

Western Governors University Offers Tips for Busy Adults Resolving To Pursue a College Degree in the New Year

December 26 2021 1:58 PM



ALTON – The ongoing pandemic continues to impact the local workforce, causing many to reevaluate their careers and make resolutions to strengthen their skillsets as the New Year approaches. For many, this process will include going back to college in 2022 to earn an undergraduate or graduate degree and make themselves more marketable to potential employers. To aid in the decision-making process for those who are still considering their options, Western Governors University (WGU) is offering tips to keep top of mind when choosing a college or field of study. The fully online, nonprofit

university is also offering \$100,000 in scholarships to new students who plan to enroll in the New Year.

Each [New Start Scholarship](#) is valued at up to \$2,500 per student and will be applied to WGU's already-low, flat-rate tuition of about \$3,800 per six-month term. The scholarship is open to new students enrolling in any of the university's 60-plus undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the high-demand fields of IT, business, education and health professions, including nursing. To learn more about the New Start Scholarship, visit wgu.edu/newstart.

Because choosing the right school and degree program is crucial to career success, especially in this ever-changing climate, WGU is offering the following tips to help those looking to earn a degree in the New Year navigate their return to school:

- Choose a field of study that will lead to fulfillment and success. The recent and ongoing labor shortage has affected a wide range of industries, creating record numbers of job openings in a variety of fields. While this means more options could be available for prospective employees, not every industry is experiencing an employee shortage. Make sure the degree selected is in-demand, relates to your current field and is relevant to employers. For those considering changing careers altogether but are unsure what path might be best for them, consider reaching out to potential employers to see what they value in a degree program or skillset. Having a clear understanding of what specific degree or program to obtain will provide the needed basis for selecting a school that is the right fit.
- Research online options. If you are planning on going to school remotely or taking fully online courses, make sure you do your research and choose a school that has a long and highly rated history of offering quality online programs to students. While most institutions began offering this as an option at the start of the pandemic, not all are experts in the area, which could impact the student experience.
- See if prior experience will count toward a degree. Work experience and previous education/training may mean a student doesn't have to start from scratch. Before enrolling, make sure earned college credits will transfer into the chosen program of study. Workplace training and experiences may also help accelerate degree completion, especially if choosing a school that offers a competency-based approach to learning. This increasingly popular model allows students to move at their own pace and advance when mastery of the subject matter is demonstrated, enabling students to graduate faster.
- See how connections with students will be made. Networking is key to career advancement, but with the pandemic showing little signs of slowing, there may be more limited options for students and alumni to get together in person than in years' past. Before enrolling, check and see what options there are for students to interact and connect. Many universities have started holding outdoor events or

smaller gatherings, but even if these gatherings are limited or a student feels uncomfortable attending, there should be opportunities to connect online. Many schools offer community groups that help students feel connected, as well as chat groups, video conferencing and email to socialize, compare thoughts and get advice from fellow students.

- Pay attention to tuition costs and financing options. Find out what tuition costs – including books and fees – before enrolling. Research financial aid and scholarships that may be available. Depending on income, a student may be eligible for a government grant, particularly a Pell grant, to help pay for education. Speak with a financial advisor about other means of assistance that can lower costs. Many employers also offer tuition reimbursement or assistance. Being diligent in this process will give students a better understanding as to what school or program is best for them and their financial situation.
- Choose a reputable, accredited university. It's important to note that employers and academic institutions will only recognize degrees earned from accredited universities. Make sure time and efforts aren't wasted on a non-accredited program by verifying a university's accreditation before enrolling. The U.S. Department of Education publishes [a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies](#) determined to be reliable authorities. It can also be beneficial to request information on alumni placements, employer surveys, and graduate rankings to ensure the degree will be valued.

“The beginning of a new year represents opportunities for positive changes and is the perfect time for those who have been putting off furthering their education to make the leap to return to school, advance their careers and improve their lives,” said Dr. Angie Besendorfer, Regional Vice President of Western Governors University. “We encourage individuals to do their homework and select the university that's best for them. WGU offers affordable competency-based education programs that are a fit for many working adults, and we look forward to helping more students achieve their educational goals in the coming year and find careers they love.”

For more information about WGU and its programs or the New Start Scholarship, visit wgu.edu/newstart.

About WGU

Established in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors with a mission to expand access to high-quality, affordable higher education, online, nonprofit WGU now serves more than 130,000 students nationwide and has nearly 250,000 graduates in all 50 states. Driving innovation as the nation's leading competency-based university, WGU has been recognized by the White House, state leaders, employers, and students as a model that

works in postsecondary education. In just 25 years, the university has become a leading influence in the development of innovative workforce-focused approaches to education. WGU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, has been named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies, and has been featured on NPR, NBC Nightly News, and CNN, and in The New York Times. Learn more at www.wgu.edu.