

COMMENCEMENT IN ANAHEIM

NOVEMBER 6-7, 2026

OUR MISSION

To change lives for the better by creating pathways to opportunity.

OUR PROMISE

We provide strong returns on students' educational investments through a deep connection to workforce needs, respected and relevant credentials, eliminating unnecessary costs, and generous financial assistance and transfer policies.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear graduates,

On behalf of all of us at WGU, I congratulate you and welcome you to our commencement. We recognize and respect the hard work and sacrifices you have made to complete your degree, and today is your day to celebrate this important milestone in your life.

We share your excitement and pride in this achievement—one that has the potential to make a real difference for you, your family, and even future generations. As you join the ranks of the more than 515,000 graduates and counting, we hope you will stay in touch through the Alumni Association.

Again, thank you for joining us today. We are so grateful for the opportunity to share this day with you and your loved ones. Congratulations!

Scott D. Pulsipher, President
Western Governors University

FRIDAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Mariana Atencio

Journalist, Author & Speaker

From her earliest days, Mariana Atencio was drawn to people and stories. Combining them into a career in journalism was a natural fit. It was there Mariana honed an essential skill for her work – the ability to build trust and connection on purpose. That work gave Mariana a window to study human nature and organizations that led her to become an expert on trust.

The journey there wasn't so simple. It began when she was mugged on a mountain trail in her native Caracas, Venezuela. As she knelt with a gun pressed to her forehead, she realized Caracas was a deteriorating place and she decided to pursue journalism in America.

Mariana knew America from spending summers there with her younger sister. Years later she spoke on the TEDx stage about those trips and the feeling of being an outsider struggling to adjust to a new country. That TEDx talk, "What Makes You Special," catapulted Mariana onto the global stage and has been viewed more than 25 million times. It established her as a global authority on the power of authenticity as a trust multiplier.

A scholarship to Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism School paved the way for Mariana's 15-year career. She went on to become a hard-working news anchor for Univision and a national correspondent for NBC News, also filing for ABC. Her reporting has been honored with a Peabody Award, a Gracie Award, and three national Emmy nominations.

FRIDAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER CONT'D



Mariana Atencio

Journalist, Author & Speaker

Mariana reported from environments where the stakes were high and lives were upended – anything from Cat 5 hurricanes to international conflict zones. "I would engage people at one of the worst times of their lives, and I needed to build trust fast so they understood I was trying to bring their story and an understanding of their situation to the viewers," she said.

Mariana also interviewed top leaders from politics, culture, sports, and business – from Pope Francis and the King of Spain to icons like Serena Williams and Rafael Nadal. Mariana translated their lessons into practical, leadership-ready frameworks. Today, she brings those tools to organizations and leadership teams, helping them close the Trust Gap so decisions move faster, collaboration strengthens, and execution becomes more consistent especially during periods of change.

The success of Mariana's TEDx talk led her to expand her message in her bestselling book Perfectly You: Embracing the Power of Being Real, showing why "being real" is not a soft skill but the secret weapon in a world saturated with noise and AI-generated content.

Since leaving network news, Mariana has become a sought-after speaker on leadership, organizational culture, trust, and executive communication – as well as a host and moderator for high-profile gatherings, where she is known for guiding leaders in deep and candid conversations that deliver real insight. She is also the creator of The Trust Advantage newsletter.

Mariana is a frequent on-air analyst across major news networks, a Henry Crown Fellow at the Aspen Institute, and serves on the board of the future Smithsonian American Latino Museum in Washington, D.C.

SATURDAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Linzie Starr

Director, Enterprise IT Project Management Office - Rady Children's Health

Linzie Starr III is a seasoned information technology leader with nearly 20 years of experience driving innovation, leading organizational change, and delivering enterprise solutions that make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

As Director of the Enterprise IT Project Management Office at Rady Children's Health, Linzie leads a unified PMO spanning the San Diego and Orange County regions. Reporting to the Chief Information and Digital Officer, he oversees an organization of roughly 70 project managers, business analysts, and managers, and a $40 million annual operating budget, delivering the technology initiatives that help Rady care for children and families across Southern California.

Throughout his career, Linzie has held key leadership roles at the County of Los Angeles, University of California and the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, and Southern California Edison combining strategic vision with a human-centered approach to innovation and organizational improvement.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Linzie is an avid distance runner who has completed more than 100 half marathons and 50 marathons, including three Boston Marathons, raising more than $25,000 for charitable causes. He also enjoys traveling, visiting Disney destinations, and spending time with family and friends.

