



2022 Annual Report

Annual Update Transcript



Introduction

Scott Pulsipher

President, Western Governors University

At WGU we recognize the talent inherent in every individual and know that when given the opportunity, everyone has something big to contribute. As we look back on 2022, we celebrate the more than 300,000 graduates we have supported in our 25 years of existence and highlight how WGU is leading the way in higher education by creating pathways to opportunity for all learners.

With a steady focus on reaching those who often have not been served well by traditional postsecondary options, the university graduated more than 43,500 students this past year, enhancing their ability to make meaningful contributions to their families and communities. These graduates include Damir-Abdualla Kadeen Baahir Harrod-DAR'ROH, who persevered through homelessness as well as mental and physical stress caused by the pandemic and went on to earn his degree at WGU in December; and Courtney Moore, who discovered WGU as a working parent of two and recently leveraged her degree to earn a director role at the hospital where she previously worked.



Damir-Abdualla Kadeen Baahir Harrod-DAR'ROH delivering the commencement address at WGU's New Orleans commencement ceremony in 2023.



Courtney Moore and Scott Pulsipher at WGU's New Orleans commencement ceremony in 2023.



We couldn't be prouder of these two and all our students who in many ways reflect the diversity of our great nation. Last year, their median age was 34, with many of our students already carrying half a lifetime of experience and wisdom with them. 79 percent of students pursued their credentials while working, showcasing a level of commitment and determination that is truly inspiring. Our learners brought with them diverse perspectives and lived experiences. 29 percent belonged to historically underrepresented populations of learners, including Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, or individuals of two or more races. 18 percent were the first in their families to earn a degree, 61 percent of our students were female, and 14 percent were military or belonged to military families. We are privileged to play a role in each of these individuals' lives.

From the very beginning, our founders understood that innovation would be critical

to meet the needs of our learners, for whom traditional models often fall short. It's a commitment we take seriously, and one that is deeply woven into the very fabric of our university. One of WGU's founding Governors, Jim Geringer, who spent his childhood working on the family farm, shared, "We were constantly solving problems and we didn't wait to be told to do something—we took the initiative, even when we didn't know how we were going to do it. That's how we should approach higher education. Don't be satisfied with where we are: let's look at where we ought to be and lead the way."

Our "tradition of breaking tradition" may indeed set WGU apart, but innovation without accountability gets us nowhere. That's why WGU holds itself accountable to achieving strong outcomes on behalf of all our students. Known as our Key Results, these metrics help us measure progress toward our mission.

Key Results

Nadeem Syed

Chief Financial Officer, Western Governors University

WGU's Key Results encompass three metrics: completion of a degree program, measurable return on students' investment of time and funds, and equity in both access to higher education as well as attainment. Our Key Results measure whether WGU is delivering on its mission to change lives for the better. As President Pulsipher has said on many occasions, access to education without completion of a credential is an empty promise.

The most rewarding part of our work is seeing our students graduate and earn a degree that will connect them with greater opportunities. In 2022, 43,586 students earned their degrees from WGU, an astounding accomplishment for these new alumni. However, we saw that over the course of the year, our four-year graduation rate fell by roughly 2% to 43.5% in December, just below our goal of 45%. Among historically underrepresented students of color, the 4-year graduation rate is lower still. This is partially due to the challenges created for learners by the pandemic, and partially a reflection of our changing learner profile.

As we work to change this trajectory and support students on their pathway to a degree, one factor that helps them persist is the knowledge that their degree will provide a

measurable return on their investment. A recent Harris Poll of WGU alumni showed that within two years of graduation, respondents saw an average salary increase of 22,200 dollars. Within four years of graduation, the average salary increase was 29,200 dollars. These results combined with WGU's competency-based education model, six-month flat-rate tuition, and lower cost degree than the national average mean our alumni are able to gain affordable and workforce-aligned credentials that prepare them for success in their careers.

However, none of these benefits are possible unless students can overcome barriers to higher education access. Part of our mission is to make enrollment more accessible, especially for underserved populations. We were pleased to note that 2022 continued a rising three-year enrollment trend among these individuals.

We can't overstate the significance of our Key Results in shaping the decisions we make at WGU. Our commitment to improving student outcomes offers clarity of purpose and direction for the academic programs we design and the types of innovation we pursue.

Here is Debbie Fowler to tell us more about student support at WGU.

Student Support

Debbie Fowler

Senior Vice President of Student Success, Western Governors University

For most people who choose to attend WGU, their lives look a little different than what we imagine the typical first-time college student's life to be. They are working adults who come to WGU looking for a higher education experience that will fit their busy lives and allow them to either complete their first degree or learn the skills necessary to complete a graduate degree and move ahead in their careers.

