Expanding Access to Higher Education to Meet Workforce Needs in Texas

WGU Texas was established in 2011 by the state of Texas to expand access to busy adults in the state. Created through a partnership with accredited, nationally recognized Western Governors University, WGU Texas offers busy working adults an affordable, flexible option for earning an accredited college degree.

WGU Texas offers more than 50 bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in business, K-12 teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing. The university provides an additional option for Texans who need to complete their undergraduate or graduate degrees to advance their careers.

The university uses an innovative approach to teaching and learning designed for adult learners. This approach, called competency-based learning, is based on the understanding that adult students come to college with different levels of knowledge and that they learn at different rates. Students are awarded degrees based on demonstrating what they know and can do rather than time spent in a classroom. Requirements for each degree program are defined in collaboration with employers, ensuring that students graduate with the knowledge and skills employers need.

While most online universities simply use technology to distribute classroom education, WGU Texas uses technology to deliver instruction and content. This changes the role of the faculty member from that of a lecturer to a mentor. Faculty mentors work one-on-one with students, providing individualized support, guidance, and instruction.

Terms at WGU Texas are six months long and begin on the first day of each month. Students move at their own pace and may complete as many courses as they are able in any term. This allows many students to accelerate their studies, and as a result, the average time to complete a bachelor’s degree is less than three years.

WGU Texas has partnered with the Texas Association of Community Colleges to provide community and technical college graduates seamless credit transfers and tuition discounts.
WGU Texas Student Portrait

Enrollment by College
(December 31, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2,784</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers College</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professions (including Nursing)</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5,828</td>
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Enrollment Growth

- 2100 students in DEC 2011
- 3500 students in DEC 2012
- 4500 students in DEC 2013
- 5800 students in DEC 2014

Growth in Cumulative Graduates

- 1100 graduates in DEC 2011
- 1550 graduates in DEC 2012
- 2200 graduates in DEC 2013
- 3100 graduates in DEC 2014

- 41% compound 3-year annual growth in enrollment
- 41% compound 3-year annual growth in graduates

Distribution of Students

- Undergraduate: 4,762 students (82%)
- Graduate: 1,066 students (18%)

- The average age of WGU Texas students is 37; student ages range from 19 to 69.
- 73% of WGU Texas students are classified as underserved.
- 41% are first-generation college students.

"WGU Texas is blazing a trail to bring innovative, competency-based education to more Texans, ensuring they are well equipped to take on 21st century workforce demands. WGU Texas’ flexibility and affordability means more Texans can pursue and achieve their undergraduate and graduate degrees. And, for Texas businesses, WGU Texas is delivering highly-skilled, well-qualified graduates."

—Bill Hammond, CEO, Texas Association of Business

WGU is the largest educator of math and science teachers in the U.S., conferring 5% of the nation’s baccalaureate and 15% of the nation’s master’s degrees in STEM teaching.
Making Higher Education Affordable

**WGU’s tuition of about $6,000 per year has not increased since 2008.** Tuition is charged at a flat rate per six-month term regardless of the number of courses completed. The university is self-sustaining on tuition, receiving no ongoing state or federal funding.

Financial Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>WGU Texas students receive financial aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>WGU Texas undergraduates receive Pell grants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WGU’s 3-year student loan default rate is 6.6%, compared with the national average of 13.7%**.

In 2014, WGU awarded more than $2.5 million in need-based scholarships.

Reducing Student Debt by 29%

WGU’s Responsible Borrowing Initiative encourages students to borrow only what they need to complete their degrees. Since its launch in 2013, average borrowing per student (of those who take out loans) has decreased by $2,500 per year, a reduction of 29%. In one year, **WGU students reduced borrowing by $125 million**.

Providing a Quicker Return on Investment

A degree from WGU pays for itself faster. WGU students experienced an average increase in income of $10,400 in the first one to three years after graduation, significantly higher than the national average. **With an average cost of $18,000 for a bachelor’s degree, the return on investment of a WGU degree is about 2 years**.

“WGU Texas has allowed me to achieve something I wanted to do right out of high school—to teach children. It has given me a sense of pride and helped me earn the respect of my colleagues.”

—Terri King
B.A. Interdisciplinary Studies (PreK-8)
Houston
Delivering A Better Learning Experience

2014 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

NSSE is a national survey that measures student engagement. In 2014, NSSE polled more than 350,000 students from more than 600 institutions. Students gave WGU the highest scores possible at significantly higher levels than the national average in the following key areas:

- Quality of interactions with faculty—20% higher
- Quality of academic support—23% higher
- Would attend same institution again—25% higher
- Rating of entire educational experience—16% higher
- Time spent per week on studies—13% higher
- Acquisition of job-related knowledge and skills—13% higher

“At WGU Texas, I am able to accelerate my courses, and the cost of my degree is solely in my hands. The faster I accelerate, the more affordable my education becomes.”