SATURDAY KEYNOTE SPEAKER CONT'D



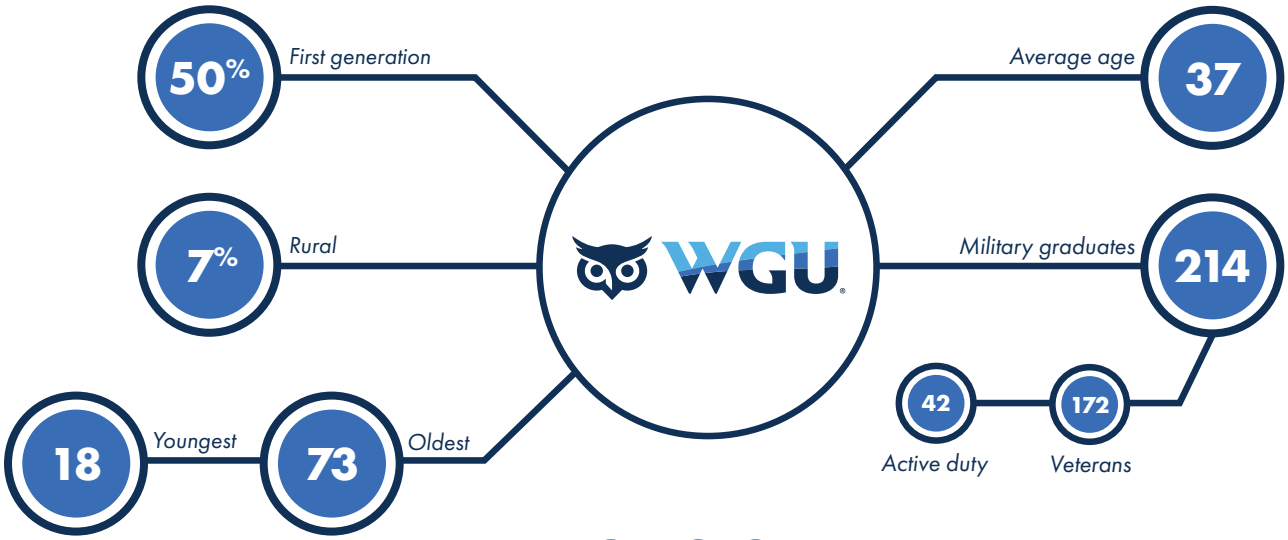
Linzie Starr

Director, Enterprise IT Project Management Office - Rady Children's Health

A theee-time WGU graduate, Linzie earned his Bachelor of Science in Information Technology in 2022, his MBA in Information Technology Management in 2023, and his Master of Science in Management & Leadership in 2025. He was recognized as a WGU Distinguished Graduate in 2024.

Linzie is also founder and chief consultant of Novo Point Strategic Partners, a boutique transformation advisory firm. Through it, he helps individuals and organizations in healthcare, the public sector, and other regulated industries lead change that holds, aligning strategy, governance, and culture so new ways of working actually stick. He advises executives navigating complex transformation, helping them build cultures where constructive dissent drives better decisions and lasting change.

GRADUATING CLASS PROFILE



2,887

Total Number of Graduates

Degree distribution by college:

22%	18%	19%	41%
638 *Education*	**507** *Technology*	**560** *Health*	**1,182** *Business*

Degree type:

57%	43%
1,649 *Masters*	**1,238** *Bachelors*

52%

Percentage of graduates from California

5,674

Furthest mileage traveled from Guam

48

Number of states represented (including U.S. territories)

FRIDAY AFTERNOON CEREMONY

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT
Rick Benbow
Regional Vice President, West Region

ANTHEM SINGER
Meylin Villa, Eagle, NE
B.S. Accounting

GRADUATE SPEAKERS
Ramandeep Sandhu, Stockton, CA
MBA - Healthcare Management

Alyce Rowe, Ellijay, GA
B.S. Health and Human Services

Keynote Speaker
Mariana Atencio
Journalist, Author & Speaker

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES
Dr. Courtney Hills McBeth
Chief Academic Officer & Provost

Leavitt School of Health
School of Education
School of Technology
School of Business

CLOSING REMARKS
Scott Pulsipher
President

SATURDAY MORNING CEREMONY

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT
Dr. Mitsu Frazier
Senior Vice President, School of Business

ANTHEM SINGER
Katelynn Simmonds, Trenton, UT
B.A. Special Education and Elementary Education

GRADUATE SPEAKERS
German Gomez, Cerritos, CA
Master of Business Administration

Joshua Forkner, Salt Lake City, UT
M.Ed. Education Technology and Instructional Design

Keynote Speaker
Linzie Starr
Director, Enterprise IT Project Management Office - Rady Children's Health

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES
Dr. Courtney Hills McBeth
Chief Academic Officer & Provost

Leavitt School of Health
School of Education
School of Technology
School of Business

CLOSING REMARKS
Scott Pulsipher
President

SATURDAY AFTERNOON CEREMONY

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT
Rick Benbow
Regional Vice President, West Region

ANTHEM SINGER
Patricia LeBlanc, Desert Hot Springs, CA
M.S. Nursing - Education

GRADUATE SPEAKERS
Feda Odeh, Palos Hills, IL
M.S. Curriculum and Instruction

Gabriel Murillo, Victorville, CA
M.S. Management and Leadership

Keynote Speaker
Linzie Starr
Director, Enterprise IT Project Management Office - Rady Children's Health

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES
Dr. Courtney Hills McBeth
Chief Academic Officer & Provost

Leavitt School of Health
School of Education
School of Technology
School of Business

CLOSING REMARKS
Scott Pulsipher
President

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The Honorable
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The Honorable
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Oklahoma
The Honorable
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Tina Kotek

South Dakota
The Honorable
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Washington State University



CONGRATULATIONS, NIGHT OWLS! YOU DID IT!

Welcome to our growing alumni network,
now more than 515,000 strong!
Stay connected, network with colleagues, and learn
about the many resources and benefits available to you:

wgu.edu/alumni

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