



COMMENCEMENT IN MINNEAPOLIS

AUGUST 22, 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!

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "Scott D. Pulsipher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

*Scott D. Pulsipher, President
Western Governors University*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Shayla Drake

SHRM-CP, CWDP

Shayla Drake, SHRM-CP, CWDP, is a Workforce Strategy Consultant with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), where she works with employers, educators, workforce professionals, economic developers, and community organizations to develop workforce solutions that strengthen Minnesota's economy. Serving Northeast Minnesota and contributing to statewide initiatives, Shayla helps employers navigate workforce challenges through strategic planning, talent development, labor market intelligence, and collaborative partnerships.

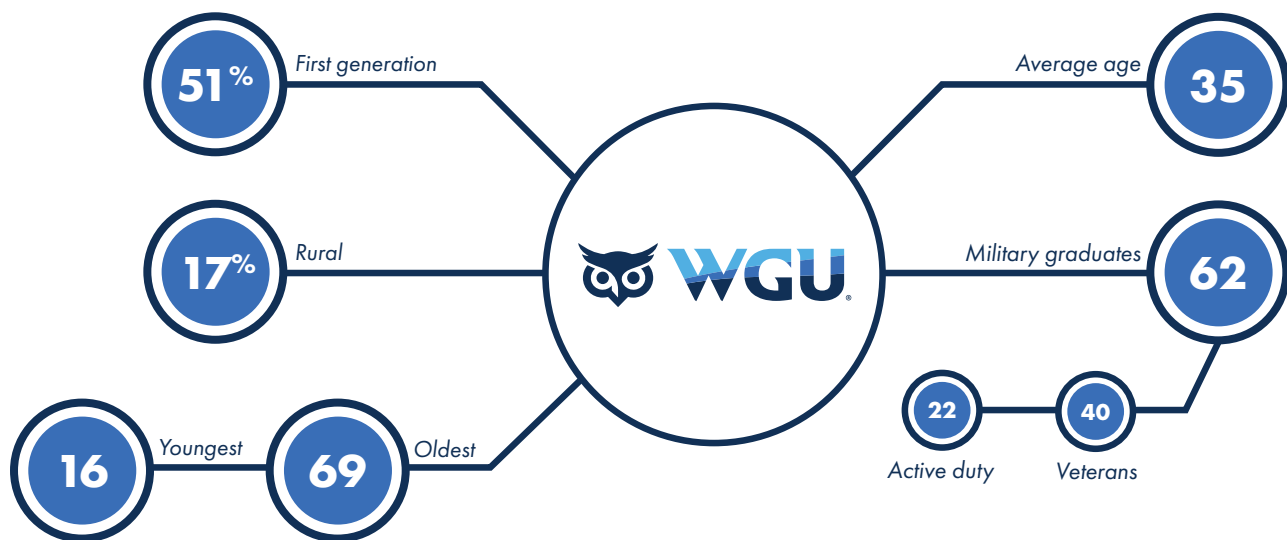
Before entering workforce development, Shayla began her career in healthcare as a Licensed Practical Nurse. After an unexpected medical crisis and a period of rehabilitation and recovery led her to pivot careers, she faced the challenge of rebuilding her professional path while finding a new way to pursue her passion for helping others.

That journey led Shayla to Western Governors University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in business with an emphasis in human resource management. She transitioned into human resources before ultimately finding her calling in workforce development, where she now helps employers and communities build stronger unified talent ecosystem while creating meaningful career pathways for workers and job seekers.

Throughout her career, Shayla has helped lead regional and statewide workforce initiatives, employer collaboratives, industry summits, and cross-sector partnerships. Her experience spanning healthcare, human resources, and workforce strategy gives her a unique perspective on the challenges facing today's workers and employers, as well as the ability to translate complex labor market information into actionable workforce strategies.

A proud WGU alum, Shayla understands firsthand the determination it takes to pursue an education while navigating unexpected life changes. Her journey from nurse to WGU graduate to workforce strategist reflects her belief that a career path does not have to be linear to be meaningful, and that new opportunities can emerge from even the most difficult transitions.

GRADUATING CLASS PROFILE



744

Total Number of Graduates

Degree distribution by college:



Degree type:



27%

Percentage of graduates
from Minnesota

2,615

Furthest mileage traveled
from Juneau, AK

42

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

SATURDAY MORNING CEREMONY

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT

Dr. Terrance Hopson

Regional Vice President, Midwest Region

ANTHEM SINGER

Egnolia Dias Candido, Bethel, CT

B.S. Psychology

GRADUATE SPEAKERS

Kaytlyn Mae Sagert, Kingsley, IA

B.S. Mathematics Education

Khalid Barre, Minneapolis, MN

M.S. Cybersecurity and Information Assurance

B.S. Cybersecurity and Information Assurance

Carmen Briggs, Winona, MN

B.S. Human Resource Management

Zain Malik, Chicago, IL

B.S. Information Technology

Keynote Speaker

Shayla Drake

SHRM-CP, CWDP

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES

Dr. Deborah Fowler

Senior Vice President, Academic Delivery

Leavitt School of Health

School of Education

School of Technology

School of Business

CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Courtney Hills McBeth

Chief Academic Officer & Provost

MEMBER GOVERNORS

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Governor, Utah 1993–2003

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*The Honorable
Michael J. Dunleavy*

Indiana

*The Honorable
Frank O'Bannon*

Oregon

*The Honorable
Tina Kotek*

Arizona

*The Honorable
Katie Hobbs*

Montana

*The Honorable
Greg Gianforte*

South Dakota

*The Honorable
Larry Rhoden*

California

*The Honorable
Gavin Newsom*

Nebraska

*The Honorable
Jim Pillen*

Texas

*The Honorable
Greg Abbott*

Colorado

*The Honorable
Jared Polis*

Nevada

*The Honorable
Joe Lombardo*

Utah

*The Honorable
Spencer Cox*

Guam

*The Honorable
Lou Leon Guerrero*

New Mexico

*The Honorable
Michelle Lujan Grisham*

Washington

*The Honorable
Bob Ferguson*

Hawaii

*The Honorable
Josh Green*

North Dakota

*The Honorable
Kelly Armstrong*

Wyoming

*The Honorable
Mark Gordon*

Idaho

*The Honorable
Brad Little*

Oklahoma

*The Honorable
Kevin Stitt*

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Strada Education Foundation*

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*Director, Policy & Public Sector, ESRI
Former Governor, State of Wyoming
(1995–2003)*

David Simmons

Chairman & CEO, Simmons Media Group

Dr. Samuel H. Smith

*President Emeritus,
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

GET SOCIAL

Share the excitement!

Use #WGUgrad to tag your commencement posts.

