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WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY *Alumni Newsletter*

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2012 WGU Winter Commencement Goes to Atlanta



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Graduates Head South to Atlanta for 2012 Winter Commencement

Western Governors University held its 2012 Winter Commencement ceremony on Saturday, February 11, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia. More than 300 graduates gathered to be acknowledged for their accomplishments in front of thousands of their guests that included family members and friends. The commencement was broadcast online via live video feed to allow other graduates and their families across the nation and overseas to view the ceremony.

John M. Steele, senior vice president of Human Resources for the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), gave the commencement address. HCA is one of WGU's corporate partners and, in his introduction of the speaker, President Robert W. Mendenhall acknowledged HCA's support—both for helping define the competencies for WGU's healthcare degrees and for encouraging its employees to advance their education at WGU. "HCA believes in the fundamental education model of Western Governors University," Mr. Steele said in his address, confirming that 300 HCA employees now attend WGU, and 75 bachelor's and master's graduates from WGU are employed at HCA. Referencing words from a Paul McCartney song, Mr. Steele said that "in this ever-changing world," employers need people who are truly versatile, able to learn efficiently and effectively, who can master change at the same pace as their employers, and who are self-motivated. "Those are the kind of people you represent as graduates of Western Governors University." In healthcare, Mr. Steele said, "We need the right technical skills to be sure, but more than that, we need people who have the calling, who understand



WGU PRESIDENT ROBERT MENDENHALL
ADDRESSES GRADUATES

what it is like to really care for people." From the perspective of someone who sees over 200,000 people through the HCA system, Mr. Steele summarized three life skills that are important for graduates to incorporate in their lives as they go forward: First, continue to learn—to maintain, exercise, and improve skills. Second, look for ways to find balance in everything, as our technological world works for computers but doesn't always work for people. Third, keep a sense of humor and find something to enjoy about every single day. In conclusion, Mr. Steele congratulated the graduates of this class, some of whom are HCA employees, and said that their talent is and will be part of America's economic success.

Following the commencement address, graduate speakers from each of WGU's four colleges shared their experiences of WGU and how higher education has affected their lives.

Carlisha Moore [Bachelor of Science in Business Management, College of Business] from Dacula, Georgia, described how she knew a college degree was missing in her life. Carlisha initially graduated with honors and scholarships from high school at age 16, studying languages at a university, but withdrew when her scholarship sponsor closed its doors. She went to work and life went on. In the past four years, says Carlisha, she became a wife to a wonderful husband, a mother to two beautiful girls, and a full-time career woman—so Carlisha sought a school that would recognize that she had put in the work, but needed to finish what she'd started. WGU was that school. "I have learned more in the past year and a half than I have in my entire college career," Carlisha said, affirming that she didn't put pressure on her future nor punish herself for past mistakes, but stayed in the now to graduate. She encouraged other graduates to take future endeavors one step at a time, and to live in the now. Carlisha has re-enrolled at WGU and is pursuing an MBA.



COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER JOHN M. STEELE,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES, HCA



2012 Winter Commencement continued...

Karen Marchand-Singleton [Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), College of Health Professions] from Beaufort, South Carolina, says she knows there are angels among us because Karen met one of them when hospitalized for a grave illness in her second pregnancy—a nurse who befriended Karen, and then aided her in enrolling in a technical school to become an LPN. Karen later earned an associate's degree. In 2009 Karen looked for a BSN program that would give her an affordable, quality education and found WGU. Karen said that WGU understands the value of mentorship—for faculty, mentors, and staff all helped her persevere through a breast cancer scare followed by the death of her father just as she was completing degree requirements. In September 2011 with only one task remaining for her degree, Karen had to have spinal surgery, and again her mentor was virtually with her. Karen graduated in October 2011. She thanked WGU and staff for putting the needs of students first. "Yes, I do believe there are angels among us, those who nurture us, guide us, and help us fulfill our dreams," Karen said, "And many of them work right here at WGU."

