

FEB 15 2013

EXECUTIVE ORDER
13-04SECRETARY OF STATE
COMMISSIONS DIVISION

WHEREAS, increasing the number of adult Missourians who have earned a college certificate or degree will make Missouri even more competitive and successful in the global economy; and

WHEREAS, Missouri has set a goal that 60% of working age adults will hold a high-quality college certificate or degree; and

WHEREAS, the number of students enrolling and graduating from Missouri's colleges and universities has increased steadily over the past decade; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that there are still nearly 750,000 adult Missourians who have earned some college credit but have not completed a certificate or degree program; and

WHEREAS, there is an unmet, significant need to provide adult learners with more opportunities to obtain higher education degrees; and

WHEREAS, Western Governors University (WGU) is a non-profit, independent university that is regionally and nationally accredited and that offers on-line degrees based on demonstrating and documenting competency as opposed to degrees based on clock or credit hours; and

WHEREAS, WGU is fully independent and requires no state direct appropriation to offer its programs to its students; and

WHEREAS, WGU provides a viable and self-sustaining complement to traditional learning methods through on-line, competency-based distance learning methods; and

WHEREAS, WGU, along with Missouri's existing colleges and universities, can assist Missouri's citizens attain their educational aspirations.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON, Governor of the State of Missouri, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Missouri, do hereby declare and express the commitment of the State of Missouri to the establishment of WGU-Missouri as a non-profit institution of higher education located in Missouri that will provide enhanced access for Missourians to enroll in and complete on-line, competency-based higher education degree programs. In support thereof, I hereby direct:

1. The Missouri Department of Higher Education to A) recognize, endorse, and support on-line competency-based education as an important component of Missouri's higher education system; B) eliminate any unnecessary barriers to WGU-Missouri's operation and delivery of such education programs; and C) work with WGU-Missouri to integrate its academic programs and services into the state's higher education goals, policy, and evaluation;
2. The Missouri Department of Higher Education to take all necessary steps now and in the future to ensure that WGU-Missouri students will be eligible to apply for and receive financial aid on the same basis as students at Missouri's public universities;
3. The Missouri Department of Higher Education to work with WGU-Missouri to create appropriate data sharing processes (including at the student record level), as required by state and federal guidelines for higher education providers, to assess WGU-Missouri's performance, and to evaluate the extent to which WGU-Missouri is helping the State achieve its higher education goals;
4. The Missouri Division of Workforce Development to explore methods for promoting on-line, competency-based education opportunities like WGU-Missouri for dislocated workers and other Missourians in need of higher education credentials;
5. Other state agencies whose assistance may be required, such as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Economic Development, to facilitate the establishment and operation of WGU-Missouri; and

6. WGU-Missouri to establish an advisory board whose members shall be appointed by WGU, in consultation with the Governor.

Contemporaneously with this Executive Order, the State of Missouri is entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WGU to further memorialize and establish the partnership between the State of Missouri and WGU.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Missouri, in the City of Jefferson, on this 15th day of February, 2013.

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor

ATTEST:

Jason Kander
Secretary of State