



WGU TENNESSEE®

WGU Tennessee Holds First Commencement Ceremony

NASHVILLE (June XX, 2014) – [WGU Tennessee](#), the state-based, nonprofit online university launched last summer as part of Gov. Bill Haslam’s “Drive to 55” initiative, held its first commencement ceremony on June 14 at the Renaissance Hotel in Nashville.

“This is a huge milestone for our hardworking students,” said Dr. Kimberly K. Estep, chancellor of WGU Tennessee. “Most of our students balanced full-time jobs, families, and coursework, so it’s great to see their dedication celebrated.”

Shannon Brown, WGU Tennessee advisory board member and senior vice president and chief human resources and diversity officer for FedEx Express, spoke to the crowd of 500-plus at the commencement. He inspired the students and families with his story of hard work and his commitment to learning.

Of the 60 graduates, four WGU Tennessee students shared their stories at the ceremony, including Shannon Tucker of Nashville, Miranda Good of Murfreesboro, Tenn., Jeff Gebhart of Clinton, Tenn., and Tabitha Calvin of Atoka, Tenn.

Tucker, who graduated with an MBA in health care management, cited the university’s competency-based program as the reason she was able to achieve her master’s degree. She began her job as the assistant vice president for quality at HCA at the end of May.

Good, a special education teacher, graduated with a bachelor’s degree in special education in two and a half years, compared to the traditional five it would have taken her at other universities.

Gebhart, an IT asset manager at Jacobs Engineering, also expressed gratitude to WGU Tennessee, crediting his success to the university’s student culture. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in information technology management.

Calvin, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in information technology, spoke of receiving four IT certifications within a six-month period at WGU Tennessee while balancing her job as a senior technical analyst at Dell and being a mother of two.

“Our goal is to provide opportunities to as many people as possible,” Estep said. “The success we achieved in our first year makes us optimistic about the growing impact we can have on higher education in Tennessee.”

Since WGU Tennessee launched 11 months ago, the student body has grown to **1,000** – an increase of more than 30 percent.

WGU Tennessee enrolls students into its programs each month. Tuition is \$3,000 for a six-month term, during which students can complete an unlimited number of competencies. Earlier this month, WGU announced that tuition would remain \$3,000 a term for the seventh year in a row. Those interested in learning more can visit tennessee.wgu.edu.

About WGU Tennessee

WGU Tennessee is an online, nonprofit, competency-based university established to expand Tennesseans' access to higher education throughout the state. Formed through a partnership between the state of Tennessee and nationally recognized Western Governors University, WGU Tennessee is open to all qualified Tennessee residents. The university offers more than 50 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the high-demand career fields of business, K-12 teacher education, information technology, and health professions, including nursing.

Degrees are granted under the accreditation of Western Governors University, which is accredited through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Teachers College programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and nursing programs are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).*

In addition to WGU Tennessee, there are four other WGU state-based, state-endorsed universities: [WGU Indiana](http://wgu.edu), established in June 2010; [WGU Washington](http://wgu.edu), established in April 2011; [WGU Texas](http://wgu.edu), established in August 2011; and [WGU Missouri](http://wgu.edu), established in February 2013.

For more information, visit the WGU Tennessee website, <http://tennessee.wgu.edu/>, or call 855-948-8495.

*Western Governors University offers nursing programs that are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 5380, Washington, DC 20036, 202-877-6791).

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Contact for media inquiries:

Kirk Graves
615-472-6055
kirk.graves@wgu.edu

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Contact for enrollment information:

855-948-8495
tennessee.wgu.edu