs rankings using fiscal year 2019 GI Bill benefits, the most recent year for which data is available. 2U.S. Department of Defense rankings of use of financial aid programs provided by a U.S. military service branch, fiscal year 2020. 3Fiscal year 2020 over fiscal year 2019, U.S. Department of Defense.
Resilience on Display: Role Model Murals

Too often, in too many underserved neighborhoods, going to college doesn’t seem like a possibility. WGU’s Role Model Murals project seeks to change that with a series of hand-painted murals honoring determined WGU alumni and their stories of strength and resilience. Local artists create these murals in the underserved neighborhoods where the highlighted student grew up, inspiring entire neighborhoods to reach their full potential.

The first two murals, shown below, went up in 2020—with more to come in 2021.

Jacqueline Becerra
M.S. Nursing – Leadership and Management
San Antonio, TX

Jacqueline grew up in poverty. As she walked down the street at age 15, she suffered a violent sexual assault at the hands of three men. Determined not to let life circumstances limit her, she used her experiences as a driving force to help people facing the same hopelessness she did. With her husband, Jacqueline started a network of safehouses for victims of human and sex trafficking, both in the U.S. and Mexico. She is also Nursing Director at Tenet Healthcare.

Shayne Moore
B.S. Information Technology
Nicetown, PA

Few people where Shayne grew up ever talked about college as a realistic goal or even a possibility. Fortunately for him, his mom and dad always did. It was a lesson he never forgot, which is why, even while working a full-time job, serving as an assistant pastor at a local church, and volunteering at several local prisons on a weekly basis, Shayne still found the will and the time to earn a bachelor’s degree from WGU. Not only has it unlocked his potential in an IT career he loves, but it’s given him additional resources to continue to give back to his community.
Crucial Connectivity: Bridging the Digital Divide

In 2020, internet access became more important than ever as learning, education, healthcare, retail, and countless other services went almost entirely online. But broadband internet’s evolution from luxury to necessity was a foregone conclusion even before the pandemic struck.

14.5 MILLION+ Americans (and probably many more than that) lack physical access to broadband (especially rural and tribal populations).1

30% of Americans do not subscribe to broadband, either because of lack of infrastructure, high cost, lack of perceived need, or other reasons.1

87% of Americans said that, during the pandemic, the internet is “essential” or “important.” 53% said “essential.”2

Talent is universal. Access to the internet is not. Our current infrastructure stops tragically short of enabling all Americans to tap into their potential. WGU won’t rest until everyone has access to a high-quality education. We cannot let lack of internet access lock the gate on individual potential. This year, we have:

• Launched the Online Access Scholarship, committing $1 million in the first year to provide computers and cover the ongoing costs of internet connectivity for recipients during their enrollment at WGU. We expect to provide this scholarship to as many as 2,000 students.

• Partnered with the National Governors Association to convene government, nonprofit, and internet service providers to define and address state-level drivers of digital inequity.

• Published in local, regional, and national news publications—including Forbes, Real Clear Politics, and Silicon Slopes—to advocate for solutions to the digital divide.

“Receiving this Online Access Scholarship means I can go back to school and finish my IT degree so I can pursue a career in web development. … This scholarship has put me close to my dream. Being able to go back to school will open up a lot of different opportunities for me, including financial freedom. No one should have to choose between keeping the lights on and keeping Wi-Fi.”

EULONDA BEARD
Online Access Scholarship Recipient

Aligning with Industries: College Highlights

**WGU | COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**

Enrollment as of December 31, 2020: 41,785  
Graduates in 2020: 14,298

2020 Highlights:
- Improved two-year graduation rates from 44% in December 2018 to 51.4% in December of 2020.
- Improved graduation rates in M.S. Management and Leadership and MBA even more: 56.7% and 53.8%, respectively.
- Earned a Society for Human Resource Management Honorable Mention Merit Award for virtual SHRM chapter’s first full year of operations.
- Launched new Bachelor of Science Business Administration structure to meet the needs of students and employers by providing a common core along with majors and microcredentials relevant to a variety of today’s business career opportunities and industry needs.