Keith Sosebee [Bachelor of Science in Information Technology—Networks Design and Management, College of Information Technology] from Lafayette, Georgia, enrolled at WGU in July 2011, but his WGU story had begun months earlier with an email advertisement. Skeptical at first, Keith looked closely at WGU's web site and saw three things he liked—accelerated, affordable, and accredited—he especially liked affordable. Transfer went smoothly for his prior associate's degree and IT certifications, and Keith read more about WGU's competency-based learning approach. "I discovered that this was the approach to learning that I have really been looking for all along," he said, and Keith praised his mentor. During 2011, he worked full time, married, enrolled at WGU, and learned he and his wife had a baby on the way—so Keith accelerated his program to get as much done as possible before the October due date. He submitted his cap-

stone project from the hospital while waiting for his daughter to be born, and it passed. Keith encouraged other graduates for the future, "This is to say that if you really put your mind to getting it done, you can do it—no matter what."

Julie Laub [Master of Arts in Teaching—Science, Teachers College] from Kaysville, Utah, shared that her love of chemistry was planted in her heart by her father during a father-daughter onsite visit to his laboratory for a science fair project. Subsequently she says, she became an organic chemist, married, and then, with the support of her husband after the birth of their first baby, lay down her career to help raise their children. Sixteen years later, her father again sparked the idea of Julie returning to college to earn her teaching certificate and master's degree, and with her parents' encouragement and monetary support, she enrolled at Western Governors University in January 2011. "One of the many benefits of earning a degree at WGU is the ability to accelerate coursework," said Julie. By May 2011, she had completed all of her coursework, research projects, and clinical work. In June she received a phone call from her local school district, and one week later accepted a full-time teaching position at a nearby high school, teaching first- and second-year chemistry, advanced placement (AP) chemistry, and honors chemistry. Julie said in her closing remarks that education is a precious gift, that in the overall educational experience, it is an honor to move from one being educated to the one educating.

WGU honored a total of 2,654 graduates in this commencement, awarding 1,583 bachelor's degrees and 1,071 master's degrees in the colleges of Business, Information Technology, and Health Professions, including Nursing as well as Teachers College. For this winter commencement group, graduates ranged in age from 18 to 70 with an average age of 38.

You can view the commencement speeches at:

www.wgu.edu/wgu/commencement_february2012



CARLISHA MOORE



KAREN MARCHAND-SINGLETON



KEITH SOSEBEE



JULIE LAUB

2012 WINTER COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY IN ATLANTA, GA



GRADUATES, FAMILY MEMBERS, AND WGU MENTORS CELEBRATE AFTER THE CEREMONY



WGU a Top Military-Friendly School for 5th Straight Year

UNIVERSITY RECOGNIZED AS 2012 TOP MILITARY-FRIENDLY SCHOOL BY MILITARY ADVANCED EDUCATION

For the fifth consecutive year, nonprofit online Western Governors University (WGU) has been named to Military Advanced Education's *2012 Guide to Top Military-Friendly Colleges & Universities*. Published annually, the guide provides information regarding college options for U.S. service people and veterans.

WGU offers online accredited degree programs that are flexible, accessible, and supportive for military personnel and spouses who are often faced with challenges that make it difficult to earn a degree at a traditional college. With over 50 online bachelor's and master's degree programs in Business, Information Technology, Teacher Education, and Health Professions, including Nursing, students can study on their own time from anywhere with an Internet connection. Additionally, students receive ongoing support from faculty who serve as one-on-one mentors through their entire degree program. WGU's terms are six months long and can begin on the first day of any month.

WGU graduate Loretta Lombard, a Lt. Col. for the U.S. Air Force, earned her MBA while on active duty. She was able to complete her degree while being deployed three different times to three different continents. "The six-month terms allowed for adjustments to my availability due to my military requirements and family priorities. If I had to leave on Temporary Duty, I could easily pick up where I left off and get going again when I could return my attention to school," Lt. Col. Lombard said.

