Western Governors University Summer Commencement Class

Graduates: February 1 thru June 30, 2010

Total Graduates: 1,279

100+
50–99
20–49
10–19
1–9

New Jersey | 19
Maryland | 11
Massachusetts | 10
Connecticut | 9
Rhode Island | 4
Delaware | 3
New Hampshire | 3
Vermont | 3
Washington D.C. | 2

Armed Forces | 9
Canada | 2
Virgin Islands | 1
Puerto Rico | 1
Fritz Sheldon
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

After eighteen years in mortgage finance, culminating with the founding of a successful mortgage company in Miami Beach, Florida, the entire mortgage industry collapsed. Due to the economic climate, it became impossible for Fritz to continue his career, and as a result, he lost absolutely everything. He says, “It was the best thing that ever happened to me.” Fritz continues, “There’s nothing like total devastation to make you think about what you’d really like to do with the rest of your life! My decision to attend WGU marked my realization that the future is linked to education and a desire to learn.”

Fritz did well in his studies at WGU. In March 2010, he completed his Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management. One of the WGU lessons Fritz values most is how he learned to be a better self-advocate and leader. That lesson is serving him well, as he embarks on a Professional-Designation degree program at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM) in San Francisco.

While attending his new school, Fritz has already acted on the business plan he wrote for his WGU capstone project by opening Runway Couturier, a fashion-only event-production company - [http://www.runwaycouturier.com](http://www.runwaycouturier.com). Most students wait until they are out of school before seeking employment, let alone founding a company. Undaunted by the challenge, Fritz says, “Just as my late grandmother, Lucy Sheldon, used to tell me when I was a boy, ‘You can do anything you set your mind to.’ As it turns out, she was right.”

“My decision to attend WGU marked my realization that the future is linked to education and a desire to learn.”
-Fritz Sheldon, WGU graduate

Nadine Reid
SOMERDALE, NJ

Nadine Reid is a loving wife and devoted mother to her two-year old son. She is also the first of her nine siblings to attend college. After working in the business world for over 10 years, Nadine decided to earn a Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management. She says her journey at WGU was phenomenal and that she will cherish it for the rest of her life.

Nadine states that discovering WGU was one of the best things that ever happened to her. She admits that there were challenges along the way to her degree but with the three D’s as her motto: Desire, Drive and Determination, she was able to make her dream a reality. She had the desire to be a college graduate, the drive to stay up late at night and get up early in morning to work on assessments, and the determination to accelerate the pace of her program.

Nadine gives special recognition to her husband Wayne, son Pearce and mentor Wendy Alafua, thanking them for the integral part they played in helping her accomplish her dream of becoming a college graduate. She looks forward to working in a challenging position that utilizes her marketing and management skills.
Annette Wildner
TARPON SPRINGS, FL

 Originally from California, Annette has lived in Florida for over 10 years. She has worked in business, specifically facilities management and office design, for over 17 years. When her son recently graduated from high school and started college, Annette decided to earn a college degree as well.

 Annette says, “Once I started school at WGU everything in my life seemed to come alive.” Most of her WGU memories are of conversations with her mentor, Linda Bentley. She says, “Through my difficulties with migraines and a death in the family, she was there for me and understood exactly what to say and do to keep me focused. I can honestly say that without her guidance I never would have completed my degree.” Annette states that her WGU education helped her gain a deeper understanding of her work in business and to develop a sense of how interconnected various business functions work.

 In March 2010, Annette completed her Bachelor of Science in Business Management. She hopes her degree will help take her to the next level in her organization. However, she doesn’t plan to end her educational aspirations. After taking a short break she wants to come back to WGU to earn a graduate degree.