**WGU | COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS**

Enrollment as of December 31, 2020: 29,306  
Graduates in 2020: 16,866

2020 Highlights:
- Achieved 5-year reapproval for California prelicensure nursing program.
- Achieved American Nurses Credentialing Center accreditation for nursing continuing education.
- Launched Medical Assistant Career Accelerator Program as part of partnership with Futuro Health.
- Launched contact tracing continuing education module for all RN-to-BSN students.
- Launched M.S. Nursing – Family Nurse Practitioner degree program.
- Launched Chronic Care Coordinator certificate program with our first virtual reality clinical experience.
- Launched Race to Value podcast, focused on moving to a value-based healthcare industry.
Enrollment as of December 31, 2020: 26,314
Graduates in 2020: 5,239

2020 Highlights:

• Updated B.S. Cloud Computing degree program in collaboration with Amazon Web Services to align with AWS framework.
• Created virtual proctoring options for all certification exams in response to COVID-19 pandemic, with some of those options becoming permanent solutions—increasing their availability to students in rural areas even after the pandemic ends.
• Formed transfer articulation policy with nonprofit technology workforce development organization Per Scholas.
• Formed partnership with Kenzie Academy to give learners a skills-focused pathway to high-tech careers.

Enrollment as of December 31, 2020: 31,764
Graduates in 2020: 10,618

2020 Highlights:

• Ensured that all 1,875 students who were in demonstration teaching at the start of the pandemic were able to complete it, despite schools ending face-to-face instruction.
• Ranked #2 nationwide in combined graduate and undergraduate conferrals for students of color and in the top 1% of conferrals of Black and Hispanic/Latinx educators at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, according to the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
• Launched the Professional Core for all initial licensure programs, introducing new courses anchored in social and emotional learning theory and educational technology.
A global pandemic. Economic disruption and workforce displacement. Entire industries wondering: What’s next?

Education has the power to change lives—and if we redefine higher education in ways that reinvigorate its promise, we can rewrite the future.

Resilience at scale is possible. In fact, it’s the only way we can truly recover. Changing the future means bettering lives for generations to come. When we do that, higher education will finally have lived up to its potential to change the world—one individual, one family at a time.
Recognized for Innovation with an Impact

Awards and Recognitions

- **Ellucian Impact Award**
  for use of Banner software to power Responsible Borrowing Initiative

- **UPCEA Excellence In Advancing Student Success Award**
  for WGU’s innovations targeting student success

- **Military Friendly Top 10 School**
  for ‘20–21 (#1 in online/vocational category)

- **UPCEA Excellence In Advancing Student Success Award**
  for WGU’s innovations targeting student success

- **University Research & Review Best Value School**
  for seventh consecutive year

- **USDLA 21st Century Distance Learning Award**
  for the 10th time

- **Utah Best of State in Online Education**
  for 12th consecutive year

Grants that Accelerate Innovation

Generous support from the following foundations played an important role in furthering WGU’s mission and fostering innovation in 2020:

- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** for WGU Labs research on access and outcomes for students from historically underserved populations

- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** for projects that remove barriers to education and opportunity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Charles Koch Foundation** for WGU Labs to create the College Innovation Network

- **Kern Family Foundation** for the creation of the WGU Teachers College Character Education Professional Learning Program

- **Lilly Endowment** for WGU Indiana to create a learner-owned “Achievement Wallet”

- **Merkin Family Foundation** for development of the B.S. Health Services Coordination program and certificates in healthcare case management and care coordination

“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 broadly and, more specifically, the importance of education in 2020 and in trying to keep households moving forward during these difficult times.”