Selected by Military Advanced Education for the guide based on the quality of academics, WGU's degree programs are approved for tuition assistance for active-duty, reserve, and National Guard personnel. Veterans are eligible for education benefits through the GI Bill. Scholarships are available for active service people, their spouses, and veterans.

WGU is dedicated to providing educational opportunities for adult learners. Major General R. Martin Umberger of the Indiana National Guard, a strong supporter of military-friendly options for higher education, believes institutions like WGU will help America's military members reach their personal and professional potential. "Our soldiers and airmen will benefit tremendously from the parallel offerings of online learning opportunities," he said.

As a top military-friendly institution, WGU provides several benefits for military members and their families.

- Degree programs that are approved for Veterans Administration (VA) benefits under the GI Bill, as well as tuition assistance for active-duty, reserve, and National Guard service members
- Scholarships specifically designed for active-duty military, reservists, veterans, and military spouses
- Competency-based learning, which allows students to advance when they demonstrate mastery of subject matter rather than by logging classroom hours
- Option to accelerate degree completion for students who can devote additional time to their studies
- Learning resources and course materials that are available online 24/7 from anywhere there is an Internet connection
- Affordable tuition—just under \$6,000 per year for most programs

For more information about WGU and military benefits, please visit www.wgu.edu/military.



Face to Facebook on WGU Community

It's possible for online university students and alumni to connect with each other, even without a physical campus to meet on. WGU is committed to giving students and graduates opportunities to network and make social connections if they want to.

Our newest addition is the WGU student- and alumni-only community on Facebook. This community will connect you with other WGU students and grads who share similar interests, degree programs, geographic location, and, above all, an understanding of how unique the WGU student experience can be.

The WGU on Facebook community is conveniently connected to your Facebook account, but it is an exclusive, private network for WGU students, alumni, and some faculty and staff. Should you choose to participate, your activity in the WGU community

will not show up in your public Facebook feed, and your Facebook privacy settings will determine how other students and alumni are able to view your personal Facebook profile.



Alumni received an invitation to the community via email, but if you haven't, feel free to visit <http://social.wgu.edu> and enter your my.wgu.edu email address to get access to the app.

If you need additional assistance or have any questions regarding this invitation and the WGU on Facebook app, Student Services is more than willing to give you a hand. Email studentservices@wgu.edu or call toll free at (866) 903-0110.

TUESDAY TRIVIA CATCHES ON WITH WGU STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

Tuesday Trivia questions are posted weekly in the Student Success Community, on WGU Facebook, and on WGU Students and Alumni LinkedIn page by the Alumni Relations team. A winning name is drawn from all correct entries received for the month. Not only is it fun to come up with the right answer, but the winner receives a small surprise gift in the mail. Watch for your chance to enter every Tuesday!

WGU CAREER SERVICES PROVIDES A WIDE ARRAY OF RESOURCES AND SERVICES TO ENHANCE YOUR SEARCH OR CAREER—WITH RESUME REVIEWS, MOCK INTERVIEWS, CAREER CAFÉ WEBINARS, INTERACTIVE JOB CLUB, STRATEGIES, AND MORE! VISIT: WWW.WGU.EDU/CAREERSERVICES

Career assistance graduates internships school club resources planning **job** cover OptimalResume letters **interviews** webinars cafe **resumes** help listings groups appointments **networking** students career **Services**



WGU Grads and Students Get Together

WGU students, alumni, and mentors held a number of local meet-ups this past year in cities nationwide including Chicago, Denver, Kalispell, Polson, Portland, Temecula, and Kansas City. In total, networking events have been held in 12 cities to date. WGU graduate Sheila Pitts, who hosted an event for other grads and students from the Kansas City area (see group picture), says with enthusiasm, "Coordinating this event was very easy and exciting. The event was fun and a great opportunity to meet people who I didn't know in my neck of the woods with something in common—WGU."

Here's a great opportunity to sign up as a host for an event in YOUR city—it's easy and fun!