 Luke Wittum
OWOSSO, MI

 Luke Wittum was born and raised in Michigan. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Bible Studies with minors in Hebrew and Greek from Central Bible College in Springfield, MO. After completing his undergraduate degree, Luke worked in computer consulting, thinking it would be a temporary job until he found an opening for a position as a minister with a church. After 12 years, Luke continues to work in IT and still enjoys the field. In 2001, he went to work for Mt. Morris School District as their information systems manager and in 2004 he was promoted to director of technology. Throughout his career Luke continued to acquire IT certifications. However, he also wanted to earn an MBA so he could gain more managerial and leadership skills. A married father of four who works long hours, Luke needed a school where he could work at his own pace. Luke says, “The ability to have a flexible schedule and accelerate were important features that led me to WGU.”

 Luke appreciates the assistance he received from his mentors and the support of his family. He is proud and grateful of his achievement. Eventually, Luke wants to move into an IT management role with a larger organization.

 “The ability to have a flexible schedule and accelerate were important features that led me to WGU.”
- Luke Wittum, WGU graduate

 Fran Yuhas
TOMS RIVER, NJ

 Fran Yuhas has been employed as a Family and Consumer Science teacher for seven years in the New Jersey public school system. In February 2010, she completed her Master of Science in Special Education from WGU to enhance her current teaching position.

 Fran is committed to teaching her students. She came to education after her husband died. She needed to work and make a positive difference. Fran found her place teaching students how to cook. Along the lines of cooking, she teaches them about life and other lessons they will need. While a WGU student, Fran chaperoned a group of high school students to France for their spring break. In addition to teaching fulltime, Fran also mentors a youth club.

 She says, “WGU provided the flexibility and support that I needed and Tina Giovanni was a terrific mentor. She coached, motivated and inspired me when I was feeling down and overwhelmed.”

 Fran has proposed a child development pre-lab class which she hopes to see implemented in the future.

 Fran will turn 62 in October and believes that you are never too old to learn or start a new career. She says, “Teaching is the best decision I have ever made and I will never retire.”
Danielle Donohue
ANDOVER, MA
Danielle joined the U.S. Army when she was 17 years old and spent 10 years advancing through the enlisted ranks from a non-commissioned officer to an air assault instructor. During her tenure as an instructor, she trained thousands of soldiers to rappel from Blackhawk and Huey helicopters. After leaving the Army, Danielle began work with Raytheon Company and again rose quickly through the ranks. However, she knew that she needed a college degree to achieve her career goals.

Prior to enrolling in WGU, Danielle created a spreadsheet that compared different online universities so she could make an informed decision. After posting her spreadsheet online for other students to benefit from her research, a NY Times reporter contacted her and asked if she could use her spreadsheet as well. One of Danielle’s most memorable WGU experiences is passing her final social science paper, her last degree requirement. In March 2010, Danielle earned a Bachelor of Science in IT Network Design & Management, realizing a dream she had since she was 18.

Since completing her degree, Danielle’s managers have mentioned a promotion and new roles for her career. Now that she has some free time Danielle is painting, running, golfing, and hiking. She says, “I can say, without a doubt, I value my free time much more and am going to love this summer before I start my MBA in the winter.”

Hermilio D. Maia
PORTLAND, OR
Hermilio Maia was born in Brazil and has been married for 36 years. He has four children, including twins, and one granddaughter. After a 30-year career as a mechanical engineer, Hermilio started a new career as a mathematics teacher with charter and private schools. After teaching for several years, he realized that he needed to acquire his certification and to refine his teaching skills. He started researching online programs. The combination of WGU’s competency based approach and the flexibility of the program prompted him to enroll.

Hermilio states, “The high level of academic standards required by the university and the quality of the work involved in writing my capstone were very challenging and became the corner stone of two and a half years of dedication and hard work.” In December 2009, Hermilio completed his Master of Arts in Teaching – Mathematics Education. He states that the education he received at WGU will enable him to have a positive impact on the lives of his students.

Hermilio currently works as a substitute teacher in two school districts in Portland, OR and is seeking a full-time position as a high school mathematics teacher. He encourages others to consider the rewarding field of teaching. He says, “It is never too late to pursue additional education, and with effort and persistence you can succeed.”

“IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO PURSUE ADDITIONAL EDUCATION, AND WITH EFFORT AND PERSISTENCE, YOU CAN SUCCEED.”
- Hermilio D. Maia, WGU graduate
Kendra Henson
COHUTTA, GA

Kendra is a stay-at-home mom who is married to her best friend Josh. She is the mother of their five-year old daughter Tameka. She has always enjoyed helping people, especially children and decided that she wanted to become a teacher. In April 2010, Kendra completed her Bachelor of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies (K-8).

Kendra says, “Western Governors is a blessing to me because I was able to complete my college education to become a teacher while being a stay-at-home mom. I have enjoyed every moment as a WGU student.” Each time she completed a course, she came one step closer to her dream of being a teacher. While a student she served as historian of Alpha Epsilon Sigma, a chapter of Kappa Delta Pi - the Educators International Honors Society. Kendra enjoyed serving in Alpha Epsilon Sigma because it provided support for her college years.

“Western Governors is a blessing to me because I was able to complete my college education to become a teacher while being a stay-at-home mom.”
- Kendra Henson, WGU graduate

As a WGU graduate, Kendra plans on pursuing her masters degree through WGU and applying for a position as a teacher in her local school district. Kendra says, “I have a desire to create an environment so each student has an opportunity to succeed.”

Katie Manchester Ha
SAN JOSE, CA

Katie Manchester Ha received her Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and Spanish from the Croft Institute of International Studies at the University of Mississippi in 2003. She started teaching college-level Spanish in 2000, and has subsequently taught English as a Second Language, study skills and test preparation courses.

To further her education, Katie came to WGU to earn a masters degree. Katie states that one of her most memorable WGU experiences was getting involved in the learning communities. She says, “Creating new activities can be challenging, and in the beginning of the program, I worried that I was overlooking something or that it could be better. After turning to the WGU communities and faculty for help, I became more active in the TESOL community and felt more confident with my work.”

Katie encourages everyone to get involved in professional organizations. She says, “Not only can you start giving back to the community by volunteering, you can also network and find jobs. Most importantly, participating in professional organizations provides a forum for knowledge sharing so that you can brainstorm and develop new techniques in your field.”

She completed her Master of Arts in English Language Learning. Prior to her recent move to California, Katie taught in the Intensive English program at Houston Community College. Katie loves traveling, studying languages and cultures, and has spent time in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Costa Rica for advanced language and literature studies.
Marilee Hullinger
WEST BOUNTIFUL, UT

Marilee’s goal of becoming a teacher began in elementary school where she was inspired by her father and teachers. This July that dream has come to fruition as the 46-year old mother of three earns her Bachelor of Arts in Special Education (K-12).

When her peers were celebrating their high school graduation, Marilee was in the hospital having surgery for cancer. She later completed two years of college but had to stop when her husband Richard broke his neck and was paralyzed from the chest down. Together they adopted three children and Marilee put her dream of becoming a teacher on hold to care for her family. During that time she volunteered in classrooms, served as PTA president, substituted, and worked as a para-educator. In 2008, Marilee decided it was time to finish her college education. She says, “WGU has allowed me to obtain an amazing education with the flexibility of working from home.”

Throughout her WGU education, Marilee has received support and encouragement from her wonderful husband Richard. Marilee cites demonstration teaching as the highlight of her WGU experience, “A classroom filled with 24 children and an amazing teacher gave me insight into what my teaching career would be. Every minute spent in the classroom was joyous!”

“WGU has allowed me to obtain an amazing education with the flexibility of working from home.”

- Marilee Hullinger, WGU graduate
Angelia Mai lives in Laughlin, Nevada. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from WGU and has overcome more than the average person to reach her educational goals. Before 2005, Angela was a successful business woman. She had received Phi Beta Lambda’s national first place awards for Impromptu and Extemporaneous Speaking, Future Business Leaders of America’s national first place awards for Business Reporting and Presentation, Toastmasters awards, and the acclaimed World Wide Golden Poet’s Award twice over. She sought out WGU to help her continue to climb the business ladder. Then, in 2005, her life changed forever. After suffering successive strokes, she was unable to “remember from one day to the next a great deal of the information.” She had to re-learn all of the material that was once familiar, from math to basic motor skills. However, with rehabilitation and support from her family and mentor, Elisa Chavez, Angela is not only graduating, but she also managed to finish her capstone with the highest marks. She states that Elisa helped her see that her “otherly-abledness” gives her “a unique position” in the business and information world. She says, “After all, when you have to relearn it all every day, you are always learning the latest and greatest!”