**SANDRA SLAGER**
Chief Operating Officer, MindEdge
Access at Scale: A Nationwide Student Body 129,169 Strong

Enrollment Map

As of December 31, 2020
An Alumni Network of 214,194 Graduates

Alumni Map

Connecticut | 1,302
Delaware | 251
Maryland | 2,762
Massachusetts | 1,342
New Hampshire | 471
New Jersey | 2,461
Rhode Island | 365

Connecticut | 1,398
Delaware | 251
Maryland | 2,794
Massachusetts | 566
New Hampshire | 991
New Jersey | 1,160
Rhode Island | 1,208

As of December 31, 2020

“One of the ways that I stay connected with WGU is by giving back to WGU Advancement. I was fortunate enough to receive two scholarships from WGU—one for my bachelor’s and one for my master’s. So this is just one way that I can pay it forward by giving back to future graduates.”

MATT WEST
B.S. Marketing Management
M.S. Management and Leadership

WGU.EDU 35
Lengthening Our Stride: The Future of Work and Higher Ed

Making opportunity work for everyone requires a collective, comprehensive effort. Improving the quality, accessibility, and outcomes of higher education must compel all of us to do more. At WGU, we have invested in endeavors to transform not only the institution but also the system of higher education.

Our expanded vision has WGU the university at its core, with additional entities built to magnify our innovation capacity (WGU Labs) and increase resources and capital flexibility (WGU Advancement and Juvo Ventures). This foundation facilitates the incubation, launch, and scaling of new operating entities to unlock opportunities, remove barriers to access, and improve quality and outcomes throughout the education-to-opportunity lifecycle.

The first such entity—WGU Academy, launched in 2019—is featured on Pages 36–39. More such entities will continue to be introduced as WGU seeks to scale access to pathways to opportunity.

Resources and Funding

WGU Advancement

The primary fundraising entity for WGU and its affiliates, WGU Advancement had a banner year in 2020—particularly when it came to enabling us to support our students through a global pandemic.


Of all gifts received, 16.9% were from alumni, 3.6% were from students, 74.4% were from staff and faculty, 4.1% were from WGU Board members and friends, and 1% were from foundations and corporations.

Our donors helped raise $690,123 for scholarships including the WGU Employees Give Back Scholarship, the Fellow Night Owls Scholarship, and the Online Access Scholarship.

We raised $159,072 for the WGU Student Emergency Aid Fund, established in March as the pandemic rippled across the country. The fund provided more than 4,500 students with emergency non-tuition aid in 2020.

Juvo Ventures

A double-bottom-line venture capital firm anchored by WGU, Juvo Ventures was established to invest in transformative endeavors across the learner lifecycle to expand access, improve quality, increase outcomes, and broaden pathways between talent and opportunity.

Juvo has a mission to empower entrepreneurs, invest in innovative solutions, optimize learner outcomes at scale from early childhood to adulthood, and maximize investor returns.
Engines of Innovation

WGU Labs: The Innovation Engine
WGU Labs was created to bring ideation and incubation under one roof. It is both an idea engine and a testing ground, focused on solving tough educational problems by rapidly designing, testing, and refining effective learning solutions. WGU Labs brings the scientific method to bear in helping define what the future of education can—and should—look like.

Accelerator at Labs
Accelerator at WGU Labs provides research, market development, and product enhancement services to early-stage education businesses. Through these services as well as financial investments, Accelerator advances the scale and impact of education companies that share its mission to increase student access, lower student costs, and improve student outcomes. During 2020, Labs welcomed four new companies to the Accelerator.

The College Innovation Network
WGU wants to improve outcomes for every learner, particularly those traditionally underserved by higher education. Founded by WGU Labs with grant support from the Charles Koch Foundation, the College Innovation Network (CIN) exists to bridge the gap between under-resourced institutions serving disadvantaged populations and the EdTech solutions that could help their students thrive. CIN connects member educational institutions with EdTech innovations and helps them identify, launch, and evaluate essential tools designed to advance student academic, career, and life outcomes.