Hosts may choose a venue and date for the event, and decide whether the event will be casual mingling or more organized with a presentation. Alumni Relations also helps support a host in preparing for an event by providing some giveaway items to share with participants and by promoting the event.



GRADS AND STUDENTS GET TOGETHER AT EVENT IN KANSAS CITY

To coordinate a meet-up in your local area, please visit: http://alumni.wgu.edu/networking_events

WGU AND ALUMNI RELATIONS IS PROUD TO PRESENT THE WGU ALUMNI ACCESS REWARDS PROGRAM FOR REGISTERING ON THE WGU ALUMNI COMMUNITY WEB SITE. CLICK ON ALUMNI AND FOLLOW LINK TO YOUR REWARDS.

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Returning to Work After Raising a Family

BY RENEE CASSIDY

For so many of us who have stayed out of the main-stream workforce to raise our families, heading back to work can seem very challenging, especially in today's job market. However, with some preparation, recognizing what you have accomplished and discovering your true potential can be very helpful during this life transition and is worth exploring. It may even start you on a new career path. Here are some ideas:

- **Find** something you love to do and do it. Whether it is learning a new language, taking piano lessons, planting a garden, or teaching a class, do whatever you enjoy. Along with building skills and providing a positive balance in your life (at a time when things may seem out of your control), it may also help you discover new career directions.
- **Identify** the value in the activities you have done such as volunteering, organizing schedules, and coaching/guiding family members. Writing a detailed list for each one can be a great tool in uncovering your many hidden strengths and talents.

- **Seek** support from a variety of sources such as networking groups, college career services, professionals in your field, and mentors. We can all learn from one another's experience and constructive feedback can be extremely beneficial.
- **Evaluate** if there are any areas you would like to improve. For me, attending WGU for my BS in business provided not only academic skills but confidence that I was current to the needs of today's business world.

For certain, change is constant and preparing for transitions can make the process easier. Starting out by realizing your full potential and the competencies you have to contribute can prove to be key benefits to your future employers as well as your own lifelong happiness and success.

About the author: Renee Cassidy graduated from WGU in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management degree. She works in the Admissions office at MassBay Community College and is a Certified Empowerment Coach at the Renee Cassidy Life and Career Transition Services.

Call for Alumni-in-Action Stories - Dreams in Motion

You've seen two of our WGU alumni featured in recent issues of the Alumni newsletter—graduates who began with a small idea that bloomed into a living reality. Some Alumni-in-Action stories are global in scale; some have their biggest impact on a local level. If you have a story to tell about your own unusual or original idea that you've made blossom and that has made a difference in your community in small or large ways—please submit your story to us.

Alumni-in-Action stories are somewhat longer than regular profiles—about 400-500 words. Let your high-resolution photos help capture interest and tell your story. Remember, we're looking for community impact and a dream that may have taken an unusual path. Tell us about your work and what it has meant to you. Your story may be featured in our next Alumni in Action in 2012 or beyond.

We're looking for a(n):

- Impact on communities—could be grassroots, local/state, national, or international
- Original or unusual path to a dream

- Service in some form—any of our four WGU areas of education, information technology, healthcare, or business
- Details of how you set your dream into motion
- Minimum of 400-500 words—feel free to write more (your story will be edited by our newsletter editor and you will have a chance to review the version before it is published)
- Photos—2 or 3 photos that also tell part of your story—high-resolution images [in a standard file type, such as jpg]

Go to the Alumni web site: <http://alumni.wgu.edu>—and click the left column button, "Submit an Article."

Gently nudge a fellow grad if you know of someone you want to see featured for his or her lifework. Suggest that they go to the Alumni web site to submit a story or let us know his or her name (please be sure to tell your friend/colleague you are doing so). You never know what dreams may become—until you set them in motion!

Yvonne Moncovich '11

WILMINGTON, NC

As the director of operations at an outsourced medical billing company based in Wilmington, North Carolina, Yvonne Moncovich already had a fantastic job, she says, but earning her business degree would fulfill a lifelong goal. "Brick and mortar universities couldn't offer me the kind of schedule I needed as a working, single mother," Yvonne says. "A friend suggested online universities and, after interviewing three, I chose Western Governors University because of the semester-based pricing and the self-paced, competency curriculum." Yvonne enrolled at WGU in August 2008.

