First Distance Ed University Earns Teacher Accreditation

The Teachers College at Western Governors University (WGU), a completely online university founded by the 19 Western Governor's of the United States, has been awarded accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The NCATE accrediting body operates a performance-based system which requires entities applying for accreditation to provide evidence that candidates have the knowledge and skills to be effective in helping students learn. NCATE examined 70 institutions at its fall meeting.

Western Governors has previously received institutional accreditation from four regional accrediting commissions, and has been aided by a $10 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. WGU's Teachers College was designed to address the growing need for high quality teachers through online, competency-based degree and licensure programs. The virtual university serves students in all 50 states, 10 foreign countries, and 3 U.S. territories. WGU has teacher candidates in all 50 states. The average student age at WGU is 36; most (77 percent) are female. Most (85 percent) are employed, the majority of them full-time. 4500 candidates are currently enrolled in the Teacher's College.

Although classwork is done online, Western Governors' Teachers College requires pre-student teaching clinical experiences as well as student teaching in a regular classroom. The university has a placement office which works with school districts to find student teaching placements (called demonstration teaching by the university) and Host Teachers. Clinical supervisors are screened and trained by the university. Candidates spend at least 12 weeks in Demonstration Teaching.