—Mary Fredette
B.S. Marketing Management
Fort Hood

WGU Texas Student Satisfaction

| Overall, how satisfied are you with your WGU Texas experience? | 96% satisfied; 59% very satisfied |
| How satisfied are you with the mentoring support that you receive? | 93% satisfied; 75% very satisfied |
| On average, how often are you in contact with your mentor? | At least every two weeks: 98%
Once a week: 68% |
| Did you achieve or will you have achieved the goals you had when you started at WGU Texas? | 94% yes |
| Have you or would you recommend WGU Texas to a friend? | 97% would recommend WGU Texas. 77% have already recommended WGU Texas. |

WGU’s one-year retention rate in 2014 was 79%, while the average one-year retention rate at U.S. public four-year institutions was 73%.

“With record-setting job growth in Texas over the past year, an educated workforce is more important than ever. WGU Texas is a wonderful option for adults who did not complete college and want to finish and contribute to the strong Texas economy.”

—Andres Alcantar,
Chairman,
Texas Workforce Commission
“WGU Texas has a really unique program that is perfect for anyone who is currently working or who wants to upgrade some skill sets. WGU Texas graduates are successful because they have the job skills necessary to be competitive in the workforce.”

—Wendy Chance, VP of Membership, Austin Human Resource Management Association

**Employer Satisfaction**
(2014 Survey of 300 Employers by Harris Poll)

- 99% said that WGU graduates meet or exceed expectations; **92% said WGU graduates exceed expectations.**
- 94% rated WGU graduates’ job performance as good as or better than the job performance of other graduates; **53% rated WGU graduates as better than other graduates.**
- 96% said that their WGU graduates were prepared for their jobs; **89% said WGU graduates were very well or extremely well prepared.**
- 93% of employers rate the “soft skills” of WGU graduates as equal to or better than graduates from other institutions.
- 86% of employers rate WGU nursing graduates as very good or excellent in “evidence-based practice.”

**Graduates Prepared for Success**
Comparison of results of a 2014 Harris Poll Online survey of 1,561 new college graduates nationwide with a survey of 1,213 WGU graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Outcomes</th>
<th>WGU</th>
<th>National</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in Degree Field</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Full Time</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in Additional College Program</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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In a 2014 survey of WGU Texas students, **97% said they would recommend WGU Texas.**
Growing and Building, WGU Texas’ Third Year

In addition to increasing statewide enrollment to 5,800 students, WGU Texas continued to establish itself as an important member of the state’s higher education community. In its third year, WGU Texas:

• Honored nearly 900 students during its 2014 commencement ceremony in Houston.
• Continues to receive a $2 million grant from the Houston Endowment and was awarded a $500,000 grant from the Greater Texas Foundation to support the university’s growth in Houston and in rural Texas, respectively.
• Launched a partnership and co-branded scholarship with the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC) to boost Hispanic education and improve talent pools and competitiveness of Hispanic businesses across the state.

Chancellor and Advisory Board

WGU Texas is based in downtown Austin and has staff members across the state. The university is led by Chancellor Veronica Vargas Stidvent. Stidvent has served in a number of prominent roles in Texas higher education and federal policy. WGU Texas operates under the guidance of an advisory board composed of corporate, community, and education leaders in the state.

- Andres Alcantar, Chairman, Texas Workforce Commission – Austin
- Jelynne LeBlanc-Burley, Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, CPS Energy – San Antonio
- Patricia Diaz Dennis, Senior Vice President and Assistant General Counsel, Retired, AT&T – San Antonio
- John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Educate Texas – Dallas
- Bernie Francis, Owner and CEO, Business Control Systems, and First Class Caregivers, Inc. – Dallas
- Reynaldo García, President and CEO, Texas Association of Community Colleges – Austin
- Bonnie Gonzalez, CEO, Knapp Community Care Foundation – Weslaco
- George Grainger, Director of Research and Planning and Senior Grant Officer, Retired, Houston Endowment – Houston
- Woody Hunt, Chairman and CEO, Hunt Companies – El Paso
- Lizzette C. González Reynolds, Chief Deputy Commissioner, Texas Education Agency – Austin
- Mark David Milliron, Chief Learning Officer, Civitas Learning – Austin
- L. E. Simmons, Founder and President, SCF Partners – Houston

Yovaletta Sullivan, Houston

Patient Care Manager, Texas Children’s Hospital Pavilion for Women

Houston native Yovaletta Sullivan’s experience earning a degree has been a journey. While enrolled in another degree program at WGU Texas, she was offered a promotion contingent on obtaining her BSN degree. She made a smooth transition into the BSN program, but toward the end of her first term, she learned that she needed to have brain surgery. After recovering from surgery she benefited from WGU Texas’ flexibility and with the support of her mentors, she learned about her own strength and was able to earn her BSN.

Now with a clean bill of health and recent promotion, Yovaletta is improving her career opportunities once again by accelerating through the MBA Healthcare Management program at WGU Texas.

3,100 graduates

Nearly 3,100 Texans have earned degrees from WGU.
WGU TEXAS PROMISE:

We help our students achieve their dreams for a degree and career success by providing a personal, flexible, and affordable education based on real-world competencies.