Yvonne's staff all work from remote offices and serve clients throughout the southeastern United States, she says, so her familiarity with virtual communication and the self-discipline that is required to work remotely made WGU a perfect fit. "I loved my relationship with my mentor, who really grew to know me over my 3 years there. I enjoyed learning about subjects that I never would have considered taking and often didn't think I would enjoy."

In addition to her current use of business technology, Yvonne says, "I was the production coordina-

tor for Harry Blackstone, Jr., where—in addition to his famous prestidigitation—he was also known for the magic we designed specifically for the *New Kids on the Block*. I earned an Emmy award for "Outstanding Casting in a Mini-series" for my contributions to the HBO series, *From the Earth to the Moon*."



Now that she has her Bachelor of Science in Business—Human Resource Management degree from WGU, what's next for Yvonne? She plans to work on her master's degree in the future and obtain her Global Professional in Human Resources (GHR) certification. Yvonne also volunteers for various non-profit organizations in her community, and on the personal side, she says, is the mother of two teenage sons, is researching her family's genealogy, and learning French. Yvonne also loves to take photos of the places she travels. Yvonne has lived in Connecticut, Southern California, and North Carolina.

Jason Desjardins '10

UPTON, KY

Born and raised in Waterbury, Connecticut, Jason Desjardins joined the U.S. Army following high school and served six years as a communications maintainer. Jason attended four semesters at a local community college after his military tour, but went to work full time when he and his wife started a family—with the birth of their daughter followed three years later with a son. Over time, Jason earned a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) degree from another university, worked for 16 years for a world-class brake manufacturer, and has been married for 24 years and their children are now teenagers. Yet he wanted to complete a master's degree to advance in his career. "WGU had the best to offer," says Jason, and he enrolled in the MBA—Information Technology Management degree program. He enjoyed the learning experience, and the freedom to learn at an accelerated pace.

When he graduated from WGU in 2010 with a master's degree, Jason was promoted to night shift supervisor. "My degree has afforded me the opportunity to change jobs as well as a continuous stream of job offers," so Jason has begun a new job as a



JASON DESJARDINS AND FAMILY

production manager for a plastics company. "It was the upward movement I was hoping that my degree and experience would gain me," says Jason. "Thanks to WGU, I have been able to move from a supervisor's position to a department manager position." He now manages the paint and assembly lines that cover two shifts, and has six supervisors who report directly to him along with about 20 employees under each supervisor. Jason also plans to work on a doctorate so he can teach at the college level. Jason enjoys anything to do with the outdoors and spending time with his family, and is active in his church as well as the band boosters for his son's high school.



Lisa Whitney '08

BUCKSPORT, ME

Seeing the light-bulb go on over a student's head when he or she "gets it!" is what inspires teacher Lisa Whitney. Originally from Maryland, Lisa has been in Bucksport, Maine, since 1986. She chose Western Governors University in spring of 2003 to begin her Bachelor of Arts in Educational Studies degree because it afforded her the flexibility she needed working full-time as a divorced mother of two daughters, advocating in her community as a municipal official, and unable to travel the miles it would take to attend a traditional university. "It was wonderful to have classmates from all across the country, and, in a few instances, out of the country," says Lisa. She adds that all of her encounters with WGU staff and mentors were extremely positive, and phone calls with her mentors are one of her fondest memories of WGU.

Lisa was offered the first job she applied for the summer after graduating in 2008, and has been promoted twice in three years. After starting as a fourth-grade teacher at the northeasternmost Catholic school on the eastern seaboard, Lisa explains, she was promoted to fifth grade, then to sixth grade as a home-

room teacher, and became the middle school language arts teacher for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. "It means I will have been with my original students for five years by the time they graduate!" For the past two years, Lisa has pursued her Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI), and says, "Once I settle down a bit, I'd like to pursue my master's degree." At home, Lisa enjoys reading, cooking, baking, being a "Nana x2", promoting the Bucksport Performing Arts Center, and staying in touch with friends. She describes her idea of a perfect day—swimming and relaxing at a lovely Maine lake with friends and family, then at day's end, watching evening stars and listening to the haunting calls of loons.



