WGU Teachers College Receives NCATE Accreditation

The first ever NCATE accreditation for an online institution recently occurred at Western Governors University (WGU). According to NCATE, "In 2001, NCATE modified its standards in part to anticipate the accreditation of non-traditional providers, and WGU is the first to engage the opportunity." The approval ratifies WGU's focus on the quality of its teacher preparation programs. It further validates that WGU's online, competency-based programs meet the highest criteria by which professional education programs are evaluated.

WGU President Dr. Robert Mendenhall is elated about the accreditation. "WGU is rapidly becoming one of the largest teacher education programs in the country, and as we have teacher education graduates seeking licensure in all 50 states, it was important for us to have NCATE accreditation in addition to our own quality standards," says Dr. Mendenhall. "We are very pleased with the growing acceptance of competency-based education not only by students, but by accrediting organizations, state departments of education, school districts, and the U.S. Department of Education. It is a tribute to NCATE that they were willing and able to apply their standards of quality to a non-traditional program, that is both online and that measures learning rather than time."

WGU’s Teachers College continues to grow more than 40% annually. After just three-and-a-half years, the college now enrolls more than 4,000 students, with approximately 1,000 of these students concentrating on math and science education. Approximately 600 candidates for licensure will graduate this year. Because WGU's Teachers College is online, it serves a national audience. Today, WGU graduates can apply directly to more than 40 states for teacher certification, and WGU students are eligible for reciprocity in most of the remaining states. With the NCATE accreditation, WGU students will be able to apply for certification directly in even more states.

WGU offers bachelor's and master's programs leading to initial teacher certification in interdisciplinary studies (primarily for elementary teachers), in the high-need areas of mathematics and science, and in social science. WGU also offers master's programs for already-certified teachers in mathematics, science, English language learning, management and innovation, learning and technology, and measurement and evaluation.

Eighty-five percent of WGU students are from underserved populations. Underserved populations are classified by WGU as either economically disadvantaged, rural, first generation college student, Hispanic, African American, Native American, or a combination of two or more of these categories. The average age of students is 37; most (77 percent) are female. Most (85 percent) are currently employed, the large majority of them full-time.

WGU now joins the ranks of 623 other colleges and universities, such as Stanford, Teachers College of Columbia University, Purdue, Texas A&M, BYU, Southern Utah State, and others with NCATE accreditation. Nearly 100 other programs are currently seeking the highly-recognized NCATE accreditation.