Marianne Jenkins
MADISON, CT
Marianne Jenkins lives in Madison, Connecticut, but is originally from Utah. For the past three years, she has worked as a middle school paraprofessional, working with an autistic student. She has volunteered at numerous national and international organizations, and also served as a district organizer for the Obama presidential campaign.

Dee Connolly
SILVER SPRINGS, NV
Dee Connolly lives in Silver Springs, Nevada and earned a Master of Arts in Teaching with an emphasis in Mathematics Education, grades 5-12. Dee currently works full time in a small rural community as a regular and long-term substitute teacher. She began WGU a month after she was married. She states, “WGU gave me the ability to do all of life’s important tasks, including working full time, being a mother and wife, and helping care for my parents.” Dee has had to carefully balance her educational and personal life, as she travels from Nevada to California regularly to care for her ill and disabled father. She credits her mentor, Mark Johnston, for encouraging her and giving her confidence when life became overwhelming. She also is indebted to her mother for always pushing, believing and encouraging her. After graduating, Dee plans to continue working with students and encouraging them toward their own educational endeavors. She is also considering a second degree in educational leadership. She says, she will “of course” attend WGU.
Fran Flath
FARMERS BRANCH, TX

Fran Flath lives in Farmers Branch, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in English from Stephen F. Austin State University. She also has a teaching certificate in English, theater, speech-communication, language arts, and reading from Texas Women’s University. She has been in education for the past 20 years.

“I got a better job than the one I was interviewing for. Thanks WGU!”
-Fran Flath, WGU graduate

When the economy weakened, she was laid off from her teaching position. While job hunting, she saw schools advertising advanced degrees but found the costs to be insurmountable. However, when she researched WGU, she found it to be affordable and accessible. She then “gave WGU a call. The people were so nice and knew what they were talking about. When I sheepishly admitted that I was currently unemployed … they told me about a scholarship for people just like me! I was hooked. I signed up.” Fran has now earned a Masters of Education in Learning and Technology from WGU. She plans to take this degree back to the classroom and to “help my students learn to master the world of technology … and help my fellow teachers learn to use that technology to its fullest extent as we touch the future through our students.”

Fran credits her mentor, Rachel Gregson, for helping her succeed at WGU. She calls Rachel “a guide and true friend.” This fall, Fran will be teaching in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at North Hills Preparatory School in Irving, TX. She says, “The degree I received at WGU definitely helped me get the job. One of the books that I studied in my program came up in my interview – I was able to talk about and answer questions on instruction design and share the unit of instruction I had built as part of my master’s degree. Not only did I get a job – I got a better job than the one I was originally interviewing for! Thank you WGU.”

Michael Torrey
HYRUM, UT

Michael Torrey is a dedicated educator and father of three young children who live in Cache Valley, Utah. He has worked as an elementary school teacher in northern Utah for the past five years. Michael was recently named “Teacher of the Year” for his school and was awarded the “Hat’s Off Teaching Award” for outstanding educator in his school district. In May, he earned a Master of Education in Education Leadership from WGU.

Michael remembers the sense of accomplishment when he passed his first WGU assessment and his final comprehensive exam. Michael says, “I studied hard and made many sacrifices. I felt an overwhelming feeling of satisfaction in completing something great. My WGU experience truly has been a worthwhile experience.” As a teacher, Michael tries to prepare his students for careers that have not even been created yet. He wants his students to understand that success is more than taking classes. Michael says success also involves traits like “hard work, persistence, determination, and dedication. The same traits that help WGU students succeed.”

After graduation, Michael plans to continue living in Cache Valley where he will raise his family, teach elementary school and pursue his dream of becoming a principal.