All colleges strive to provide their students with the best programs. Western Governors University (WGU) goes one step further, and also focuses on giving their students the best credentials.

WGU is an online, accredited university. It was founded specifically to help adult learners fit college into their already busy lives. A little over a year ago, WGU added certification requirements as part of their Information Technology degree programs.

"We want our students to be more knowledgeable and marketable when graduating," explained Gwen Britton, IT Program Coordinator. "Not only do our graduates gain competencies toward a bachelor’s degree, but (they) graduate with at least eight certifications."

In developing the program, industry certifications that complement WGU’s Information Technology offering and its specializations in Network Administration, Networks Design and Management, Databases, Security and Software were chosen.

CompTIA A+, CompTIA Network+, CompTIA Security+ and CompTIA Project+ are all required certifications.

"CompTIA certifications were chosen because they are vendor-neutral, and applicable in many environments," said Britton.

The cost of certification is included in the tuition.

"When students find out that certifications are part of the required coursework, they are thrilled," said Britton. "Many have worked in IT for several years, but never obtained their degree. It really gives them an edge to earn their degree and also be highly certified."

Certifications also benefit new grads without work experience; it shows that they have the ability to work with technology.

"Having the certification proves that they know the technology," explained Britton. "It reinforces their educational competencies."

Britton says she receives only positive feedback about the program. Graduates have told her they receive more job opportunities, and also find it easier to get promoted.

"It has been very successful," said Britton. "We are definitely thinking of ways to expand and develop our certification offerings in the future."

Best Practices in Education: Western Governors University

By Natalie McGregory, staff writer

In 2007, CompTIA is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Just as the information technology (IT) industry it serves has grown, CompTIA has also enjoyed remarkable growth over the past 25 years. The organization was founded by representatives of five micro-computer dealerships working together to find better ways to do business. Today, CompTIA has more than 22,000 member companies in over 100 countries around the world; and serves as the voice of the world’s $1 trillion-plus IT industry. For more information, visit: www.comptia.org.

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