For that reason, we have designed the entire WGU experience around a one-by-one, personalized approach to student success. Built on the efforts of our dedicated faculty and staff, WGU's innovative framework of student support is the reason 86% of alumni are satisfied with the academic help they receive, 84% say they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, and 96% say they would choose to attend WGU again.

Not only are graduates satisfied with their WGU experience, but employers are also impressed with the level of knowledge and preparation those grads bring to the workplace. Ninety-nine percent of employers say WGU alumni meet or exceed workplace expectations, and 95% say they would hire another WGU graduate.

Our focus will always be on delivering strong outcomes for our Night Owls. But we also recognize we are uniquely positioned to use what we have learned to improve the student experience, not just for our students but for learners across the higher education sector.

Here are Gene Hayes and Sarah DeMark to tell us more.

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Skills and Outreach

Sarah DeMark

Interim Provost, Western Governors University

As we look ahead to the next 25 years, we are working to positively impact the education-to-work lifecycle, not just for our students, but for all students.

WGU has long been a leader in industry relevant, competency-based education. Last year, we took some critical, early steps in a larger journey toward sector transformation.

For example, we launched the WGU Skills Library, which is a database of essential skills and competencies that helps us design credentials with workforce needs in mind. Designing credentials through this approach enhances the alignment between our programs, courses, and assessments, and current and projected labor market demands.

WGU took it a step further by publicly releasing our Skills Library collections publicly, including to the broader Open Skills Network community. As co-founders of the Open Skills

Network, WGU's continued collaboration with our partners in the network helps us all move toward a shared language of skills-based education and hiring.

WGU also reaffirmed its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. By partnering with groups like Beyond100K and The Reboot Representation Tech Coalition, we can increase outreach to women and those from historically underrepresented groups as they train to become leaders and educators in STEM fields.

And not only did WGU develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Assessment and Learning Framework, but we made it available to other institutions under a Creative Commons license. In sharing this tool, we hope to make learning and assessment products more accessible and equitable at WGU and beyond.

Gene Hayes

Senior Vice President of Regional Operations, Western Governors University

Partnerships are key to moving all of higher education to a more valuable, student-centered experience. That's why WGU builds local and regional relationships with government leaders, educators, and business partners—so we can break down barriers to education together.

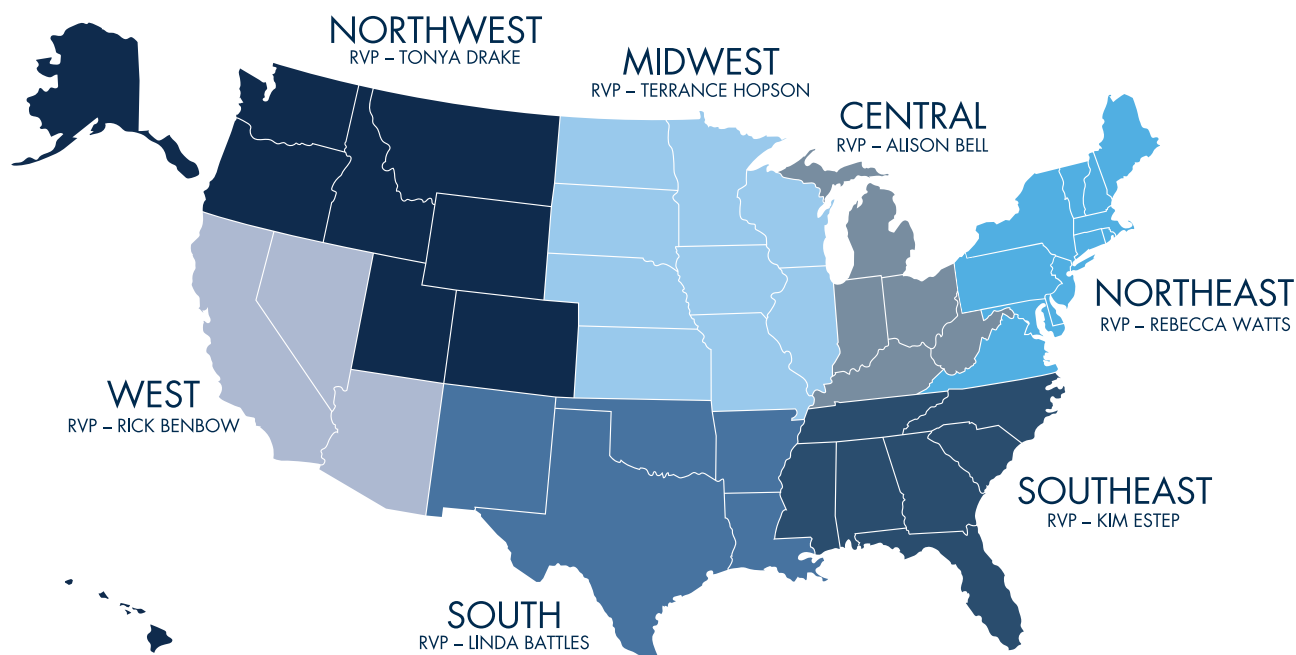
In 2022, WGU signed agreements with the states of Nebraska and Arizona, bringing the total number of state partnerships to 13. These partnerships augment existing state-based educational networks and allow working adults—many of whom have some college credit but no credential—to access financial assistance to finish their degrees.