Malia Bergstrom '09

FAYETTEVILLE, GA

When Malia Bergstrom returned to college for a post-baccalaureate degree in science education, she turned to Western Governors University in January 2008. As an experienced and practicing teacher at a high school near her home, her favorite aspects as a WGU student were that she could take courses around her work schedule, and found the assignments relevant. Malia graduated in December 2009 from the Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Preparation program. She teaches anatomy, physiology, and gifted biology at Fayette County High School. In addition, she sponsors the high school's Multicultural Club. "I teach at the high school from which my children graduated," says Malia. "I have just completed the courses needed for gifted endorsement and am teaching two gifted classes now." Malia recently taught a five-week class for fellow teachers on using the new technology that the high school received. She is also working on her master's degree at the University of Georgia in gifted, creative, and talented education.

This year Malia was named Teacher of the Year at Fayette County High School and she credits her education at WGU for preparing her well. She recently contacted WGU with additional good news, explain-

ing that she is one of three finalists for District Teacher of the Year based on a series of essays she wrote. "All that writing and revising for WGU projects honed my skills," she says. On an initial visit, a team from the district office visited the school to interview her and to observe her classroom.

Subsequently, they came back to videotape her class and conducted a follow-up interview. Malia says the district will announce the recipient of the honor in April. When she is not teaching, Malia says she likes entertaining, and loves dinner and wine and good conversations with friends and family.

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 "All that writing and revising for WGU projects honed my skills."

-WGU Alum, Malia Bergstrom



Michael D. Peters '07

COLUMBUS, GA

Following his first year of college and determined to continue his education while serving in the United States Air Force, Michael D. Peters took one to two classes at a time, which were semesters, he says, that “turned into years academically speaking.” His traditional academics suffered whenever he had to leave town, so after a search, he found Western Governors University and enrolled in the IT program to earn his Bachelor of Science in Information Technology—Security. “In one year, I finished what I thought would take ten and earned more than a degree, I earned self-respect and the respect from prospective employers too,” Michael says. He was so impressed with his WGU experience that he enrolled in the WGU master’s program and earned a certified MBA in IT management in 2007, which helped him secure his first executive-level corporate position. “Working with my mentors was inspirational and helped keep me on target. I also love the delivery of coursework from any location which, in my case, is virtually everywhere I go,” Michael says. He has since published his second IT-related book, earned his executive juris doctor degree in cyberspace law in 2011, and is working on a science fiction novel. His second book, *The Holistic Operational Readiness Security Evalua-*

tion: HORSE Project Series (Vol. 1): Governance Documentation and Information Technology Security Policies Demystified, has been adopted by WGU as a resource in its IT curriculum. [See related highlight box on his publications.]



Michael is currently the chief information security officer (CISO) to a high-tech software firm, and has held two other positions as CSOs to large financial corporations. His credentials include CISSP, CRISC, CISM, CCE, CMBA, SCSA, and he is an ISSA Fellow. With over 25 years of IT and business experience, Michael has become a recognized expert in IT operations, systems, data, and network security, risk, and privacy within the areas of finance, technology, manufacturing, healthcare, insurance, defense education, energy, and transportation. On the personal side, Michael says he loves cooking for his family, date nights with his wife, hiking, kayaking, biking, and airsoft battles with his kids.