Equity Initiative
In its 2020 strategic initiative, WGU leadership reaffirmed its commitment to equity as a core component of its mission to increase opportunity and access to education. As a nonprofit affiliate, WGU Labs shares this mission and seeks to make this strategic priority a reality for WGU students through its work on the Equity Initiative at WGU, funded by the Gates Foundation. WGU Labs uses this research to better support WGU students. This means acknowledging how the intersections of their personal identities—race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and more—shape their individual experiences in ways we cannot ignore.
WGU Academy: Personalizing Onramps to Postsecondary Education

Addressing College Readiness

Academic and psychological barriers too often keep prospective students, especially those from historically underserved populations, from being accepted—or even seeking admission—into the postsecondary programs that could change their lives. That’s why WGU Academy was created—to tackle the problem head-on.

Academy is built to prepare students for college success. There are two main ways Academy achieves this for its students:

- **Academic preparation.** As a low-cost, low-risk on-ramp to a WGU degree program—or, potentially, to a program at another institution—WGU Academy offers transferable college-level courses. These are not “remedial” courses—they’re rigorous academic courses that provide students with resources and any extra assistance they may require to earn the college credits they need to launch a successful college career.

- **A growth mindset.** Too many college readiness programs focus on academic coursework but miss the opportunities to support students’ social, emotional, and psychological barriers to success. WGU Academy helps students learn to believe—to know—that they can succeed in postsecondary education. With the coach-guided Program for Academic and Career Advancement (PACA), Academy strengthens students’ confidence and resolve, develops self-directed learning skills, and provides a foundation for both academic and career success. Students also work with a personal Success Coach throughout their time at Academy.

Measuring Success

Increasing Access: 2020 Growth

- **8,954** New students served in 2020
- **146%** Growth in new students over 2019
- **1,583** Academy graduates in 2020
- **2,413** Academy graduates to date
Giving More Students the Tools They Need to Succeed

Term 1 on-time progress in WGU degree program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WGU STUDENTS (NON-ACADEMY GRADS)</th>
<th>74%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WGU ACADEMY GRADUATES</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGU ACADEMY GRADS, FIRST-GEN COLLEGE STUDENTS</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“This is my second term at WGU, and I’m already 42% done with my bachelor’s degree. I had no prior college credits before going to the Academy or the university, so that was all completed in the year I’ve been doing school. I am currently pursuing a B.S. in Business Administration – Marketing and I am loving WGU so far!”

CARISSA BACA
WGU Academy Graduate
WGU College of Business Student

“I am enrolled in the College of Business working toward a B.S Business Administration–Marketing. I finished one additional course in my first term on top of on-time progress and am starting my second term going strong!”

MEGHAN JOHNSON
WGU Academy Graduate
WGU College of Business Student

“I just finished student teaching with WGU, and I’m aiming to participate in the virtual graduation ceremony this May. It’s been a fantastic, life-changing experience. It’s pretty crazy to think that I started WGU Academy with zero college experience, and I will be graduating with my bachelor’s degree less than two years later.”

LACIE HIGLEY
WGU Academy Graduate
WGU Teachers College Student
REINVENTING EDUCATION FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

The Future of Work and Higher Ed

A Skills-Denominated Future
The way previous generations thought about education and careers doesn’t fit the realities of today’s workplace or the needs of today’s earner-learner. Under the old paradigm, students—mostly from privileged backgrounds—would leave high school and either enter a trade or enroll in a university, where they’d pick their lives’ paths and spend four or more years having a “college experience,” laying the groundwork for the careers from which they would eventually retire.

Today’s reality is different, and it points to an even more dramatically changed future: The job a college graduate will have in 10 years likely doesn’t exist today. They will work for many different organizations, have many job titles, and follow a career trajectory they can’t possibly predict right now. Education will be an ongoing part of that path, part of a working-and-learning loop as a changing workplace requires regular upskilling and reskilling to meet new realities.

