

# STATE OF INDIANA

## EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT INDIANAPOLIS

17-07

### EXECUTIVE ORDER

**FOR: CONTINUING WGU INDIANA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY TO EXPAND HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOOSIERS THROUGH ON-LINE COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION**

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS MAY COME, GREETINGS.

**WHEREAS,** there is a significant need in Indiana to provide Hoosier adults with access to opportunities to obtain higher education degrees;

**WHEREAS,** Indiana's Commission For Higher Education has a goal of producing the equivalent of 10,000 additional Hoosier Bachelor's degrees each year through 2025;

**WHEREAS,** for Indiana's citizens to be competitive in the global economy, more citizens need the skills and knowledge that come with degree completion and college credentials;

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

**WHEREAS,** WGU is fully independent and requires no state direct financial participation for WGU to offer its curriculum to its students;

**WHEREAS,** Indiana helped start WGU in 1998 to provide access to affordable education and training opportunities through on-line, competency-based programs, and pledged to take appropriate actions to create policy to support the goals of WGU;

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

**WHEREAS,** WGU has demonstrated success in providing on-line, competency-based education to Hoosiers, and shares Indiana's and the Commission for Higher Education's goals for increasing the number of adults in our State who have obtained high-quality Bachelor's degrees through cost-effective, flexible, and quickly initiated means; and

**WHEREAS,** the State of Indiana desires to continue to enable WGU to provide services in the State of Indiana for the benefit of Hoosier adults.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, Eric J. Holcomb,** by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Indiana, do hereby commit the State of Indiana to continue to partner with WGU through WGU Indiana to meet the needs of Hoosier students by providing on-line, competency-based educational opportunities. To accomplish these purposes, the State will take the following actions:

1. Indiana will continue to partner with WGU to establish a state-based institution chartered as WGU Indiana to provide enhanced access for Hoosiers to on-line, competency-based higher education degree programs.
2. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education ("CHE") shall:
  - a. recognize and endorse on-line, competency-based education as an important component of Indiana's higher education system;
  - b. work to eliminate unnecessary barriers to the delivery of such education programs provided by WGU Indiana; and

- c. work with WGU Indiana, as appropriate, to integrate WGU Indiana's academic programs and services in the State's higher education policy and strategy.
3. The Indiana Department of Workforce Development shall continue to explore methods for promoting on-line, competency-based educational opportunities like WGU Indiana for those dislocated workers and other Hoosiers in need of higher education achievement and Bachelor's degrees.
4. The Division of Student Financial Aid ("SFA") shall take all necessary steps now and in the future to ensure that WGU Indiana students will be eligible to apply for and receive student financial aid on the same basis as students at Indiana's public universities.
5. CHE and SFA shall work with WGU Indiana to create appropriate data sharing processes, as may be required by state and Federal guidelines for higher education providers, to assess WGU Indiana's performance, and determine the extent to which it helps the State achieve certain CHE goals for Indiana's higher education system.
6. WGU Indiana shall have an advisory board whose members shall be appointed jointly by the Governor and WGU.
7. The State of Indiana recognizes that the steps taken herein are consistent with the goals and objectives of the CHE as well as the State of Indiana to improve access to higher education opportunities for Hoosier adults.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, Eric J. Holcomb, have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Indiana, on this 9<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2017.

Eric J. Holcomb  
Governor of Indiana

ATTEST: Connie Lawson  
Secretary of State