SECURING THE “C” LEVEL—GETTING, KEEPING, OR RECLAIMING THAT EXECUTIVE TITLE

If you aspire to join the elite executive ranks, or you want to maintain your lofty position, or you recently suffered a setback and want to come back with vigor, then this book is your road-map for taking charge of your executive career and aspirations. In this book, Michael D. Peters emphasizes that you have the power to create significant positive change in your life by making one of two choices: You can change You, the “Me, Myself, and I” facet, or you can change “The Challenge.” By creating a plan—a plan that is adaptable and serves as the framework for our success throughout our lives—your aspirations are achievable, the author says. The challenge you will master after applying this framework is to secure, maintain, or reclaim that executive-level corporate position.

Available in print and ebook from Amazon.com:

http://www.amazon.com/Securing-Level-Getting-Reclaiming-Executive/dp/146796882X/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpt_2.
ISBN-10: 146796882X or ISBN-13: 978-1467968829

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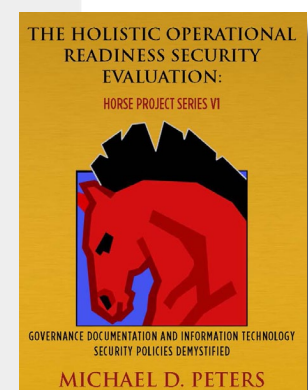
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Judy Wick '11

HEREFORD, AZ

Judy Wick has been in the IT field for over 20 years, from supporting network systems to applications and management, and was in the military. "I got my first break in working for a software company who developed time management programs for various industries. I was hooked and never looked back," Judy says, adding that her military experience enables her to support the mission of the U.S. Army troops with the necessary tools. She lives with her husband in the small town of Hereford, Arizona, approximately ten miles from the U.S./Mexico border and wanted to finally obtain a bachelor's degree to augment her years of professional experience. Cost was a major factor. Judy chose Western Governors University because she says it offered the best degree program aligned with her current technology certifications and profession, and it was affordable. She enrolled in the Bachelor of Science, Information Technology degree program, and graduated in January 2011. At WGU, Judy found the courses versatile and rewarding, and says she enjoyed working at her own pace and studying on her own, which helps illustrate her commitment and perseverance to future employers.

With her certification as a Certified Information Security Specialist Professional, Judy is continuing her studies at WGU in the Master of Science, Information Security and Assurance degree program, which is approved by the National Security Agency (NSA).

"In some way we are all connected via the network grid, whether we use an ATM machine, our cell phones, socialize on social networking sites, or do financial transactions," Judy says, explaining that she wants to make a contribution by helping to defeat cyber-criminals, who seek monetary gains or attempt to disrupt our way of life and interrupt our defense networks and intelligence agencies. Judy would also like to share her knowledge and experience in a classroom environment once she has completed her master's degree. In her leisure time, Judy is an avid reader of history, theology, and other nonfiction genres, and says she loves to travel, visiting and experiencing different cultures.



Save the Date

2012 WGU Summer
Commencement



JULY 14, 2012
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
WWW.WGU.EDU/COMMENCEMENT



**It's your story.
Tell it with a
college ring.**



Shirley Karlsen '10

SULTAN, WA

Shirley Karlsen has been a registered nurse for 24 years in the area of Maternity/Child Health, and has welcomed hundreds of babies into the world at a local community hospital's birthing center. She is a single parent with four children of her own, two of whom have disabilities. Yet at age 17, Shirley was an unwed teen mother who had not graduated from high school. Her own mother insisted Shirley plan a future that included earning a GED and choosing a career direction, and Shirley says, in retrospect, "I chose nursing somewhat serendipitously, as it seemed the most adult job that I could imagine at the time. It still is—all these many years later." Shirley went on to community college in Everett, Washington, and says her incredible nursing teachers and mentors inspired her. This is where the germ of an idea began to flourish into a dream, says Shirley, to somehow give back, and become a nursing instructor who would inspire future nursing students.

It was a coworker who introduced Shirley to Western Governors University. The competency-based, affordable education gave Shirley the opportunity she needed to apply past experience and accelerate her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program,

said Shirley. Following shoulder surgery in February 2010, which allowed her to commit a large portion of time to studying and writing papers, Shirley completed her BSN requirements in the unusually short time frame of 12 weeks.