We are also pleased to partner with many public sector businesses as they support their employees

on the path to opportunity and growth. For example, this past year we became nationwide education partners in the McDonald's Archways to Opportunity program as well as Amazon's Career Choice Program, allowing employees of those companies to access WGU degree programs at little to no cost.

Through these relationship-building efforts, WGU seeks to be a catalyst in changing how we define the value of higher education, both now and in the future.

To highlight how we are leading higher ed innovation, here are Chris Lee and Jason Levin.



10X Vision

Chris Lee

President, WGU Academy

Since 2017, WGU has sought to transform higher education through what we call our 10X vision—the creation and growth of transformational entities that magnify WGU’s impact and focus on themes such as post-secondary student readiness, technological innovation, and global delivery models.

WGU Academy

I am proud to lead WGU Academy, a low-cost, low-risk college readiness approach designed to serve as an onramp to higher education. In 2022, Academy learners completed more than 10,000 courses designed to help prepare them for degrees. Graduation from Academy guarantees acceptance into WGU, and last year we found that 90% of Academy grads who completed their first term at WGU persisted in their studies and continued to their second term, a key indicator of continued success.



WGU Advancement is the official fundraising arm of WGU and its affiliates. In 2022, Advancement raised over 31 million dollars through the generosity of more than 3,400 donors, including WGU alumni, employees and students, as well as corporate partners and philanthropic foundations. These donations are used to fund scholarships and advance a more equitable model for higher education.

Jason Levin

Executive Director, WGU Labs



At WGU Labs, we investigate policy, systems, and technology solutions that transform learning. Last year, we conducted 13 research engagements, invested 2.3 million dollars in six companies through the Accelerator, and supported four university initiatives focused on analytics and user experience.



And finally, Juvo Ventures, a double-bottom-line venture capital firm, continued its efforts to invest in educational and future of work technology companies that improve access, quality, and outcomes across the education to work lifecycle. With more than 20 portfolio companies, Juvo is empowering entrepreneurs to create innovative solutions that unlock the learning potential of every individual.

By expanding our vision and finding ways to improve every aspect of the education ecosystem, WGU is taking its commitment to improving the student journey seriously and we look forward to even better things to come.

Conclusion

Scott Pulsipher

President, Western Governors University

Having had a chance to look back at all we've accomplished this past year for learners, we now want to take a moment and turn our attention to where we are going and what WGU can become.

Historically, WGU has reached underserved students by removing barriers of time, cost, and place. As we look ahead, our commitment to our mission and to these individuals will remain unchanged, and over the next five years, WGU will invest in expanding access among learners who may have little or no prior post-secondary experience, may be younger, may be working in good, but entry-level or low-resiliency jobs, or who may need new skills and credentials to catalyze their upward mobility toward a more vibrant and resilient opportunity. We refer to this segment of individuals simply as Rising Talent.

They are those for whom current postsecondary options are not only insufficient and minimally accessible, but often are even invisible. With hardened resolve, we will amplify our commitment to personalizing learning and the student experience to increase the probability that every individual can complete, regardless of background, starting point, or approach. We anticipate further innovation in course and instructional design, student mentoring and services, and even more flexibility in pace and sequencing to ensure that expanded access also delivers increased attainment. In expanding pathways to new and existing learner segments,

we will continue to reinvigorate the promise of education as the surest pathway to opportunity. Pathways at WGU will include not only our accredited, workforce-ready bachelor's and master's degrees, but also on-ramps, readiness offerings, and alternative pathways like micro-credentials that align with workforce demand, lead to high resilient opportunities, and provide transferable, stackable credit, increasing the probability all students progress.

As we continue to innovate and hold ourselves accountable to our commitments of quality and relevancy, strong completion and attainment outcomes, lower costs, and enabling historically underserved populations, WGU will strive to elevate our Key Results to a level that sets a new standard for "value" in higher education and compounds WGU's capacity as an engine for economic mobility yet unseen.

To that end, we measure what matters most – the value and impact we deliver for students – and we share those outcomes in our Annual Report. It's our hope this level of transparency and accountability provides confidence to every potential learner that college can be for them, such that they feel empowered to pursue educational pathways that can lead to a better life for themselves and for their families.

I invite you to explore our progress in greater detail at wgu.edu/annualreport.