Open Skills Network
With initial funding from Walmart, WGU created the Open Skills Network. OSN’s roughly 800 individual members and more than 350 partner organizations as of early 2021 work to promote a more equitable, skills-driven labor market that matches learners and workers with skills-based education and career opportunities to benefit the individual, employer, and economy at large.
Igniting a National Skills Movement

OSN is putting in place the foundations on which we can build the skills-based future. The creation of rich skills descriptors (RSDs) will enable educators, employers, and workers to speak a common language about what skills mean in the context of a given job or industry. To date, WGU’s more than 3,000 competencies have all been tagged with rich skills descriptors from the WGU skills library, currently over 11,000 RSDs strong. In 2020, WGU and the OSN developed the Open Skills Management Tool.

WGU and OSN are also helping move the education-to-opportunity pipeline beyond the traditional résumé. A Learning and Employment Record (LER) is a learner-owned, technology-enabled record of verified skills and achievements an individual has accumulated—through formal education as well as on-the-job trainings, military experience, and many informal learning settings. WGU was a participant in all three LER pilots conducted by the White House’s American Workforce Policy Advisory Board in 2020 and is now working in partnership to bring about a fully functioning exemplar: the Indiana Achievement Wallet. Partially funded by the Lilly Foundation, this initiative will culminate in an Achievement Wallet and LER that can be adopted by states and regions nationwide.

And while the traditional bachelor’s degree will continue to carry value in the economy of the future, it will only be part of the story. A skills-based lifelong learning loop will include microcredentials earned independently or as part of a broader credential, providing incremental value that can be realized in far less time than a four-year degree program. In 2020, WGU introduced the Medical Assistant Career Accelerator Program in partnership with Futuro Health and a redesigned suite of undergraduate business degree programs that incorporate skill-specific microcredentials along the way.
2020: A Year of Challenge and Opportunity

**January 22**
WGU Labs announces a partnership with Edquity to test its emergency student aid platform, offering at-risk WGU students (including low-income students, students of color, LGBTQ students, and adult learners) access to funding support and measuring its effects on success measures like retention.

**March 12**
In response to the emergent COVID-19 pandemic, President Scott Pulsipher announces that all university operations would move to remote status effective immediately. The Environmental Barriers Team mobilizes to respond to the pandemic as a crisis impacting all of WGU’s 120,000+ students.

**March 18**
WGU teams up with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to offer webinars aimed at easing the transition from face-to-face to virtual accreditation evaluations during the pandemic.

**April 16**
With K–12 and postsecondary institutions scrambling to move to online learning, WGU hosts the first of nine free webinars to help learners and educators adapt, with topics like creating an online community of care, working from home while educating your children, and modifying student teaching experiences. The series will continue in 2021.

**May 12**
WGU commits $10 million in emergency non-tuition aid to help students experiencing financial and health hardships due to the pandemic. The funds are distributed through the Edquity partnership launched in January.

**May 30**
WGU hosts its first-ever virtual commencement ceremony, allowing graduates, their loved ones, and faculty and staff to celebrate safely.

**August 13**
WGU partners with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for four projects aimed at removing barriers to quality, access, and outcomes across the education-to-opportunity lifecycle.

**August 25**
WGU and Global Online Academy announce a partnership to train K–12 educators in delivering engaging online instruction.

**August 4**
WGU Labs announces the founding network partners for its new College Innovation Network’s pilot year.

**September 30**
WGU graduates its 200,000th graduate since granting its first degree nearly 21 years earlier—just 2½ years after passing 100,000 grads.

**November 9**
For the second year in a row, WGU pledges to match up to $50,000 in Intermountain Healthcare employee contributions to IHC’s community health campaign, supporting community-based programs addressing opioid misuse, the social determinants of health, suicide prevention, obesity, and equal access to quality care.
NATIONAL SCALE, LOCAL IMPACT

WGU meets students where they are and solves local, state, and regional workforce challenges.