Although WGU was where she wore her commencement cap and gown for the first time in her life, Shirley did not stop there. Her WGU mentor encouraged Shirley to reach for her master's degree, and thus Shirley says, "I completed my degree in December of 2010 having learned more than I ever thought I was capable of learning," and adds that as a result of her education at WGU, she began as a clinical nursing instructor in January 2011 at the same community college she once attended, coming full circle.

.....
"I completed my degree in December of 2010 having learned more than I ever thought I was capable of learning."

-WGU Alum, Shirley Karlsen

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Amie Kenyon '12

GRAND RAPIDS, MI

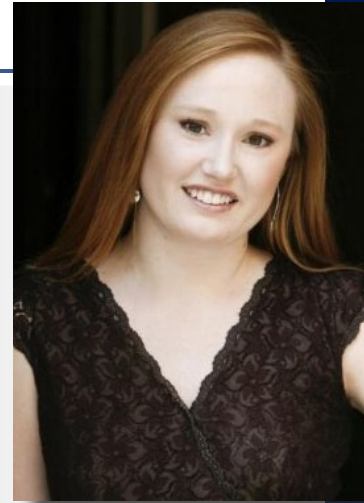
Initially interested in Western Governors University during her search for a school where she could earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, nurse Amie Kenyon chose another university—but not for long, she says. Realizing that she was wasting precious time and money at the other school, Amie contacted WGU again and enrolled on the spot. By applying her prior nursing experience, she was able to accelerate her program and quickly completed her BSN. She is now enrolled in WGU's Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree program, and an MSN will allow her to enter a Nurse Practitioner program. Amie says she loved many aspects of WGU—going at her own pace; no group assignments where her score was dependent on others; affordable tuition; contacting people from all over the United States; and competency-based programs where the assessments showed her understanding of the material, which for her was a great motivator. Amie says her

.....
 "Having my BSN is allowing me to move forward in a more challenging role as a nurse."

-WGU Alum, Amie Kenyon

next goal is to enroll in a Family Nurse Practitioner program and eventually earn a doctorate-level degree, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP).

After graduation, Amie received a raise and recently accepted a position in urgent care with a magnet hospital system in her area. "They would not have hired me without my BSN, and I feel very lucky and happy that the timing was right." She previously spent three years in another area of nursing and was ready for a change, adding, "Having my BSN is allowing me to move forward in a more challenging role as a nurse." Amie also loves to travel and says her favorite places are New York City and anywhere in the Caribbean. She enjoys time with her nieces and nephews, and her three dogs. "I try to remain positive in everything I do," Amie says, "and I always hope to maintain and keep achieving my dreams."



Tina Wade '10

EAST HELENA, MT

Even though she had an excellent education and an associate's degree, operating room nurse Tina Wade says wanted to continue her education to gain a better grasp of leadership as well as community health, and to feel more complete, adding, "I feel that if you understand all aspects of nursing (pieces of the puzzle), you can take better care of your patient. Understanding your patient is more important sometimes than the diagnosis in my opinion." Tina also wanted to leave the private sector and take care of veterans, yet the Veterans Administration (VA) system prefers RNs to have a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. She says she completed WGU in hopes of going to work for the VA. At WGU, Tina says she loved having a mentor, especially as a cheerleader to call and get that boost to get her through. She says it was a very easy program to follow once she got going. "I'm a hands-on learner and I doubted myself being able to do an online program. My mentor was there to say, 'Try this and see what you think.' By the time I completed EWB, I felt like I could complete anything." Tina graduated with a BSN in August 2010.

Tina soon fulfilled her hopes when she was hired by the Montana VA in April 2011. She feels that the reason she got the position was not only for her experience, but because she had earned her BSN, and adds with enthusiasm, "I have been an OR nurse for just over five years now and am loving it!" Tina enjoys the great outdoors when she is not working, participating in hiking, boating, camping, and four-wheeling, and time with her husband of 25 years and grown daughters, she says. She also loves to take pictures of landscapes and wildlife as a hobby photographer.





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